Narratives of Former Prisoners Interacting with the Master Narrative at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen.

"The witness has always to protect memory from erasure" - Susan Meiselas

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Abstract

Because of the debate on the role of eyewitnesses in remembering the GDR, I aimed to elucidate how the personal narratives of former prisoners of Hohenschönhausen interact with the master narrative that is presented at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen. Through observational methods, I gained insight into the navigation strategies of personal narratives within master narratives. The results from the analyses on both personal narratives and the master narrative at the memorial museum showed that former prisoners mainly accept the presented master narrative. In addition, it illustrated the ability of former prisoners to reject certain parts and simultaneously accept other parts of the master narrative. I also found that the personal stories are complementary to the master narrative, in the way that they strengthen it. Thus, personal stories of former prisoners interact synergistically with the presented master narrative of the Gedenkstätte-Hohenschönhausen.

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Chapter 1: An introduction to the role of personal stories in remembering

The communist regime of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) was led by the only existing party within this regime: the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (SED). In order for the GDR to maintain a stable state for over forty years (Koehler, 2008; Fulbrook, 2011), the SED was supported by the Ministry of State security (MfS), or simply said, the Stasi, a security system that operated as secret police in favor of the state. Amongst other factors, dissatisfaction with the regime, the SED leadership and the Stasi led to the Peaceful Revolution in 1989, which caused the opening of East Germany's borders to the West. The Wall that was built to divide Germany into East and West and prohibited citizens to cross, fell. *Die Wende*, the turning point, refers to the sociopolitical change in 1989, which unified East and West Germany again.

Ever since the collapse of the GDR in 1989, there has been an ongoing political, academical and social debate about how the history of the now united Germany should be remembered (Bouma, 2020; Wüstenberg, 2011; Clarke & Wölfel, 2011). Within the borders of the GDR, people experienced the regime and everyday life differently. Certain aspects of everyday life, such as the security of a job and a feeling of familiarity that the state provided, are remembered positively (Bouma, 2020). A survey done on German students showed that especially East German students had an overly positive impression of the GDR education, health and welfare system. The authors attribute this positive view to the stories told by relatives who lived in the GDR that expressed the advantages of the social aspects in the GDR (Jones, 2011). However, victims of the Stasi remember the unjust suffering and harm on inflicted upom them (Gebauer, 2010). The Stasi documented a suspicious person's everyday life in extreme detail by using spies, which was done by employees of the Stasi or *Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter (*unofficial collaborator; IM). If information that the Stasi collected was indicating a mindset against the GDR, people could be denied access to education, blackmailed into working for them, or imprisoned. With 91.015 employees and about 173.000 IM's, one out of 60 people was working for the Stasi (Bouma, 2020; Funder, 2011), showing the involvement of and commitment to the SED. This even led to the fact that people were spied on by people they trusted, for example their own relatives or friends (Bouma, 2020). When the regime collapsed, the Stasi made sure to destroy important and harming material about citizens that they documented during forty years of GDR as much as possible (Miller, 2002; Stein, 2016). This loss of much hard evidence led to the growing importance of eyewitnesses and their

individual stories. They became a source of information to understand the history of the GDR and thereby sparked the debate on how to remember the GDR.

The way in which individuals remember and the society remembers the past is called the *Erinnerungskultur* (culture of remembrance). This is extremely important in German culture and politics. In order to come to terms with the history of the GDR, express the GDR's past and to "make memory" of it, there was a fast rise of large numbers of museums and memorials on the communist regime in Germany and especially in Berlin (Clarke & Wölfel, 2011; Ludwig, 2011). Therefore, the debate on remembering shifted to museum policies. However, different sites that display the history of the GDR often tell complementary or competing stories (Ludwig, 2011). An explanation for why museums on the GDR are displaying these different stories, is because of the two different "memory phases" Germany finds itself in simultaneously. It is currently in a phase of both communicative memory as well as cultural memory. Communicative memory is when eyewitnesses or other actors are telling their stories and interpretation of the history. This form of memory lives in everyday interaction and can exist for over three or four generations (Assmann, 2011; Lahusen, 2011). However, due to the fast rise of memorials and museums, there was a sudden institutionalization of history, which is part of cultural memory (Ludwig, 2011). This is a form of historical consciousness or knowledge about the past that is shared and presented by institutions (Assmann, 2011). Normally, there is gradual transition from individual or communicative memory to collective or cultural memory (Asmann, 1995: Clarke & Wölfel). For example, in the case of traumatic events, it takes fifteen or more years for interest in commemoration to arise (Assmann, 2004). In this case however, communicative and cultural memory are living simultaneously (Lahusen, 2011), which means that not only individual stories but also memorials, museums or research institutions are playing a part in remembering.

The narratives that are constructed through either one of the phases of memory can differ because of the social or political goal of a person or institution. In addition, narratives may also differ because great historical events are often not as important in the personal memory as they are in collective memory (Lahusen, 2011). This means that a personal story overshadows historical turning points and it is rather an exception that personal chronology is in line with the collective chronology. For example, the end of a war is often only a turning point in retrospect, and not a point of reference in a personal story (Lahusen, 2011). Moreover, they can differ because during this transmission of communicative memory into

collective memory, there is a gap between the personal experience and the representation of this experience. This means that besides from trying to explain the reality, the person focusses on how to tell this reality. To bridge the gap between the individual experience and its narrative representation, imagination and aesthetics are used (Kopf, 2010), and the connection to the "real" personal story fades.

Concerning the GDR, these differences lead to different stories that new generations interpret and engage themselves with. The different interpretations are leading to social and political division in society and are the basis for political uncertainty. For example, positive feelings towards the GDR are seen as threat to democracy and political stability (Jones, 2011). Some researchers have expressed their concerns about people who were born after unification: they "may be misled into preferring the societal model represented by the former GDR over the contemporary realities of the Federal Republic" (Clarke & Wölfel, 2011). However, people who are left with a positive feeling towards the GDR critique these concerns as political propaganda directed against the Left or accuse them of overemphasizing brutality in the GDR (Jones, 2011). Because of the different narratives that stimulate the interaction between communicative and collective memory, I focus on bringing to light how these two phases of remembering interact with each other.

The two phases of remembering are especially visible at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen. This is a former prison of the Stasi, where political opponents of the GDR were imprisoned. The site now functions as a memorial to commemorate the former prisoners and as a museum, where visitors, often young German students, are informed about the horrors that took place at the prison. The memorial museum is located at the very place where prisoners used to experience physical and psychological torture, which therefore, make stories easier to grasp and believe. Specifically important to this site of remembrance are the former prisoners, since they actively exhibit their personal stories of Stasi detention during their tours through the former prison. The former prisoners create an authentic impression and engage visitors emotionally, concealing the clear political agenda of the memorial (Jones, 2011). This kind of site is therefore the most important actor in the field of memory building (Ludwig, 2011). It also plays a role in educating and stimulating social change and is integrated into cultural education. It has acquired the function of a cultural leader (Earle, 2013), which enables them to create a way of remembering in a society. However, due to the debate about the role of eyewitnesses and their relationship to history (Stein, 2016) and the

controversial ideas about what narrative to present, this memorial has been the center of controversies.

Museums present their own cultural memory, or differently said, their own master narrative. The master narrative is an outcome of how museums handled the past or conflicting stories. Mary Beth Stein (2016) defines master narratives as being "stories that nations, societies, and institutions tell about themselves to explain how things came to be and to legitimate the power relations in which such discourses operate", or simply said, the dominant story line. Because the individual stories are of great importance to the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen, and the ability of their personal memories to interact with the master narrative, they have the power to challenge or accept the master narrative of the museum (Hochman & Spector-Mersel, 2020; McLean & Syed, 2015). However, the problem is that little research has been done on how personal narratives accept master narratives, challenge them or even change them (Hochman & Spector-Mersel, 2020). Therefore, I contribute to fill this gap in the literature by focusing on how the personal narratives interact with the master narrative at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen.

It is important to gain a better understanding about master narratives since they are an extremely powerful socio-political-psychological tool to portray a certain reality. They are created to explain and to legitimize (Stein, 2016) and therefore serve as a motivational force to engage in acts of mutual destruction (Hammack, 2011). Bar-Tal, Oren and Nets-Zehngut (2014) further define master narratives as tools to create an identity, an ingroup and outgroup and to justify actions. Master narratives are therefore able to contribute to maintaining a negative perception of another group or event. In the opposite manner, they have the power to change a certain negative perspective to a more positive one. For example, *Das Leben der Anderen*, a movie about a writer who is under surveillance by a Stasi captain, portrays a loyal Stasi officer who suddenly starts to feel for and protect the writer. This movie is often viewed as being an authentic portrait of the reality in the GDR (Bathrick, 2011). However, critics argue that this movie downplays the evil acts of the Stasi, turning the officer into a hero and later into a victim of the collapse of the GDR. Regardless of the critiques from historians, the movie was globally well received and "significant numbers of political, historical, cinematic, and journalistic authorities, and even Stasi victims", labelled it as well represented (Bathrick, 2011). In this way, the master narrative is able to contribute to a more positive image of a Stasi officer.

In addition to master narratives being a socio-political-psychological tool, it serves as a foundation for socializing new generations and is defining the way in which history is remembered (Bar-Tal, et al, 2014). At sites such as the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen, visitors take on the narrative as an emotional memory, without experiencing it. This memory has the ability to shape one's subjectivity and politics (Chaitin & Steinberg, 2014). Especially concerning traumatic events, transgenerational transmission is common and makes the individual trauma turn into collective trauma, meaning it lives and is remembered beyond the lives of people who experienced the events first hand. However, these transgenerational trauma survivors that never witnessed the events themselves, may "remember" it differently and the events can change shape from generation to generation (Hirschberger, 2018; Chaitin & Steinberg, 2014; Volkan, 2001). The traumatic events of Stasi detention, now in a phase of both communicative and cultural memory, are at the beginning phase of a process of transmission to new generations. Therefore, at this moment it is important to gain a better understanding of how individual stories interact with this powerful socio-political-psychological tool, the master narrative of the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen.

In addition, according to Dr. Elke Stadelmann-Wenz, head of the research department at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen, the differences in narratives may clash and cause difficulties and debates concerning the permanent exhibition or the master narrative. Research should be done on how these narratives interact to gain more insight into these clashes and difficulties of the personal narratives and the master narrative. This elucidates how these personal narratives can change and form the master narrative of the memorial museum. Research has been conducted on the "traditionalization of memory in the patterning of historical accounts and personal stories told on tours of the memorial museum" (Stein, 2016). However, the interaction between what the former prisoners tell on their tours and the presented master narrative of the memorial museum has not yet been researched. In order to do so, the question leading this research is: *How do individual stories of former prisoners at Hohenschönhausen interact with the presented master narrative of the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen?*

To answer the main research questions, sub-questions are formulated below.

1. How is the master narrative presented at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen?

2. What are the reoccuring themes recognized in the presented master narrative at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen?

3. How are the personal narratives of the former prisoners presented at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen in guided tours?

4. What are the reoccuring themes recognized in the personal narratives during the tours at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen?

5. How are the master narrative and the personal narratives at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen in line with each other?

6. How do former prisoners navigate within the master narratives at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen: to what extent do individuals accept or challenge them?

With this research, I aim to create understanding of how the personal stories of the former prisoners who give tours at the memorial museum interact with the master narrative of the memorial museum. The sub-questions provide information about both the personal and the master narrative and approach the analysis of the navigation through these narratives. In order to answer the questions, qualitative multi-methodological research was conducted to determine the differences or even clashes between personal stories and the master narrative and what meaning can be derived from this concerning the interaction between the two.

1.1 Relevance

This research is relevant on both a scientific and societal level. Firstly, much has been written on the role of eyewitnesses in remembering. This thesis contributes to the scientific knowledge on the role of eyewitnesses and what is generally remembered by a society. More specifically, it will fill in the gap in the literature about how former prisoners interact with the master narrative. Secondly, because narratives of former prisoners and the master narrative may differ, there could be a clash of competing stories. This research provides scientific knowledge about these possible differences. Thirdly, it contributes to the existing knowledge of the social construction of narratives. It provides an understanding, based on this case study, of the role of personal stories within the social construction of narratives. With a focus on Bar-Tal et al.'s (2014) framework on construction of narratives, which is explained further in the theoretical framework, this research contributes to the knowledge on the applicability of their analysis to this new post-conflict case study. Finally, this research elucidates how

educational systems, such as this memorial museum, can change and form narratives. This contributes to the existing knowledge about the role of museums in education.

From a societal perspective, this research provides insight into the differences or even clashes between personal stories and the master narrative at the Gedenkstätte Hohenschönhausen. Firstly, with this contribution, the memorial museum can adjust its policies to narrow these discrepancies and create an inclusive narrative. This could respond to the circulation of different narratives in society and thereby smoothen the transmission to new generations. Secondly, it creates understanding about whether the critiques on memory representation at this site can be justified or whether they can be scientifically counterargued. Thirdly, from a broader perspective, it contributes to elucidating the debate of former prisoners in remembering by giving insight into this social-political debate of how these former prisoners interact with the general narrative of the GDR.

1.2 Overview and structure

In the following chapters, the main research question and the sub-questions are answered. In chapter 2, a general description of past and present of the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen and the historical context it operated in is given to understand certain aspects of the memorial museum that are of importance for understanding the results. In chapter 3, a critical discussion of the main theories and models that are serving as the framework for this research is provided. In chapter 4, the methodologies to answer the questions and the motivation for these specific approaches are explained.

After having explained the approaches to this research, chapter 5 provides the results from the different analyses. By doing so, this chapter answers the first and second sub-question: *How is the master narrative presented at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen?* and *What are the reoccuring themes recognized in the presented master narrative at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen?*. The second part of this chapter answers the two sub-questions regarding the analyses of the personal narratives: *How are the personal narratives of the former prisoners presented at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen in guided tours?* and *What are the reoccuring themes recognized in the personal narratives during the tours at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen?*. Within this section of chapter 5, the comparison is made between the master narrative and the personal narratives, which answers the sub-question: *How are the master narrative and the personal narratives at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen in line with each other?*.

In the last section of chapter 5, the extent to which former prisoners accept and challenge the master narrative is explained by answering sub-question 6: *How do former prisoners navigate within the master narratives at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen: to what extent do individuals accept or challenge them?*. The results of these sub-questions lead to the answer of the research question: *How do individual stories of former prisoners at Hohenschönhausen interact with the presented master narrative of the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen?*. This is presented in chapter 6, where the discussion and the implications of the answers are provided. Here, personal reflection on the research, together with the limitations and recommendations for further research are outlined. Finally, in chapter 7, the final conclusions and the contribution of this research, on both a scientific and societal level, are provided.

Chapter 2: Past and present

In order to understand certain aspects of this research, it is needed to give a brief overview history of the prison and its context. In this chapter, I provide background of the division in Germany, which is of importance regarding the former prison. Concerning the site of the memorial museum, the past and present is explained.

After the Second World War, Germany was divided into four occupation zones. France, the USA and England eventually formed the West and the Soviets controlled the East. The capital Berlin, which was situated in the Soviet zone, was also divided into the West and East and divided over the four forces. The Soviet zone was transformed into a communist state by Stalin. The differences between the United States and the Soviet Union and their allies caused a period of tension, which defines the Cold War. Germany seemed to be the battlefield, which resulted into the establishment of two different states in Germany. First, the Western zone turned into the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949. Second, in the same year, was the GDR established under the control of the Soviets. In contrast to the West, people were dissatisfied with the GDR and tried to leave the country. Numbers were rising until the point where 50.000 people left the GDR per month in 1953. To gain more control over the population, the Stasi was established in 1950, and due to protests, they became more strict after 1953. The growing amount of people leaving the GDR resulted in the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 (Rullens & Onvlee, n.d.a).

After the Wall was built, the relationship between East and West seemed to improve. However, within the GDR, tensions seemed to grow. The population was dissatisfied with the lack of political freedom and with the poor economic circumstances compared to their Western neighbors. To control the dissatisfied people, the Stasi was a powerful source and maintained a sovereign position under the leadership of Erich Honecker from 1971 (Rullens & Onvlee, n.d.b). To illustrate the extent of power the Stasi enjoyed, a single Stasi-agent overlooked about 60 people in the GDR, but taking the "part-time-informants" into account, the number changes to one Stasi-agent per 6,5 people (Koehler, 2008; Funder, 2011). With mass arrests of political opponents, repression and fear, they were able to maintain control over the population (Koehler, 2008; Fulbrook, 2011).

The prison in Berlin-Hohenschönhausen was one of the Stasi's 17 remand prisons (*Untersuchungsgefängnis*) situated in a restricted military area. It was the central remand prison where political opponents were sent to and held during the investigation process of the

Stasi. During the National Socialist regime, this site housed a large canteen supplying soup for the National Socialists. In 1945, the Soviets took over this canteen and created a prison camp here, which was called "Special Camp No.3". Here, the soviets imprisoned "spies, saboteurs, terrorists, Nazi party activists, members of the police and secret service, government officials, and other 'hostile elements'" (Stiftung-hsh, n.d.). In 1946, the Soviet Secret Police forced the prisoners to convert the camp into a prison, to be utilized by the Secret Police solely. In the cellar of the canteen, an underground cell construction was built. The prisoners who have stayed in this cellar gave it the name "U-boat" because of the structure, the darkness and the dampness of this prison. After the establishment of the Stasi in 1950, the Soviets handed over this remand prison to the Stasi. After this, they let prisoners of a labor camp built a new part of the prison, which was no longer underground. Because of having the new building, they closed the U-boat in 1960. In the new prison, the prisoners were both incarcerated and interrogated until conviction. This prison functioned as the Stasi's main remand prison until 1989.

After the fall of the Wall, the prison was closed and converted into a memorial site. Andreas Engwert, who conceptualized parts of the exhibition, told me that he and colleagues conducted four years of research in the *Bundesbeauftragte für die Stasi-Unterlagen (BStU)* to create an exhibition at the memorial site. In 2013, the permanent exhibition was established at the memorial site, adding the characteristics of a museum to the memorial.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework: Narrative interaction in a changing landscape of remembering

In light of the research question *How do individual stories of former prisoners at Hohenschönhausen interact with the presented master narrative of the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen?* a theoretical framework was created to understand and investigate sensitive concepts such as narratives and memory concerning trauma. In the following, three theoretical themes with a close connection to each other are discussed. Firstly, existing literature concerning personal narratives interacting with and navigating through narratives is explained. Secondly, with a focus on Bar-Tal et al. (2014) who created a general framework for conflict-supportive narratives, literature concerning the development of narratives and master narratives is discussed. With this literature, the framework created for understanding and investigating the interaction is provided. Thirdly, the changing characteristic of memory (Simine & Radstone, 2013) and the view of memory as a discourse that has to be understood for this research, is presented. Lastly, trauma theory, a theory under debate because of its criticized ideas about memory is illustrated in order to clarify the framework and perspective on trauma on which this thesis is built.

3.1 Navigating through narratives: interaction explained

Before discussing the navigation through narratives, it is needed to explain the different levels of narratives. Narratives are spoken or written stories that describe events from beginning to end, providing a chronological and causal understanding of the world and a group's experience (Bar-Tal, et al., 2014; Hammack & Pilecki, 2012). These stories can both be analyzed on an individual or a collective level. The individual narrative concerns a cognitive process of constructing life stories by an individual in order for their lives to become meaningful and coherent (McAdams, 2006; Hammack & Pilecki, 2012). On the collective level, it can be defined as a social construction, where a society experienced different historical events and relate them to each other in order to create a logical sequence. What bridges these two levels of narratives is the individual engagement with or deviation from stories of collective identity, or to cite Bar-Tal, et al. (2014): "How do individuals navigate among different collective narratives and the extent to which individuals accept collective narratives or challenge them". A function of narratives on both levels is that of meaning making. Individuals create meaning by internalizing collective narratives (Hammack, 2008). This suggests that individuals engage with (parts of) collective narratives because of the

meaning they give to it. This individual navigation through the different narratives and individual choices about what to accept or challenge, shapes the master narrative within a culture (Hammack, 2011).

Understanding this individual navigation through the different narratives is of importance for this research. That is because autobiographical history of the GDR always positions itself in relation to the master narrative and is therefore offering its own evaluation of the history (Lahusen, 2011). Hereby, people are either internalizing or rejecting a narrative (Hammack, 2011). Internalizing a master narrative is a top-down process, meaning that a master narrative (top) forms a personal narrative (down) when a person internalizes parts of it (McLean and Syed, 2015). On the other hand, the bottom-up process is about personal narratives challenging and even rejecting a master narrative (Hochman & Spector-Mersel, 2020).

McLean and Syed (2015) created a model explaining that there are master narratives, alternative narratives, and a personal narrative that is "largely informed by the degree to which she or he aligns with the master narrative or alternative narrative(s)". They explained that master narratives can be seen in personal narratives when stories are built around a "particular life theme, style, or event can suggest the presence of a master narrative" (McLean & Syed, 2015). McLean and Syed (2015) introduce five principles as a foundation for identifying internalization of a master narrative within a personal narrative. Internalizing a master narrative is a top-down process that shows the ability of a master narrative to influence or form a personal narrative (McLean & Syed, 2015). With regard to the question of this research on how personal stories interact with the master narrative, the top-down process is out of the scope. Because of the aim to look at personal acceptance of the master narrative, and not to investigate how a personal narratives is influenced or formed by a master narrative, the principles are unfit to be utilized to investigate the acceptance of a master narrative. Nevertheless, the model provides three possible types of master narrative to be recognized in personal narratives that are relevant to this research. First, *biographical,* concerned with cultural life scripts, explaining how life should unfold. Second, s*tructural,* focused on how a story is constructed and should be told rather than on the content of a story. Lastly, e*pisodic,* a master narrative that deals with specific episodic stories of events in the past (McLean & Syed, 2015).

In contrast to the top-down process, the bottom-up process is of importance. This concerns personal narratives challenging and even changing a master narrative (Hochman &

Spector-Mersel, 2020). The master narrative derives its changing character from the fact that they are not necessarily rejected as a whole, but rather rejected on certain aspects that people are able to counteract with personal stories. These personal narratives that are capable of transforming a master narrative are called counter-narratives (Hochman & Spector-Mersel, 2020). Just as the autobiographical stories of the GDR, they always position themselves toward the master narrative. Therefore, these personal stories about the GDR or Stasi imprisonment can potentially function as counter-narratives.

Hochman and Spector-Mersel (2020) showed that narrative resistance can take different forms and introduced three strategies people use resisting narrative. Although the first two strategies are equal in the way that they both contest the master narrative, they differ in their directness. One is explicitly against the master narrative, the other one implicitly. In the explicit strategy the stories lack emotional expressions, include limited personal details and are told in *we* form. They are however explicit in rejecting the master narrative. For example, it was not uncommon at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen that Stasi officers would attend tours and disrupt them by arguing that what the tour guides are saying was not true (Stein, 2016). The implicit strategy is the opposite, using the personal story to reject a master narrative. The tone of the stories is emotional, and the stories are told in *I*-form story. For example, all the emotionally filled autobiographies that indicate that the person is not in favor of the GDR, are using the implicit rejecting strategy to reject the GDR. The third strategy is when a person is neutralizing the impact of the master narrative and hereby dominating it with its personal narrative and making it irrelevance. For example, elites of East Germany who wrote autobiographies did not point at the end of the GDR as a central event in their lives (Zahlmann, 2011), and are thereby neutralizing this event. These different strategies are thus mainly focused on the way a personal narrative is "used" in order to reject certain aspects of a master narrative (Hochman & Spector-Mersel, 2020).

On the level of collective narratives, the navigation through it is the basis for constructing a shared identity (Bar-Tal, et al., 2014). Identity can be defined as "ideology cognized through the individual engagement with discourse, made manifest in a personal narrative constructed and reconstructed across the life course and scripted in and through social interaction and social practice" (Hammack, 2008). This definition is in line with the idea that both individual engagement with the collective narrative and the construction of the personal narrative in a society are forming an identity. The role of identity and identifying with historical stories adds a strong emotional aspect to narratives, being that of belonging

and otherness (Bar-Tal, et al., 2014). This belonging an otherness creates in and outgroups: one feels a sense of belonging to the ingroup and one deviates oneself from the outgroup.

Different groups have different narratives as building blocks for their social identity. These narratives are constructed against the other and are competing for dominance (Bar-Tal, et al., 2014). Since I focus on the engagement of former prisoners with the collective narrative, the former prisoners should be regarded as the ingroup. Their narratives would be constructed against the outgroup, which in this case is the Stasi. Actions that are taken in order for a narrative to compete against another are legitimized by the engagement with a certain narrative. This supports the definition Stein (2016) gives on master narratives: "stories that nations, societies, and institutions tell about themselves to explain how things came to be and to legitimate the power relations in which such discourses operate". Because of master narratives being integrated in the belief system and appropriated in personal narratives (Bar-Tal, et al., 2014; Hammack, 2011), it explains the current situation and legitimizes power relations (Stein, 2016). For example, when the GDR founding myth of anti-fascism, stating that the GDR is founded to protect against fascism which is located in the capitalist world, is integrated in a personal narrative of Stasi employees, the power that they have and the way their state operates is legitimized by this anti-fascism (Peitsch, 2011).

The definition of master narratives by Stein (2016) is however not the only definition that exists in literature. Different definitions zoom into different aspects of master narratives. For example, Hammack (2011) integrates the different levels of narratives in his definition: "A master narrative represents a collective storyline which group members perceive as compulsory — a story which is so central to the group's existence and 'essence' that it commands identification and integration into the personal narrative". Another definition by Bar-Tal, et al. (2014) is more simple: "master narratives that are dominant scripts which can be identified in cultural products and discourse (e.g. media, literature, textbooks)". In light of this research, master narratives will be understood according to the definition of Stein (2016) since it is covering both the function of the master narrative and the means by which it is presented. It specifically notes institutions as being a concept that provides a master narrative, which corresponds the focus on the museum memorial in this research. However, the other definitions should not be left out. Hammack (2011) explains the levels of narratives within his definition, which is applicable to this research on personal narratives and master narratives. Additionally, both Hammack (2011) and Bar-Tal, et al. (2014) describe how embedded

narratives are in culture, ranging from textbooks to group identification, and are thereby explaining the complexity of this topic. Therefore, these definitions are considered too.

3.2 Narrative construction

A powerful method to construct narratives is language. Narratives are a central way for people in which they use language to mediate their experiences in the world. They are stories, spoken or written, and therefore language is the means to educate about certain events and to forward narratives to following generations. Bar-Tal, et al. (2014) explain the role of language in narrative construction. They explain that language can be used as "a framing tool to trigger emotions, memory, cognition, and motivation related to past events". Therefore language carries the power to frame events, groups or history towards the ideas of the one who is narrating. The article outlines five other methods of narrative construction: reliance on supportive sources, marginalization of contradictory information, magnification of supportive themes, fabrication of supportive contents and omission of contradictory contents (Bar-Tal, et al., 2014). The first one describes how there are documents supporting the master narrative. The second one explains the limitation of information that reflects negatively on the master narrative. Magnification of supportive themes explains the exaggeration of certain themes within a master narrative. The fourth explains the use of content that is not based on evidence, so it could be made up information. The last method concerns the neglection of other narratives that may contradict the master narrative.

Additionally to the methods of narrative construction, Bar-Tal, et al. (2014) created a framework explaining different themes that conflict-supportive narratives focus on. They often focus on one or more of the following themes; *justification* of actions, *delineating the danger* of the conflict towards the ingroup, *delegitimization* of the outgroup, *glorification* of the ingroup, *victimhood* of the ingroup, *patriotism,* importance of *unity* and the desire to live in *peace* (Bar-Tal, et al., 2014). The methods and themes that Bar-Tal, et al. (2014) describe are based on conflict-supportive narratives. These narratives satisfy the need for explanation and justification of specific events that happen during a conflict. It also contributes to the beginning, the duration and the extent of escalation of a conflict. However, it is disputable which events can be described as a conflict. With regard to the case-study of the Stasi, it is needed to explain the definition of a conflict.

Labeling and framing conflict is difficult. Many questions and concepts arise when talking about conflict. War, civil-war, inter-state conflict or violent conflict, they are all labels

that are often chosen based on the specific purpose of analyses. Labeling a conflict has different and changing criteria. For example, the amount of battle-related deaths can be used as a threshold. These thresholds may differ depending on the organization that sets them. The organization "Correlates of War" defines a violent conflict as one when there are over 1000 battle deaths, in contrast to the International Peace Research Institute, which sets the threshold at 25 (Cramer, 2006). This classification system has great impact on how conflicting events are viewed and treated. It is important to address that discussing the difficulties of labeling and framing a conflict is not a goal here. However, I want to explain the perspective towards conflict definitions, concerning the former Stasi prison, in order to understand the applicability of Bar-Tal, et al.'s (2014) framework.

Even though the events at the former Stasi prison during the time that the Stasi was in charge may not reach the levels of a violent conflict, I argue that it should be regarded as such. Firstly, Oberschall (1978) explains social conflict as groups, organizations, communities or crowds as being the players within a conflict. Parties are trying to reach their goals and are likely to inflict damage, harm or injury by doing this, but it is not a requirement for this definition. Social conflict concerns broad social phenomena ranging from racial conflicts to rebellions or demonstrations. Regarding the former prison in Hohenschönhausen, the phenomena of social conflict is applicable as there are two social groups, that being communist and rebellions or police officers and prisoners, that are in conflict with each other. Secondly, the main technique that the Stasi used to persecute prisoners was by psychological torture. This kind of torture focusses on "creating an atmosphere of fear, disorientation, humiliation, physical exhaustion, and manipulation" (Weisleder & Rublee, 2018). This atmosphere can be created by for example forced nudity, being kept in isolation, being sleep deprived, being starved or being in an environment where conditions such as light and darkness are manipulated. It does not leave visible scars but these invisible scars can be bigger than the scars of physical pain (Callaghan, 1996) and therefore, it is determined as violence. Altogether, I argue that the topic of this thesis should be regarded as a conflict. Precisely because every conflict is unique, there are many different perspectives and definitions to approach it with. Therefore, by approaching the Stasi prison as a conflict area, the applicability of Bar-Tal, et al.'s (2014) framework on narrative construction is justified. However, it has to be noted that this conflict ended when the GDR collapsed in 1989 and that it is being looked at as a post-conflict.

The framework of (Bar-Tal, et al., 2014) on narrative construction and the model of Hochman and Spector-Mersel (2020) on master narrative rejection are combined together in a framework that is used in this research. With the framework on narrative construction, both the personal and master narratives are discussed. Concerning the navigation of personal narrative through master narratives, the model on narrative rejection is used. The rationale for using this framework is clarified in the following diagram. The numbers in de diagram show the sub-questions that are approached. Recognizing the resemblance between the presented master narrative and the personal narrative leads to the understanding of acceptance. Recognizing differences leads to the utilization of the model of Hochman and Spector-Mersel (2020) to discover the possible challenges of the master narrative.
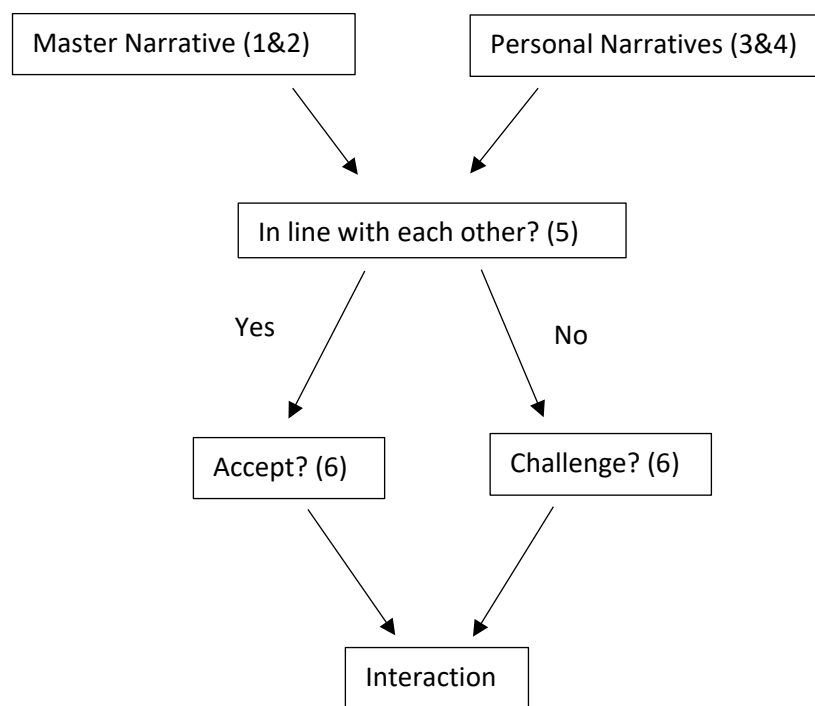
3.3 The changing characteristic of memory

When investigating research on master narratives, the studies of collective memory is the most relevant (Bar-Tal, et al., 2014). Sabrow (2009) introduces three types of collective memory of the GDR that circulate in German society. Firstly, the *Diktaturgedächtnis*, is presented as closely connected to memorials and focusses on the repressive political structure of the GDR and regards it as a dictatorship. The second one is the *Arrangementsgedächtnis*, which sees the GDR as repressive but also shows the regimes control was not unlimited. Many East-Germans thought this type of narrative presented their experiences in the GDR

most accurate (Bouma, 2020). Lastly, *Fortschrittsgedächtnis* regards the GDR as a legitimized state that provides an alternative against capitalism. This narrative builds on anti-fascism and is only present in people who still identify with the GDR nowadays (Sabrow, 2009; Bouma, 2020). These different kind of collective memories show how they form different master narratives.

In order to understand how these different types of memory can circulate in a society, the many different forms of memory such as communicative, cultural or collective memory, often used interchangeably, have to be clarified. Individual and collective memory are broadly the two forms of memory. Individual memory is based on personal experiences where our own identity and interpersonal relations are made out of. Firstly, this memory is episodic, a memory system that processes autobiographical experiences, which is relevant for this thesis. This kind of memory is perspectival, meaning it is bound to the perspective of a certain person and therefore, it is interchangeable. Secondly, it is fragmentary: a person only recalls pieces, without beginning or end, resulting in not having sequence, cohesion or structure. However, when creating a larger narrative out of these fragments, sequence and meaning follows. Thirdly, it is connected to a wider network of memories, and especially to memories of others. This means memory can adapt within a social network and therefore creates social bonds. Lastly, they are impermanent, meaning that they can get lost, fade, change, or do not make it until the point of conscious retrieval. However, the best preserved are the memories that are narrated.

Both Aleida and Jan Assmann (2004; 2006; 2011) critiqued the term "collective memory" and introduced the division of it into multiple forms of memory. According to them, it exists out of social, political and cultural memory. Social memory is closely linked to individual memory and is present in social exchange with significant others. This memory lives in oral communication and is intergenerationally transmitted (Assmann, 2006). From individual and social memory, we move to political and cultural memory. In contrast to the first two memories, the latter are top-down memories, founded on historical material presented by institutions such as museums and monuments and is also part of educational system. Hereby, they are creating a long-term, trans-generational memory. Political memory is stabilized and homogeneous and symbols that this memory is founded on are very clear and often emotionally charged. Assmann (1995; 2011) explains cultural memory as having distance to the everyday life and resting on fixed points in history. It is however, in contrast to political memory, more in favor of involving the individual. It asks for reassessment and

reinterpretation of the individual and it asks for individual participation such as writing, reading and criticizing (Assmann, 2006).

Concerning the collective memory of the memorial museum, all of these specific forms of memory are present. Therefore, it has to be understood as presenting all three kind of memory: social, political and cultural. Firstly, the collective memory is influenced by the oral communication, which is presented by the former prisoners that are narrating their personal experiences. Secondly, it is stabilized and the topics that it presents are emotionally charged. This can be recognized in the memorial being a museum at the same time, where historical material is presented. Lastly, cultural memory involves the individual as well, which can be recognized by the fact victims of the GDR had the most impact on the collective memory, especially those who were imprisoned by the regime (Wüstenberg, 2011). They often present their experiences in memorial museums (Assmann, 2011; Clarke & Wölfel, 2011), which is visible due to the individual participation of former prisoners as tour guides at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen.

Another aspect that has to be explained considering this research, is that memory has to be understood as a changing subject. Simine and Radstone (2013) explain the connection between changing memories and present problems one is facing.

Memory, in whichever form, is not a window onto the past; rather our vision of the past is constantly adapted to our needs in the present. Memory discourses mediate between our experience or knowledge of the past and the problems we face negotiating the present, and as such they are at the same time unreliable and yet significant. (Simine & Radstone, 2013)

The need for something nowadays may adapt memories or may have adapted memories before. Additionally, determination of where one kind of memory ends and one begins is not always clear (Assmann, 2006). This is visible at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen, where communicative and cultural memory are living next to each other and these phases of memory are interacting. Because of the involvement of individuals, collective memory receives a flexible and changing character and is constantly being challenged (Assmann, 2006). Because of understanding that personal narratives have the possibility to interact with master narratives, collective memory has to be understood as a changing subject.

3.4 Trauma theory

Ever since the 1990's, trauma theory is not solely a theory within the studies of psychology, but expanded to cultural, historical and geographical studies (Kopf, 2002). Cathy Caruth was one of the introducers of literary trauma. She based a lot of her work on the psychological concept of traumatic amnesia, saying that the mind is unable to process intensely painful experiences. Hereby, the person who experienced the events is not able to remember or recall it into consciousness and therefore it is "unsayable" and unrepresentable (Pederson, 2014; Kopf, 2010; Balaev, 2014). She argues that historical and objective language is not able to accurately describe traumatic experiences. Historical narratives about traumatic experiences may give the false impression that true knowledge is being given. Many critiqued the concept of trauma as being unspeakable and unreliable. The inability to recall an event, traumatic amnesia, is counterargued (Pederson, 2014). Even though the early trauma theory was critiqued heavily, it introduced the thought of trauma influencing language and the importance of language in education of history (Balaev, 2014). Next to the need for language in order for traumatic memory to be translated into a narrative, there has to be an addressable other, a listener. In this way, active listening is as important as narrating (Kopf, 2010). Former prisoners of the Stasi give tours at the memorial museum and talk about their personal experiences of being imprisoned. Here, visitors are the active listeners and are therefore stimulating the narration of traumatic memory. However, when narrating a traumatic experience, people think about how to tell and represent the story, which shifts the focus on explaining reality, to narrative representation. In light of this research, trauma has to be understood as recallable and speakable, nonetheless, the difficulties that come with narrating trauma because of language and memory matters (Kopf, 2010), are important to consider.

When people in society experience a traumatic event together, it creates a collective trauma. Hirschberger (2018) explains this as "cataclysmic events that shatter the basic fabric of society". The meaning that people derive from these traumas is an ongoing group process within a society. What do these events mean for the identity of a group, how they perceive the world and how they position themselves regarding other groups (Hirschberger, 2018)? This meaning making of traumatic events is responsible for the debate about memory that concerns itself with how personal narratives of social trauma are tied to collective memory (Chaitin & Steinberg, 2014). Hirschberger (2018) describes the difference between these personal narratives of trauma and the collective memory of it: "Collective memory of trauma is different from individual memory because collective memory persists beyond the lives of the

direct survivors of the events, and is remembered by group members that may be far removed from the traumatic events in time and space". This transgenerational transmission, as explained in the introduction, is what differences the two forms of memory. Because of this, personal and collective memory concerning trauma is closely connected and easy to confuse.

In order to make meaning of traumatic events, to heal or to create a livable consciousness, traumatic memory has to transform into narrative memory. It has to be narrated with language and demands a form of communication. Therefore, narrative, memory and trauma are closely connected to each other, which is visible at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen. Former prisoners are using language to tell their personal stories to visitors of the memorial museum and hereby, traumatic memory translates into narrative memory and the production of trauma narratives is transferred to a collective level (Kopf, 2010). Meaning that when a traumatic memory is told, a trauma narrative is produced and because of the listeners, it transfers to a collective level. With production of trauma narrative concerning a conflict, the narrator positions itself regarding the master narrative about the conflict (Lahusen, 2011) and is transferring it to the listeners. In this way, it seems easy for a personal memory to transfer to a collective level and so, to confuse them. However, a distinguish between personal and collective memory concerning trauma has to be made.

A distinction between personal and collective memory within narratives of trauma is recognized by looking at personal and vicarious experiences (Burdelski, 2016). A vicarious experience is when a person can sympathetically engage with someone else's experience, and deliver a story of someone else. Burdelski (2016) divided personal experiences in *we*-focused and *I*-focused stories and vicarious experiences into historical figures and family members/friends. *We*-focused stories are related to being part of a community, social group, or family and is referring to an event that the collective experienced and hereby, the person is positioning him or herself as a member of a group and creates a shared identity (Bar-Tal, et al., 2014; Burdelski, 2016). In *I*-focused stories, people refer to themselves as individual agents who are part of a wider community, providing a unique perspective on a situation. These categories can be used as a heuristic for analyzing stories in the guided tours when looking into the positioning of a person regarding the master narrative (Deppermann, 2013). This positioning by focusing on pronoun perspective in a story, is in line with the theory of Hochman and Spector-Mersel (2020). They argue that when rejecting a master narrative, *we*-focused stories are used for explicitly rejecting a master narrative, whereas *I*-focused stories are used when implicitly rejecting a master narrative. The vicarious experiences does not hold

a collective reference term and shows clearly that the person is able to distinguish the other persons story from their own. Even though these stories show empathy and understanding, it does not create this collective feeling of being a group that experienced a trauma together. Within this research, these reference terms are important to take into account since it shows the creation of a collective or rather an individual perspective on the conflict, which indicates the engagement with a group who experienced the similar thing and provides insight in the navigation through the master narratives (Burdelski, 2016; Deppermann, 2013; Lahusen, 2011; Hochman & Spector-Mersel, 2020).

Chapter 4: Methodology

In the following chapter, the methodological approach that I applied in this research is provided. First, the methodology and different methods used are explained and justified. After that, I provide the different ways of data collection by answering how, what, when and why the data was gathered. Lastly, the analyses conducted on the gathered data in section 4.3.

4.1 Methodology and method choices

In light of this thesis, I conducted research at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen. I aimed to understand the interaction between personal narratives of former prisoners and the master narrative of the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen. In order to do so, qualitative multi-methodological research was performed. Qualitative methods were used because of their ability to capture how human beings understand, experience, interpret and construct the social world (Gibson & Brown, 2009). Additionally, qualitative methods are based on the lived experiences of people (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). This matches the focus of this research on the narrations of lived experiences and the social construction of master narratives. Since the goal was to look at interaction, two different variables were analyzed: the personal narratives and the master narrative. Hereto, different methods to research and analyze the different variables were selected. Below I have described the methodology and methods used to analyze the master narrative and personal narratives, justified by discussing their limitations.

Master narrative

To investigate the master narrative, the permanent exhibition of the memorial museum was analyzed. First, I examined the route one takes when visiting the exhibition to understand how the master narrative is structured. Second, content of the texts presented at the exhibition was analyzed by coding for reoccurring themes. Third, pictures and objects presented at the exhibition were analyzed, since they could refer to a master narrative (Dartt-Newton, 2009). Because of the permanent institutionalized nature of the exhibition within the memorial, the exhibition was suitable for identifying and analyzing the master narrative.

Personal narratives

In order to research the personal narratives, an ethnographical methodology was used. A partially participant observational method, a valuable method in ethnography (Ciesielska, Boström & Öhlander, 2018) was approached by observing former prisoners during guided

tours. This means that it was known that I was researching them, but I did not take part in the activity that was studied. This ethnographical methodology provides insights in behavior and interactions within a context, which is in line with the goal to investigate interaction. Understanding trauma as being recallable and "speakable" (Pederson, 2014; 2018; Kopf, 2010; Balaev, 2014), stimulates the focus on speech for personal narratives on trauma. However, speech in personal narratives can be investigated according to different methods. For example, structured interviews could have been conducted to make sure that conflict-supportive narrative themes (Bar-Tal, et al., 2014) were discussed. Because the aim of the research is to understand how the presented narratives interact, interviews do not seem as an adequate method choice, since these personal narratives are not the presented ones at the memorial museum. Similarly, performing a survey to understand the personal stories and experiences of former prisoners does not provide information on how they narrate the personal experiences. Therefore, observational research was the most applicable method to focus on speech and understand the narration of personal experiences in the "real world".

A possible limitation with this observational approach is that researchers bring own assumptions to the process (Ciesielska, et al., 2018). Because observational research is less controlled and more interpretive as other approaches, my position as a researcher has to be explained. I myself was born and raised in the capitalistic democratic society that the memorial museum is originated in. Therefore, I could be prone to be submissive towards the master narrative and personal narratives, which underlines my background as a threat to objectivity. However, understanding this led me to utilize the framework of Bar-Tal, et al. (2014) concerning conflict-supportive narrative prior to data collection, to structure the observational methods and avoid personal bias. I created questions that lead to a better understanding of, and a more specific focus on the constructed themes in conflict-supportive narratives that Bar-Tal, et al. (2014) describe (see theoretical framework section of this thesis). It was however not a goal to demonstrate whether the memorial museum creates conflict-supportive narratives, but the framework is rather used as a lens to observe through.

Another limitation that comes with observational methodology is that external factors during the tours are out of my hands. For example, the number of visitors following the same tour can fluctuate from 6 to 20, which could influence the topics of the tour because of the possible questions that visitors ask and the abundance of interactions between visitors and the guide. It could also influence the time needed to go through all the topics, whereas with 20 people it could be slowed down compared to 6, which affects the number of topics that can be

discussed. Also, what kind of personal stories from their time of imprisonment that the former prisoners choose to talk about are unclear to me beforehand so I cannot prepare the discussed topics in detail.

Besides observational research having limitations, I also recognize the benefits of this method. Because of my role as partially participant I was no burden to the observed former prisoners (Ciesielska, et al., 2018) but I was able to gain information about their personal stories and behaviors. They knew I was doing research, however, I was in a normal tour with other visitors, which permits the assumption that they give the tours as they usually do. In addition, the way that former prisoners tell their stories in guided tours is not adjusted to certain research aims, since they do not know about the themes I code for. I therefore was able to observe the possible interaction with the master narrative in the field from an external point of view.

For the creation of questions that led to a better understanding of the themes of Bar-Tal et al. (2014), some themes were dealt with together. Firstly, the themes Justification and Threats of the conflict were put together since they are both regarding the conflict itself. Secondly, Glorification and Victimhood were looked at together since they are both regarding the perceived image of the in-group. Thirdly, Patriotism and Unity were dealt with together since there is a need for these subjects from within the in-group to stay a group (Bar-Tal et al., 2014). The themes Delegitimization and Desire of peace were not combined with other themes. In the following, the created questions are provided. These questions aided the coding process for themes.

Justification and Threats both focus on the conflict and the developments within the conflict. It is both regarding actions and goals from the ingroup and the outgroup. The Threats theme is regarding the impact of the actions on society or on the ingroup (Bar-Tal et al., 2014).

- To what extent are the goals of the ingroup justified?
- To what extent are actions justified by using a certain belief, religion or political conviction?
- To what extent are the goals of the outgroup perceived as unjust?
- To what extent are the actions of the outgroup perceived as unjust?
- To what extent are there perceived threats towards the existence of the ingroup, the values and the identity of the ingroup or the territory of the ingroup?

Delegitimization of the outgroup is about denying the humanity of the opponent and making them seem less important. In this way, it is also connected to the Glorification of the ingroup, since making your own group look better contributes to diminishing the outgroup (Bar-Tal et al., 2014; Leidner, Castano, Zaiser & Giner-Sorolla, 2010). However, the questions are more directed towards the outgroup.

- To what extent is the other group perceived as less then human (dehumanization)?
- To what extent is the other groups pain and emotion diminished (emotional minimization)?

Victimhood and Glorification both concern the perceived image of the ingroup. Therefore all question are regarding how they perceive certain concepts that were of importance within these themes (Schori-Eyal, Halperin & Bar-Tal, 2014; Leidner et al., 2010).

- To what extent was there perceived unjust and severe harm done to you?
- To what extent was there perceived wrongdoing done to you by others?
- To what extent were you unable to prevent this wrongdoing and harm?
- To what extent is there blaming of the other?
- To what extent is there trauma that is perceived as shared by everyone of the ingroup?
- To what extent is the ingroup perceived as the superior group?
- To what extent is there comparison between the ingroup and the outgroup?

Patriotism and Unity are about the sense of belonging, about the feeling of being one group and the readiness to protect this feeling (Bar-Tal et al., 2014).

- To what extent is there experienced readiness to make sacrifice for the ingroup?
- To what extent is there perceived disagreement within the group?
- To what extent is disagreement a point of attention and reason for disturbance within the group?

When looking at the Desire for peace, it is mainly about the impact of suffering and losses that create the need for peace (Bar-Tal et al., 2014). The need for peace could also be a goal of groups or leaders and therefore justify their actions. Their actions are perceived to be the means to get to peace.

- To what extent is there a perceived need to end this conflict?
- To what extent has the person experienced losses of friends and relatives?

- To what extent has the person experienced mental or physical problems during the conflict?
- How does the person view the end of the conflict?
- To what extent does the person perceive his or her actions as a contribution to ending this conflict?
- To what extent are the actions perceived as contributing to his or her view of ending the conflict?

4.2 Data collection

Master narrative

I conducted research concerning the master narrative at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen by a thematic analysis of the permanent exhibition. 94 pictures were taken from the route, texts, objects and images within the exhibition with a focus on the research question. In line with the personal narratives, the themes of Bar-Tal et al. (2014) were a focus lens while collecting the photos. Objects and images were only photographed when they were connected to statements given in the texts of the exhibition, since this could imply the supportive character of the object or image. Additional information concerning the permanent exhibition was gathered by consulting the catalogue for this exhibition (Knabe & Engwert, 2015). It has to be noted that when solely visiting the exhibition, one is not allowed to walk through the whole site. This can only be done with a tour guide. Therefore, data collection for the master narrative was focused on the building of the permanent exhibition only.

Personal narratives

Firstly, I collected data concerning the personal narratives by doing partially participant observational research at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen. Within this institution, the research department allowed me to conduct observational research. I observed eight different guided tours at the memorial museum distributed over four weeks in May and June 2022. All tour guides were former prisoners of the Hohenschönhausen and all tours were given in German. The tour guides that were observed were randomly sampled by the employees of the service desk of the memorial museum, who informed me when and with whom there was a spot free for me to attend a tour. Because of this random sampling, I also attended one special tour, where in addition to the normal tour, the prison hospital was visited. The only requirement was that the tour guide had to be a former prisoner. Before the tour, I

introduced myself to the former prisoner and asked permission to follow the tour in light of this research. This was however not formerly written down since it was already organized via the research department of the memorial museum. Because of the lack of a formal agreement, the former prisoners are referred to by Tour A., Tour B., etc., in order to protect their privacy. Within the text, they are simply referred to by A., B., etc. All participants were between the age of 59 and 78. Seven of them are male and one is female. Six of them were imprisoned in the 1980's, one of them in 1960's and one in the 1970's (see Appendix 1).

Finding out different overarching themes can be done with six to twelve participants (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). Because of the interest in recognizing the themes from the conflict-supportive narrative framework within these tours, this saturation number is suitable. The saturation number that Guest et al. (2006) provided was however focused on interviews, whereas the data in this research concerning the tours was obtained observationally. Individuals narrating their experiences were observed with a focus on the content of the narrative, therefore, some methodological features were comparable to an interview. There were however some differences and therefore, similar previous research has to be looked at. Few research on story telling in guided tours at museums have been done. Nevertheless, two researches, conducted within the last ten years, have used this kind of methodology and based their data on three or four tours (Burdelski, 2016; Papakostopoulos, Vaptisma & Nathanael, 2019). However, these tours were audio-recorded, in contrast to the tours in this research. Here, tours were recorded by field note-taking since it was not allowed to audio-record the former prisoners and the other visitors of the tour. In order to overcome the issue of missing information due to not being able to audio-record, I doubled the number to eight tours. Papakostopoulos et al. (2019) followed four tours that took up to 90 minutes, which is the same duration as the tours at Hohenschönhausen (Stiftung-hsh, n.d.). In addition, the tour guides can be considered as a fairly homogeneous group which also supports that the chosen number of tours followed (eight) is sufficient to reach saturation of the themes.

Because of the unavailability to audio-record tours, I followed the guidelines for taking notes as described by Ciesielska, et al. (2018). For example, notes should focus on the research topic to limit personal biases. The selection of the material depends on both the research problem and the views of the researcher on what may be important and interesting. Focusing on the research topic and deciding what was of importance, was done by structuring the observational methods based on Bar-Tal, et al.'s (2014) framework as previously explained. Another guideline of Ciesielska, et al. (2018) addresses how details should be

noted as well. Next to the framework to focus on, this guideline helped me to write down notes in a more general way.

With the themes and the corresponding questions kept in mind, I wrote short sentences as notes during the tours with a note-application on my phone and I rewrote my notes to complement the sentences on paper directly after following the tours. Also, I wrote down my interpretation of the tours with additional information. The tours of former prisoners were given in German. Even though German is not my mother tongue, I was able to fully understand the tour guides and interactions with visitors. Notes were taken in Dutch and interpretations were written down in Dutch. Eventually, quotations are then again translated into English. Because of the several translations the observations went through, within this thesis some words are referred to in German and explained in English when the German word captures the content the best. Also, because of the note-taking, quotations used in this thesis are never direct, but rather my own approximations making sure the meaning is not lost. Even though the themes were kept in mind while observing, the notes cover more general statements to allow for other themes to be detected. Since observing is multisensory experience that is being reduced to written record, it already leaves out certain features (Ciesielska, et al., 2018). Therefore, I also recorded reactions and surroundings where certain things were said. Additionally, I noted when someone used predominantly we or I as a pronoun and when someone was describing experiences from someone else. The boundaries between the types of stories are often blurred (Burdelski, 2016) and due to the fastness of the tours, I did not keep score of how often a pronoun was used, but rather the overall focus of the narrator on a specific type of story.

4.3 Analyses

Analyzing the master narrative and the personal narratives was done more similarly, therefore, they will be approached together in this subsection.

For analyzing both the permanent exhibition as the guided tours, a deductive thematic analysis (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017) was performed on the route, texts, images and objects of the permanent exhibition and the tours. This means I already had themes structured prior to data analyses based on the framework of Bar-Tal et al. (2014), as presented elsewhere in this chapter. The permanent exhibition was coded for the same created thematic questions that were used in data collection concerning the personal narrative. For each question, a code is created. In addition, for pictures taken from the objects and images was

decided whether or not they were supportive for the content and if so, which of the recognized themes they supported. This was done to discover if objects and images attribute to a certain narrative. Because of observational focus lens in data collection for both the master narrative and the personal narratives, the data was already "pre-coded". However, the pictures taken from the exhibition and the notes from the personal narratives were more generally collected. Therefore, in addition to using the framework as an observational lens, it was coded for the thematic questions corresponding to the themes of Bar-Tal et al. (2014) after data collection. Sometimes, quotations or personal stories were coded for more than one theme, however, these stories were divided into the most reoccurring themes. Also, personal narratives were deductively coded for the pronoun focus that Burdelski (2016) divided in personal experiences (*I*-focused and *we*-focused stories) or vicarious experiences (historical figures and family members/friends).

In addition to the deductive method, themes were adjusted to this post-conflict perspective and new themes developed when relevant. To recognize the themes, reoccurring codes were selected and further investigated, codes that were not occurring were eliminated and new codes were added to the framework. Additionally, the created questions were adapted to past tense. Also, the theme "desire for peace" does not fit the post-conflict perspective, since there is no need for peace anymore, but rather a desire for "keeping the peace". For this theme, new codes were created so that the post-conflict theme could be coded for. In order to understand the theme of "delegitimizing the outgroup", which Bar-Tal et al. (2014) introduced, the outgroup has to be explained. The two constructed questions within this theme are about dehumanization and emotional minimization, which are directed against victims (Leidner et al., 2010). Concerning the personal narratives of the former prisoners in relation to the historical context, in which they are the victims, and the focus of the exhibition on the victims, the former prisoners have to be viewed as the outgroup within this theme.

Next to deductive thematic analysis, I conducted narrative analysis on personal stories of former prisoners during the tours. I pursued a more categorical-content approach to narrative analysis, meaning that with the focus on selected phenomena within a person's story and what they indicate, I was able to concentrate on experiences shared by a group of different individuals (Earthy & Cronin, 2008). Due to the content approach to narrative analysis, I was able to answer the following questions concerning the different phenomena: what happened?, who was present?, how did different parties react?, what were the motives or intentions of participants?, what might particular items symbolize for the narrator or others?,

what is the meaning and importance of this story for the narrator? (Earthy & Cronin, 2008). Understanding these personal stories provide insight in the meaning they give to certain events, which then again shows the engagement with the presented events of the master narrative.

After analyzing both the personal narratives and the master narrative, the comparison was made between the narratives told during the tour and the investigated master narrative of the museum. The resemblance was analyzed to investigate the extent of acceptance. In addition, the deviations were analyzed to discover the extent to which the master narrative was challenged by using the model of Hochman and Spector-Mersel (2020). Analyzing which of the three strategies of rejecting master narratives were used by former prisoners, provided answers to how former prisoners navigate through the master narrative.

The results of these different analyses helped me to answer the question concerning the interaction between the personal narratives and the master narrative. Do former prisoners confirm what is told in the master narrative, or do they correct and certain aspect by counter narrating? Understanding how they deal with the master narrative provided the answer to how the personal narratives of former prisoners interact with the master narrative at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen.

Chapter 5: Results: The navigation of former prisoners

In order to investigate the interaction between the personal stories of former prisoners with the master narrative of the memorial museum, information about the personal narratives as well as the presented master narrative was gathered. The first subsection (paragraph 5.1) provides the results from the analysis of the permanent exhibition. This answers my research questions concerning the master narrative of the memorial museum: *How is the master narrative presented at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen?* and *What are the reoccuring themes recognized in the presented master narrative at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen?*. In paragraph 5.2 of this chapter, the results from the observational research during the guided tours at the memorial are presented. Hereby, it answers the questions: *How are the personal narratives of the former prisoners presented at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen in guided tours?* and *What are the reoccuring themes recognized in the personal narratives during the tours at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen?*. By answering these questions, the fifth sub-question is approached as well: *How are the master narrative and the personal narratives at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen in line with each other?*. In the last section of this chapter (paragraph 5.3) the extent to which the individual former prisoners accept or challenge the parts of the master narrative is discussed to answer the last sub-question: *How do former prisoners navigate within the master narratives at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen: to what extent do individuals accept of challenge them?*.

5.1 The presented master narrative

The master narrative at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen follows the *Diktaturgedächtnis,* the type of memory that is closely connected to narratives at memorial sites and focused on dictatorship in the GDR (Sabrow, 2009). Based on the analysis of the permanent exhibition, this type of memory was indeed found in the focus of the exhibition on the communist political repressive system. It promotes the discussion regarding the communist dictatorship and serves as a reminder of the suffering of the Stasis many victims and as a voice for democracy and human rights. In order to understand how the master narrative is presented, the structure of the exhibition was followed to analyze which themes occur to facilitate the presented master narrative. This analysis used the theoretical framework of themes within conflict-supporting narratives provided by Bar-Tal et al. (2014).

Even though the museum provides a clear political message, which is in line with the biographical master narrative, the type of master narrative that is most visible is episodic. This can be explained by the chronological structure that the exhibition follows. It deals with the history from 1945 until the opening of the memorial in 1994, which is shown by the red route in Figure 4. It includes episodic stories that contribute to the master narrative of a repressive system. For example, the national uprising in 1953, where a million people in the GDR demonstrated for free elections and the unification of Germany, is exhibited as being stopped by tanks which saved the regime and repressed the civilians. Apart from the timeline that is represented in the museum (see visualization in Figure 1), the information is grouped in different topics presented on "blocks" (see Figure 2). The topics on the blocks are: imprisonment (1), violence (2), interrogation (3), surveillance (4) and self-assertion (5) (see the numbers in Figure 3) and provide personal stories and experiences in order to create a more emotional and personal feeling of how it used to be in the prison. These topics can be seen in the blocks when following the green routes which are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 1: Wall that provides information in a chronological timeline.

Figure 21: Projectors mark the division of the inner structure in subsections. Information is provided on the blocks in the middle.

Following the blue route in the exhibition (see Figure 3), information focuses on the former prison staff and is located in the former management office of the prison division. The yellow route (see Figure 3) shows the way to the elevator that goes into the U-boat - the part of the prison that was closed in 1960. One cannot wander around freely in the U-boat, but one

rather follows a small route that returns to the elevator. Figure 3 presents a zoomed in version of a map that shows where the permanent exhibition is situated in the memorial site (see Appendix 2). This zoomed in version shows the red numbers 5, 7, 8 and 9 that are part of the permanent exhibition. In addition, the map is adjusted to show the walking routes with different colors as explained above. As all of these routes are part of the permanent exhibition, one can wander freely here and visit these parts without a guide.
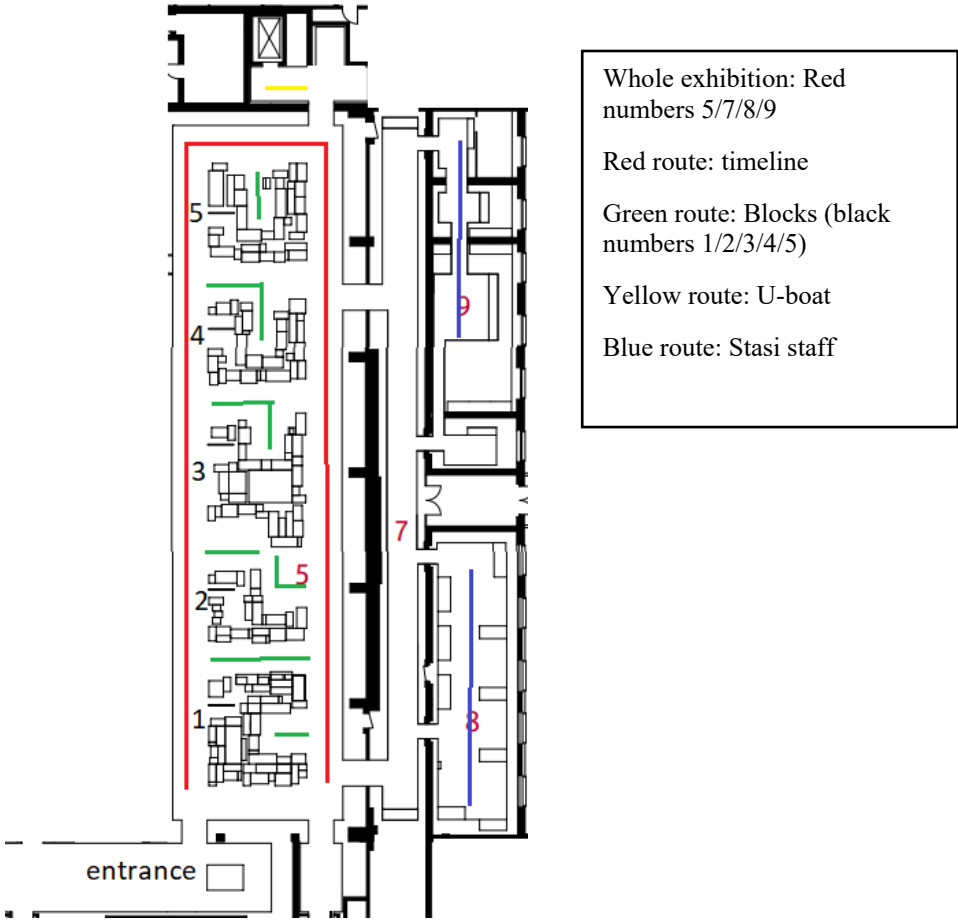
Figure 48: HG Merz Architekten (cartographer). (2014). Adjusted by author

The whole exhibition contains about 500 rare objects and 300 historical photographs (Stiftung-hsh., n.d.) that provide supportive evidence for the written statements in the exhibition. Additionally, due to the ability to visit a part of the U-boat in the basement of the exhibition, the prison itself functions as a resource that supports the story represented. An example of the prison speaking for itself can be seen in figure 4. Here, a picture of signs scratched into the wall of the U-boat, emphasized by a spotlight, is presented. This being

exhibited provides prove of the statement that prisoners scratched the walls. This method to construct a narrative is in line with the method that Bar-Tal, et al. (2014) introduced: *use of supportive resources*. Therefore, the master narrative is presented by using many supporting objects.

Figure 75: Scratched signs in the wall of a cell in the U-boat

Following the red route from left to right, at the beginning of the exhibition, the route starts at the end of the Second World War, when the Nazi dictatorship came to an end. It shows the direct switch to the new dictatorship, led by German communists. It introduces the upcoming timeline as the communist experiment that for many became a nightmare. This sets the stage and clearly shows the exhibition is going to follow the *Diktaturgedächtnis.* This statement also prepares the visitor for an overview of the horrors that happened during this regime. When walking the red route, on the right side, the five different blocks provide the visitor with information about five different topics. These blocks are not connected to a point in time, but the visitor rather takes a detour into the blocks and then back into the timeline. Ending the timeline in 1994, one has not only received information about the chronological structure of events during the dictatorship, but also concerning the topics of imprisonment, violence, interrogation, surveillance and self-assertion. Learning about the horrors of the regime by the end of the red route, paves the way for the exhibition to promote engagement with democracy, rule of law and human rights. Hereby, the construction of the exhibition contributes to the narrative of a repressive system that follows the political goal of motivating visitors to understand the dictatorship and protect democracy.

To answer the sub-question: *How is the master narrative presented at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen?*: The master narrative is hence presented in an

episodic manner in line with the *Diktaturgedächtnis,* following a chronological structure with subtopics, supported by many objects and photographs that, all together, function to explain the horrors performed by the regime, but also to create a feeling that makes visitors prone to the suggestion to engage with democracy.

Within this presented master narrative, I identified the following reoccurring themes: *Justice, Threats, Delegitimization of the outgroup, Victimhood, Desire for Peace: post-conflict perspective and Perception of the outgroup.* These themes were recognized in different parts of the exhibition, and in the following, where and how in the exhibition they were discovered will be discussed, supported with quotations from the exhibition.

Timeline: Red route

Following the red route, different themes that contribute to the focus on the horrors of the communist dictatorship, were recognized. First of all, the theme of *Justice* was recognized in different parts of the timeline. The timeline pointed out the unjustness of the SED justice system, and that there was no protection for the citizens against the state:

> There is no division of power or any inalienable rights in the GDR, although they were guaranteed in the 1949 constitution. Free and anonymous elections exist only on paper as the necessary constitutional and administrative courts do not exist for citizens to file claims against the state. – exhibition

In addition, the GDR is also portrayed as having little respect for human rights. The timeline provides information about the deal between West and East Germany, where there was supposed to be an exchange of international recognition for an improvement in the living conditions of the East German population. This deal was however not followed due to the GDR breaking its promise to respect human rights. The timeline also shows that the GDR created a new penal code that contained numerous legal articles that criminalize dissidents. The word "criminalize" refers to the fact that dissidents were framed as criminals due to the new legal articles that the GDR introduced.

The timeline also emphasizes the great focus there was on surveillance in the state: "In order to provide complete surveillance of the population it doubles the number of full-time Stasi members – from 40.000 (1969) to more than 81.000 (1982). New services are set up to spy on western journalists and diplomats or fight against émigrés and others who have fled to the West. The transit routes to West Berlin are placed under continuous surveillance". This

mostly shows the unjust goals and actions that the Stasi engaged itself with, but indicates the violation of privacy as well.

Another theme that was recognized in the timeline was the *Desire for Peace: post-conflict perspective*. The exhibition goes into the ending of the communist regime and the aftermath concerning the memorial site. After the collapse of the GDR, former inmates suggested creating a memorial at this former prison. Next to remembering the victims, the exhibition expresses the clear political goal that this memorial follows: "In this way a new purpose has been found for the secret prison of the state security service: to inform visitors about the past and motivate them to engage themselves with the rule of law, democracy and human rights". These statements fits the desire to keep the peace by promoting and fighting for democracy.

The exhibition also provides an insight into the difficulties that the former prisoners had to deal with while fighting for the maintenance of democracy and freedom: "In 2011 former political prisoners protest against a "communist conference" of leftwing groups in Berlin. The demonstrators are violently attacked by leftwing extremists". This statements says that the extreme left are considered violent and a possible danger to democracy. In this statement, the themes of *Threats* and *Perception of the outgroup* were recognized.

In this route, the master narrative is hence presented in a manner that focusses on episodes that show the horrors of the regime, without the use of personal stories. The different themes that were recognized in the timeline part of the exhibition were *Justice,* the *Desire for Peace, Threats* and the *Perception of the outgroup.*

Subsections (1-5): Green route

Imprisonment. The first block that is encountered when entering the exhibition is that of imprisonment. Here, the theme *Delegitimization of the outgroup* was recognized in the

Figure 102: Uniforms the prisoners had to wear.

described experience of entering the prison. People were deprived of their name: "They address the prisoners by their cell number and give short orders". In addition, from 1950 on, prisoners would get a uniform upon arrival: a blue sweatsuit and yellow slippers (see Figure 5). The exhibition explains here that "The prisoners' self-esteem is often first broken down through their clothing". Here, the clothing is provided to support the statement. All these measures contribute to a dehumanizing experience, which illustrates how the dictatorship repressed the civilians.

Violence. In this block, the kind of violence that was used by the Stasi was depicted. It shows the shift from physical to psychological torture from 1953 onwards. Since 1960, the Stasi used the extreme torture technique of imprisonment in *Gummizellen*, which were padded round cells in the basement with no light, no bed and no table. Prisoners were sent to these cells (see Figure 7), dressed in a straightjacket (see Figure 6), when being aggressive or when people tried to kill themselves. This information contributes to the theme of *Victimhood*, since it shows the extreme harm that was done to former prisoners.

Figure 148: Gummizell. Picture from catalogues (Knabe & Engwert, 2015)

Figure 128: Straightjacket. Picture from catalogues (Knabe & Engwert, 2015)

Additionally, *Victimhood* was recognized by focusing on the suffering former prisoners had to endure due to psychological violence, stating: "It was not rarely for prisoners to experience psychoses or attempt for suicide. Therefore, prisoners were constantly under surveillance. The fact that there are still suicide attempts, show the amount of suffering they experienced". Many experienced the imprisonment as traumatic and are still dealing with the consequences of the violence such as anxiety and depression. Showing the great amount of

suffering experienced by former prisoners, contributes to the image of the GDR as repressive and inhumane.

Interrogation. Within this subsection, the themes *Justice* and *Victimhood* were recognized. Firstly, there is a section called "producing confessions" that explains that the point of custody was to get the prisoner to confess. Here is stated that "the prisoner is supposed to feel helpless and powerless – so that he will incriminate himself and others", showing the unjust grounds for imprisonment. They are "incriminating themselves", which points out that they are framing themselves into criminals because they were forced to confess. No matter what you did, if you were arrested, you were guilty of being a threat to socialism: "The image of the opponent is not questioned, even when the findings of an investigation are contradictory". These statements show that the prisoners had no chance of not being convicted, which shows the unjust reason for imprisonment and contribute to the *Victimhood* of the imprisoned.

In order for the prisoner to feel helpless and powerless, they had to "break" the prisoners, for example by isolating them. This isolation meant: "no defense lawyer, no letters, no visitors, no books, as long as he does not confess or cooperate. He is not even allowed to speak with the guards or the inmates of other cells". When a prisoner was transported through the hallway at the same time as another prisoner, they had to stand facing the wall. In this way "only one person speaks with him during his imprisonment: the interrogator". Another way of "breaking" the prisoner, was by being sleep deprived due to being under constant surveillance, which reduced the prisoners' ability to resist and make them confess "crimes". This isolation and sleep deprivation were forms of psychological torture that the Stasi engaged with. This caused extreme harm to the former prisoners, which further contributes to the theme of *Victimhood*.

Surveillance. Prisoners being constantly watched as explained above, contributes to a dehumanizing experience. The exhibition states that: "The prisoners in Hohenschönhausen have no privacy: every five minutes guards peek through the peephole in the cell door – even when the prisoners are washing or relieving themselves. They are even monitored at night". This quotation illustrates how the privacy of the prisoners was taken away, which can be an dehumanizing experience. Being under constant surveillance is also explained as contributing to *Victimhood*, because it caused the suffering from severe lack of sleep:

> A light in the cellar prison is on day and night. In the new prison building the light is turned on every ten to twenty minutes. Sleeping is almost impossible since the prisoners have to lie on their backs with their hands placed on top of the blanket; otherwise they will be awakened by the guards. – exhibition

The experience of entering the prison can be identified as an experience of dehumanization as well. Prisoners were transported in a dark vehicle in secrecy and "in the prison, every new arrival has to strip down completely. Guards inspect their bodies from head to foot, including body orifices".

Victimhood was also recognized in the focus on how the Stasi used the trust of the prisoners but also of the civilians. There were "cell informers – fellow inmates who have agreed to provide information to the Stasi. Most of them are promised privileges; others act under pressure". This technique was so commonly used that "in the 1980s, almost a third of all prisoners in Hohenschönhausen are working as cell informers". A results is that prisoners had troubles trusting anyone. Due to the great amount of IMs, to trust someone was not only risky inside, but also outside the prison:

> Informers are the main weapons in the struggle against the enemy. Only they have the ability to penetrate through the thought processes of other. For this reason, colleagues, neighbors, friends, relatives and even spouses, are recruited as informers. Most of them report out of political conviction; some from a desire for recognition. others are motivated by rewards such as and appartement, acceptance to university of travel to the West. Blackmail is rather rare. – exhibition

This does not only show that trust is being used, but also how the Stasi aimed to infiltrate in everyday life. Because of the great psychological effect this had on the former prisoners, it adds to the *Victimhood* of a repressive regime.

Self-assertion. This block provides a positive perspective on the ways that the prisoners dealt with the Stasi's determination to break the prisoners resistance. For example, they came up with games or a communication system from within their cells. This "coping" is evident that they went through an amount of suffering. Additionally, it sheds a positive light on the work that the former prisoners do in the memorial museum.

> What might seem as at first like a burden is for most just the opposite: returning to the site of their captivity helps them work through their experiences. Many of them feel

that being able to speak about their experiences at this very site is like a late victory over the Stasi. Their time in prison thus acquires a new, positive meaning. – exhibition

Hereby, the exhibition is emphasizing the communist regime as being "defeated", which is in line with the focus of the master narrative on the dictatorship and on the favor for democracy.

In this route, the master narrative is presented in a factual manner concerning specific experiences, meaning that the narratives presented in the blocks are not individual experiences but rather an overview, or more factual presentation, of day-to-day life in prison. This provides more insight in the general idea of how people might have experienced imprisonment. The different themes that were recognized in the presented master narrative in this part of the exhibition are *Delegitimization of the outgroup, Victimhood* and *Justice.*

Stasi: Blue route

There is a specific part of the exhibition that deals with the Stasi staff. This part focuses on the training, the working life and the ideology of the Stasi. Siegfried Rataizick, the former head of the prison department, criticized the work of the memorial and declared: "I would not have missed a single day. I would do it all over again at any time". By emphasizing that this Stasi officer did not regret the horrors they committed, it shined light on the commitment to the ideology, which is presented as still alive. Here, the theme *Threats* was recognized, since the officer declared he would still act according to the ideology today. This promotes the importance of informing about the past, and therefore, *Desire for Peace: post-conflict perspective*, was recognized. In addition, the exhibition providing this statement contributes to the negative image of the Stasi as inhumane, which fits the theme of *Perception of the outgroup*. Another way that the museum presents their perception of the Stasi is by putting it in perspective: "All these efforts lead to a ratio of one member of the secret police to every 180 GDR citizens – a worldwide record". The Stasi is also compared to the size of the Gestapo: "by 1953 it is already larger than the Gestapo was in 1937". Hereby, the exhibition compares the Stasi to a group that visitors perceive as criminals and portrays them as even bigger. This framing comparison contributes to the image of the Stasi as being the repressive force in the dictatorship.

The exhibition provides information about how Stasi staff was trained to follow a certain ideology: "They swear an oath of allegiance to fight the enemies of socialism". This concept of the "enemy" divided the people in either "good" or "evil": "The staff is taught in special seminars to properly hate the enemy". Next to this hate, the communists' struggle

against the National Socialism justified their work, because they have to protect the state from that evil. This information contributes to the image of the Stasi as being brutal with no exception.

Another theme that was encountered when following this blue route, was *Justice.* Because of the strong ideology of protecting the state, "the purpose of imprisonment on remand is to fight the "class enemy" and not to determine the guilt or innocence of a suspect". This shows the unjustness of imprisonment, because it did not matter whether or not you were guilty.

In this route, the master narrative is presented in a manner that depicts the Stasi as an inhumane secret service, that was and might still be a threat to freedom. However, this part also shows that they were trained to hate and to act according to an ideology. The recognized themes encountered in this route were: *Threats, Desire for Peace, Perception of the outgroup* and *Justice.*

Having explained the different routes and the themes that were identified in them, the answer to the sub-question *What are the reoccuring themes recognized in the presented master narrative at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen?* is: the reoccurring themes identified in the presented master narrative are: *Justice, Threats, Delegitimization of the outgroup, Victimhood, Desire for Peace: post-conflict perspective and Perception of the outgroup.*

5.2 Lived experience: personal narratives of former prisoners

Personal narratives of former prisoners during guided tours all followed the memory type of *Diktaturgedächtnis*, in line with the master narrative. They focused on the communist regime as being oppressive, illustrating this by emphasizing the unjustness of the regime and the harm that has been inflicted on them. However, they followed a more biographical and less episodic narrative, which was recognized in the focus of former prisoners on narrating life scripts in stead of on historical episodes. Some events that are regarded as important in the exhibition, are never mentioned within the personal stories of former prisoners. To illustrate this, the exhibition states clearly that the GDR implemented a new penal code in 1968, which criminalized dissidents and was the cause for many arrests. Even though this affected the former prisoners greatly, since this was the cause for their own arrests, it was not mentioned in their personal narratives.

Different methods concerning narrative construction were recognized when focusing on the structure of the narrative: *framing language, reliance on supportive resources, magnification of supportive themes* and the *pronoun focus of former prisoners*. Also, within the personal narratives of the former prisoners during tours, the following reoccurring themes were coded for: *Justice, Delegitimization of the outgroup, Victimhood, Desire for Peace: post-conflict perspective* and *Perception of the outgroup.* In this subsection I discuss how the named themes were recognized, supported by quotations of former prisoners. In addition, these results show how the personal narratives were in line with the master narrative. Most of the themes occurred through the same perspective as the exhibition, with the personal narratives complementing the master narrative with emotional experiences. However, the results also show some deviation between the personal narratives and the exhibition, as well as between narratives of different former prisoners.

Construction of the tour

Being able to visit the whole site with a tour guide, the different buildings contribute to the use of resources to support the presented narrative and function as evidence for what is told. This is in line with the exhibition's use of supportive resources in narrative construction. Every former prisoner had a different way of guiding visitors through the site, so there was no specific route followed. However, the following map provides a visualization of the places that guided tours visit, which is restricted to area 1, 2 and 3 (see Figure 8). Not all observed former prisoners went to all areas on the map. Only one out of eight tour guides visited the former hospital, which was only offered in "hospital tours". The cellar of area 1 on

1. Central prison division and former basement prison: 'U-boat'. (Old building, 1939 used as NSV Canteen kitchen)
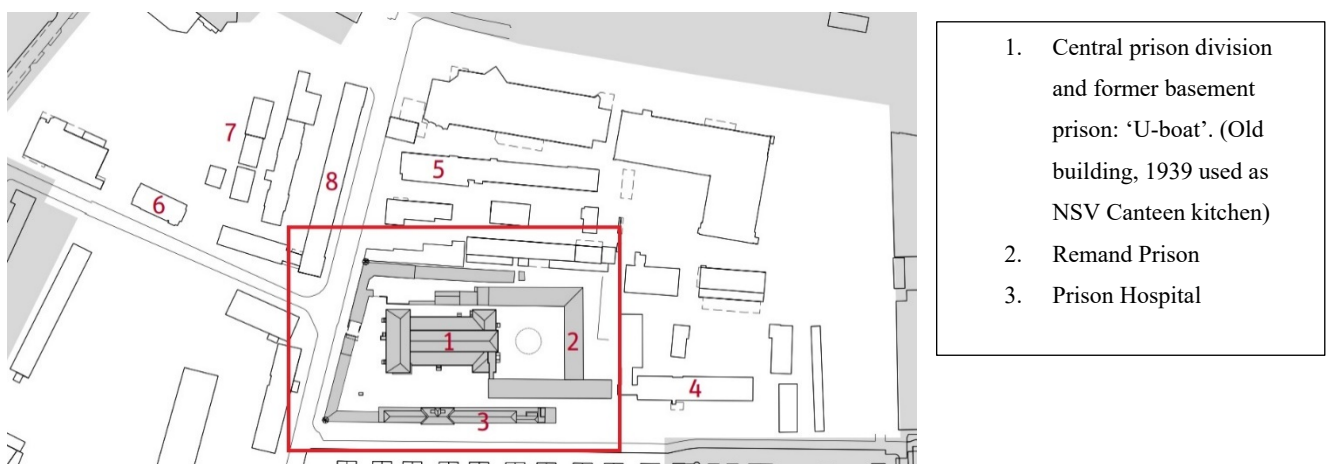2. Remand Prison
3. Prison Hospital

Figure 174: HG Merz Architekten (cartographer). (2014). Adjusted by author.

the map, the U-boat (Figure 8 and 9), was visited by all but one former prisoner. None of the former prisoners themselves stayed in the U-boat, since it was closed in 1960 and the earliest imprisonment of the participants for this research was in 1964. Area 2, the remand prison, where all but one observed former prisoners stayed, was visited by all eight former prisoners. Former prisoners had the ability to pay extra attention to the resources that are of importance for their personal narrative and leave out less important or even contradictory information. This shows the applicability of another narrative construction method of Bar-Tal et al. (2014): *magnification of supportive themes*.
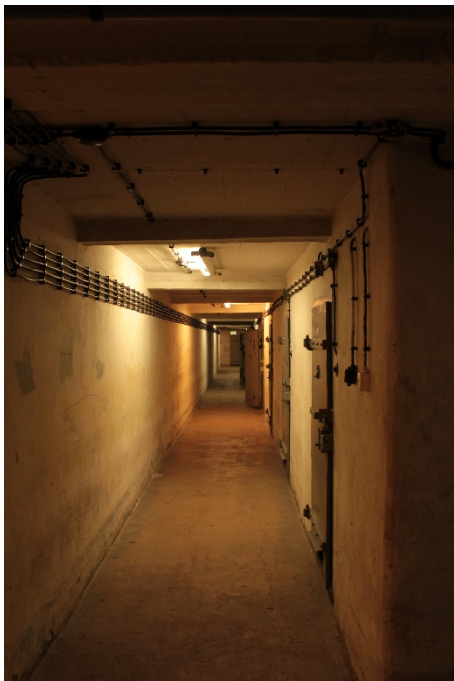
Figure 194: Hallway in the U-boat. On the right, the doors to the U-boat cells are visible.

Two other methods of narrative construction that I recognized were *framing language* and the *pronoun focus* of stories. Five former prisoners used framing language, which was detected within different occurring themes. Framing words in order to show the extremeness of the regime were used. Former prisoner H. said: "For me they [Stasi] are Nazi's. If you are capable of building a cell like that [Gummizell] as a measure, then you are simply a Nazi". Here Nazi's and the Stasi were compared, indicating that they engaged in the same kind of horrors. Not only comparing the Stasi to another perpetrator framed them, also comparison with another "good" party framed them according to the narrator. B. compared the year of abolishment of the death penalty in the GDR, 1987, with that of West-Germany (the "good"

party), 1949. She showed an article confirming the information she just provided. With this comparison, she contributed to the bad image of the GDR, which is in line with the image presented by the exhibition.

In general, most former prisoners narrated *I*-focuses stories. These stories support the emotional aspect of the master narrative, which is partly due to being a narrative of victimhood, but also because of the ability for former prisoners to work through the past by guiding tours. The personal stories serve as examples for what is presented in the exhibition, but also support the believability of the master narrative. When talking about the characteristics of people who were imprisoned there, only one former prisoner used "we". This indicates that the personal experiences are mainly perceived as individual, and not collective experiences. Five former prisoners told vicarious experiences, of either famous people, friends and relatives or other prisoners. This means they explained an individual experience of another specific person. For example, E. talked about the story of Henry, a close friend of him who is a former prisoner and tour guide at the memorial museum. He was imprisoned and because of his injuries, he was in the prison hospital. He said: "Because of Henry's stories, I was happy I was not treated for my injuries".

To answer the sub-question *How are the personal narratives of the former prisoners presented at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen in guided tours?*: the personal narratives are hence presented in a biographical manner with mainly *I*-focused- emotional stories, where they identify as victims and follow the *Diktaturgedächtnis*. In addition, it is presented through different ways of narrative construction: *framing language, reliance on supportive resources* and *magnification of supportive themes*. The reoccurring themes discovered in the personal narratives are: *Justice, Delegitimization of the outgroup, Victimhood, Desire for Peace: post-conflict perspective* and *Perception of the outgroup*. It seems that the personal narratives and the master narrative are generally in line with each other because of both following the *Diktaturgedächtnis* and due to the personal stories mostly complimenting and supporting the master narrative. However, there are some differences and notable exceptions. In the following, results that led me to answer the sub-questions in this manner, are provided.

Justice

During the tours, all observed former prisoners pointed out in different ways how unjust their reason of imprisonment was. Three out of eight former prisoners explained the

imprisonment as a consequence of wanting "human rights", referring to freedom of speech and constitutional right of freedom and democracy. Two out of eight presented the unjust imprisonment by formulating how they also participated in East-German social life as good civilians. Three others emphasized the unjust reason of imprisonment by stating that no matter what you did, you were guilty anyway. It was therefore determined before arrest, that the prisoners were guilty and would end up in jail. This compliments the exhibition, where it is stated that the Stasi incriminated people, by "producing confessions". As G. said: "Here, the truth was produced". The personal story of C. confirms these statements, because the Stasi created a way to portray him as, or tricking him into being a "traitor". He was a West-German civilian and was imprisoned for Western espionage. However, they found no evidence for this, so instead, he was convicted for trying to help someone escape and working with a "state traitor". Little did he know that this "state traitor", a woman he was having an intimate relationship with, was a Stasi employee who tricked him into helping her (fake) escape. He supported his story by showing images of the woman and newspapers that published his story.

Not only the unjust grounds of imprisonment were pointed out by all former prisoners, the unjustness of the other actions that were committed against the former prisoners is explicitly mentioned in seven tours. They either expressed it concerning their personal experience or concerning people who were imprisoned in general. No one referred to the unjustness of goals of the Stasi. For example, the antifascist myth (Peitsch, 2011) was not approached.

Delegitimization of the outgroup

All former prisoners clearly stated how they were dehumanized and how their emotions were of no importance. Six out of eight people mentioned that prisoners lost their identity in the prison. Four explained this by losing their names and getting numbers. This number was linked to the cell and their bed number, which is also explained in the exhibition. H. expressed losing his identity because of another reason. When being sleep deprived, a psychological torture technique that the Stasi used, he claimed identity disturbance can occur: "You have to think about the good things; grandma, mother, cats. But when you don't sleep it becomes hard. That is when you lose your identity". Being sleep deprived is something that is mentioned in the exhibition, however, H. provided an emotional aspect to it with his personal experience, hereby, complimenting the master narrative.

Four out of eight people explained experiencing dehumanization when they entered the prison. For example the fact that personal belongings were taken away and that one had to take off their clothes and dress in a blue sweatsuit with yellow slippers was experienced as dehumanizing, as A. stated: "You get these ridiculous clothes just to embarrass you, whatever you have reached in your life, with these slippers they belittled you". This statement appears to corroborate the presented master narrative, stating that people lose their self-esteem due to the clothing. Another example for a dehumanizing experience upon arrival was the strip search. B. mentioned: "This was demolishing, the worst thing that can be done to a human". F. added the emotional minimization of the victims suffering by saying: "People easily get stuck in these negative feelings", referring to the feeling you get during the physical search, but "guards did not care about the way you felt".

Another way the former prisoners experienced dehumanization was by losing privacy due to the guards watching through a small peephole. This lack of privacy expressed itself in stories concerning going to the toilet. Examples are for instance that D. said: "Having a door at the toilet is worth a lot. I spent 10 months going to the toilet with always having someone watch". Also E., who spent 3 years in a complete isolation cell mentioned: "Now I am happy I was in a *einzelzelle* (single cel), because of the toilet".

Victimhood

Almost every former prisoner pointed out the wrongdoing and extreme harm that was inflicted on them. Seven out of eight former prisoners explained the wrongdoing they experienced by focusing on the time before and during imprisonment and on how their life was affected by their imprisonment afterwards. Two out of eight former prisoners experienced physical pain but stated that the experiences of psychological pain were more pressing. The aspect of this theme which showed the identification as a victim is that the experienced harm was perceived as unjust, meaning they are not to blame or could not have been able to prevent it from happening. In the following, the unjust harm they experienced is explained.

Before imprisonment. All observed guides experienced the regime as repressive. The mapping out of personal lives by the state was mentioned as being repressive by four former prisoners. They felt that they lacked ownership of their own lives and that everything was planned for you by the state. A. mentioned: "I was property of the GDR and they were able to decide what I am allowed to do and what I am not allowed to do". This shows that the state also influenced what you did not do, for example which studies you could not attend. Two out

of eight prisoners were expelled from school and one, who did top-class sport, was refrained from taking part in international sport matches. As D. mentioned: "They destroyed the lives of many by mapping out everyone's life". With his personal story he confirms this "mapping out". In December he was convicted, however, when he read his files after the fall of the Berlin Wall, he learned that in November they already had decided that he was going to be bought by the West. In addition to lacking control in one's own life, one person experienced a lack of religious freedom. This is a tour specific aspect, since the exhibition does not provide personal thoughts about the regime. However, it is in line with the *Diktaturgedächtnis*.

During imprisonment. All former prisoners not only mentioned but explained the psychological torture that was done to them while being in prison. One Stasi torture technique that they mentioned was isolation. You were not allowed to talk to anyone in order to create loneliness. Guards will never look into a room through an open door since there should be no human interaction or eye-contact. F. said: "There were two rules: you will not run into anyone by accident on the hallway and you were to only see your interrogator by face". This isolation technique is explained in the exhibition, however the personal narrative provides an emotional aspect of feeling lonely. But not everyone stayed in an isolation cell. Four former prisoners mentioned that they also stayed in a cell with cell mates. However, this increased the chance that you could be spied on by another prisoners, commissioned by the Stasi. In this way, the Stasi was able to use the trust of the prisoners, or rather, misuse. Two out of eight people emphasized how the Stasi used trust of the prisoners and violated it, which caused psychological harm. B. said: "If your trust has been violated, people will be able to control you".

Five out of eight prisoners mentioned the psychological torture of experiencing fear. They experienced fear because of being disoriented, brought into confusion and because of the unpredictability of the situation. Prisoners did not know where they were, because they were transported in a dark van which arrived in the garage of the prison, where bright white lights shone on them. Seven out of eight people talked about the van as the first psychological influence. E. expressed that everyone experienced this fear upon arrival: "7000 prisoners came in through this door. Everyone had anxiety. There were no heroes here". Another way they created fear was by being sleep deprived which contributed to being confused. H. explained being in the prison as being in a delirium. Lastly, there was a lack of knowledge about the punishment you would get, which was accompanied by fear. The fear they

experienced complements the exhibition by showing the consequences of psychological torture techniques performed by the Stasi.

Another type of torture that was described by former prisoners was the inability to see friends and family. Parents were not informed when their child was arrested or where the person was imprisoned. For example, B. was never allowed to see her children and H. also said that his mother did not know anything about his whereabouts. One person mentioned the ability to talk to his mother, which took place somewhere else, so there would be no information about his whereabouts. However, all the other former prisoners expressed that their only person of contact was their interrogator.

Two people made references to experiencing physical harm. H. also mentioned that even though the Stasi used psychological torture techniques, some were certainly beaten. E. confirms this with his personal experience, saying that he was beaten right before they took his identification picture. Even though he could not see his own wounds due to not having a mirror, he saw it in his files that he looked into afterwards. Additionally, during his attempt to escape, he broke his two legs and arms. The Stasi decided to not treat him on his injuries, which illustrates further the physical harm he experienced. Three former prisoners talked about the *Gummizellen.* H. was send to a *Gummizell* for 10 days and two times for 12 days. In contrast to experiencing physical harm, D. mentioned that this did not occur after the 60's and that the Stasi handled everything "clean". This contradictory information provided by the former prisoners was not responded to by the exhibition.

After imprisonment. Many mentioned the extreme consequences and harm they experienced after being imprisoned. H. said: "After being freed, many went into therapy. Now, people are still in therapy. It was traumatizing". A personal story in which the theme of victimhood is clear is that of D.. He was bought out of prison by the West, however, he lost a lot of friends because he was not able to travel back to Leipzig in the East until years later. Another example is that E. experienced extreme consequences after being freed in 1964 due to poor physical conditions. In 1975 he was allowed to travel out of the GDR, but was denied re-entry into the state. He explained that he moved around the world, because the Stasi still came after him. In his personal story it became clear that his family was greatly affected by his imprisonment afterwards. An example is that his wife had to go into a psychiatric clinic. This aspect of the personal narratives that concerns life after imprisonment provided information about the influence it had on their lives and hereby, showing the extreme harm

the Stasi and the repressive regime caused, which completements the master narrative that follows the *Diktaturgedächtnis*.

Another aspect that concerns the theme of victimhood was blame. This is a personal narrative contribution to the master narrative since it provides identification as a victim because the former prisoners were not able to prevent the wrongdoing that happened to them. Two out of eight former prisoners attributed full responsibility of the Stasi employees' actions to the Stasi employees themselves. A. made the comparison to Nazis, stating that during the National Socialist regime, it was not a matter of choice if you would work for the Nazis, but working for the Stasi was. One former prisoner mentioned the opposite, that some people were blackmailed into working for the Stasi in order to be able to study.

Desire for Peace: post-conflict perspective.

As the theme of victimhood indicates, losses of friends, family and mental and physical pain was experienced. Six out of eight people articulated that this should never happen again. Four out of them mentioned the fight for democracy. For example, B. said she would "always fight against that that is undemocratic and does not mean freedom". The former prisoners did not only mention their own willingness to fight for freedom, they also encourage the visitors to engage with it. B. said: "We have to make sure that dictatorship can never happen again".

The "we" was something that happened more often. A clear message was often delivered to encourage "us", the visitors of the tour, to contribute to keeping the peace. A. ended his tour with saying that he feared young people who do not understand the importance of voting. D. ended with a message saying: "If you are born in freedom, you think this is forever. That is not true, it can easily go away". These statements also briefly touch upon the theme of *Threats*, not yet observed before. With the desire to keep the peace, they expressed the fear of a nondemocratic society which threatens their values and identity. However, because it focused more on the motivation to engage with democracy, the theme of *Threats* is only taken into account here. Also E. encouraged "us" to send people to this memorial museum if that person expresses that it was not such a bad life in the GDR. G. was really firm on expressing the importance of the past in connection to the present. He explained that we should look around and pay attention to what is happening outside of the EU. He mainly focused on the U-boat, saying that this is not just something from the past and that it is still happening nowadays. He then said: "History is always connected to the present, otherwise it

would be a fairytale". This personal engagement with democracy and the rule of law, and the attempt to encourage the visitors to engage as well, is in line with the *Diktaturgedächtenis* and the purpose of the memorial museum as in the presented master narrative.

Perception of the Stasi

Considering the Stasi, all the former prisoners expressed facts about or their feelings and opinions regarding them. In addition to the exhibition's statements, the reachability and control the Stasi possessed, is often explained by former prisoners. For example, B. said that the Stasi was the best secret service of the world, next to the KGB. Also, the fact that the Stasi officers, or the interrogators, were well educated, is expressed by four former prisoners. They explained the operative psychological studies the officers had done at a Stasi university in Potsdam. As noted before, the guards were perceived as robots or machines, who did not engage in any human interaction with the prisoners. D. referred to the officers as paranoia by explaining the efforts they made to keep the place a secret: "If you had to go to the hospital, you had to go by bus and drive around. In this way you did not know that you were at the same place". These examples show the perception of the Stasi is in line with the presented one in the exhibition.

To answer the sub-question *What are the reoccuring themes recognized in the personal narratives during the tours at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen?*, the identified reoccurring themes in the personal narratives are *Justice, Delegitimization of the outgroup, Victimhood, Desire for Peace: post-conflict perspective* and *Perception of the outgroup.* To answer the sub-question *How are the master narrative and the personal narratives at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen in line with each other*?, the comparison made between the personal narratives and the master narrative show that personal narratives are mainly in line with the master narrative due to providing the same information and due to the ability to have coded for the same themes. Similar themes were recognized except for the theme *Threats*, which was only recognized in the master narrative. Another way that the narratives are in line with each other is by the complimentary characteristic of the personal narrative to the master narrative, meaning that the personal stories implicitly strengthen the master narrative.

5.3 Navigating through the master narrative

In addition to the comparability of the narratives, other results show how the former prisoners challenge the master narratives. It was found that next to accepting the master narrative by

corresponding to it, a more challenging perspective towards the master narrative was present. This means that the former prisoners navigate within the master narrative by both accepting and challenging it. In the following section, results providing an answer to the sub-questions *How do former prisoners navigate within the master narratives at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen: to what extent do individuals accept or challenge them?* are described. Analyzing the extent to which the former prisoners challenge the master narrative showed that the master narrative was rejected by using explicit and implicit strategies and by neutralizing the impact of the master narrative.

Rejecting

Firstly, the strategy of implicit rejection was visible in a few personal stories that counteract the story of Hohenschönhausen. Both E. and H. expressed that the Stasi did beat people, which does not comply to the narrative of the Stasi which focuses on psychological torture solely. With their personal stories, they rejected this part of the narrative. Even though the *I*-focused stories, which are used for implicit rejection, were over presented within the personal narratives, they were mostly regarding rejection of the outgroup, the Stasi. Therefore, except for the cases above, the implicit stories strengthened the master narrative at Hohenschönhausen.

There is one former prisoner, G., who rejected aspects of the master narrative within his tour with explicit and neutralizing strategies. Even though it concerns one former prisoner out of the eight, his tour provided striking results concerning the rejection of the master narrative. Therefore, his strategies are explained in-depth in the following. Firstly, the neutralizing strategy was used by saying that his own experience here was not of importance. He rather focused on previous experiences that happened at the prison before 1960, in the U-boat. Because of this, he neutralized the impact of the part of the master narrative that concerns himself. Secondly, he explicitly rejected the master narrative by saying he does not advice anyone to go into the exhibition, which indicates that he does not agree with the exhibition.

Another way of explicitly rejecting certain parts of the master narrative of the memorial was done by stating two "clichés" as not true. Firstly, he said: "It was not possible for the Stasi to have an eye on everyone. They simply did not have the technological devices for it. There were 17 million inhabitants of East Germany and only 170.000 employees. It was simply not possible. They are not the NSA". With this statement, he was rejecting the aspect

in the master narrative that the Stasi was one of the best secret services of the world which had eyes everywhere. The exhibition provides information about the technology of the secret service, explaining all the different techniques that were developed and used by the Stasi. Also, the exhibition states that the ratio of Stasi and citizens was a worldwide record, which gives the impression that the Stasi was indeed everywhere and that surveillance was their top priority. Secondly, he mentioned another cliché and counter narrated this: "It is a cliché that they wanted to mentally break you here. They did not want that, because you would be lying under a table. They just wanted information". He then said: "Indeed, people did break down, but that could have never been their goal". The exhibition mentions in contrast: "The state security service is determined to break the prisoners' resistance".

G. also used framing language which indicated that he questions the amount of responsibility that can be attributed to the Soviets who operated as guards in the U-boat. He explained that "in order to look at this prison, we have to understand the history". He said: "This prison is a direct consequence of the war. Russians did not start the war [Second World War], that is something we have to remember". Because of stating that the prison is a direct consequence of the war that the Soviets did not start (but the Germans did), he questioned who there is to blame. He also explained that prisoners of the U-boat told him that the hate of the Soviet military, who were guards in the prison, was the worst part. He then said: "Every one of the military guards had at least one death in their family. They were not very firm of Germans". Hereby, he focused on the harm that was inflicted upon the Soviets. The fact that Germany started the Second World War is supported by the exhibition, however, hereby it did not question the responsibility that is attributed the Soviets for the horrors that took place in the U-boat. These results show that G. was not solely focusing on the horrors that the regime committed, which the master narrative does, but he also provided history on what the harm inflicted upon the "perpetrators" by "the Germans" in the Second World War.

In addition to questioning the responsibility for the existence of the prison, he also questioned who is to blame for the amount of prisoners. The exhibition states that West Germany bought prisoners from East Germany: "The GDR demands up to 100.000 deutschmarks per prisoner. The sale of around 34.000 prisoners by 1989 brings the state the equivalent of around 1.7 billion euros". G. said during the tour: "The buyer also plays its part. The more there is bought and so sold by the GDR, the more prisoners. Apparently, this selling worked". Hereby, he critiqued the policies and questioned if there is only one person to blame for the many political arrests in the GDR.

To answer the sub-question *How do former prisoners navigate within the master narratives at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen: to what extent do individuals accept or challenge them*? the results provide evidence that former prisoners challenge the master narrative to a lesser extent than they accept the master narrative. This can be seen in the general resemblance between the narratives and the coinciding themes that were coded for. All former prisoners accepted certain parts of the master narrative, however, three former prisoners rejected other parts with explicit, implicit and/or neutralizing strategies. Additional results show that former prisoners are able to present new factual information, without contradicting the master narrative.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Not much research has focused on how the personal narratives accept master narratives, challenge them or even change them. With a focus on the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen, different research questions were presented in chapter one in order to fill in this gap in the literature. Firstly, *How is the master narrative presented at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen?* and *What are the reoccuring themes recognized in the presented master narrative at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen?* to approach the master narrative of the memorial museum. Secondly, *How are the personal narratives of the former prisoners presented at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen in guided tours?* and *What are the reoccuring themes recognized in the personal narratives during the tours at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen?* in order to investigate the personal narratives. Thirdly, *How are the master narrative and the personal narratives at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen in line with each other?* to show the similarities of deviations. Fourthly, *How do former prisoners navigate within the master narratives at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen: to what extent do individuals accept or challenge them?* to understand the way former prisoners accept and reject the master narrative. The answers on these sub-questions led me to answer the research question: *How do individual stories of former prisoners at Hohenschönhausen interact with the presented master narrative of the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen?*. This chapter focusses on answering the research questions, relating the answers to literature and theory, and providing the limitations and practical implications of this research.

The master narrative is presented in an episodic manner in line with the *Diktaturgedächtnis,* supported by historical objects and photographs that functions to explain the extremeness of the regime. It sets the stage for visitors to engage with democracy. The reoccurring themes that were recognized within this master narrative are: *Justice, Threats, Delegitimization of the outgroup, Victimhood, Desire for Peace: post-conflict perspective and Perception of the outgroup.* The personal narratives are presented in a more biographical manner, presenting mainly *I*-focused- emotional stories, where they identify as victims and use framing language to follow the *Diktaturgedächtnis.* This is supported by resources, and the ability to emphasize supportive sources. The reoccurring themes recognized within these personal narratives are: *Justice, Delegitimization of the outgroup, Victimhood, Desire for Peace: post-conflict perspective* and *Perception of the outgroup.* The master narrative and the personal narratives are mainly in line with each other because of providing comparable

information and recognizing similar themes. Hereby, former prisoners accept the master narrative. To a lesser extent do former prisoners reject the master narrative. Because the narratives are generally similar, there seems to be an interaction between the personal narratives and the master narrative. Because of the results showing the complementary characteristic of former prisoners, their narratives are strengthening the master narrative. This indicates that personal stories of former prisoners interact synergistically with the master narrative presented at the Gedenkstätte-Hohenschönhausen, meaning that they add a greater effect to the master narrative.

There were not many contrasting narratives present at the memorial museum. As mentioned in the introduction, communicative and cultural memory are living simultaneously (Lahusen, 2011) and depending on the social or political goal, the narratives constructed through either one of these memories differ. However, as the results show, the social and political goal of the personal narratives and the master narratives are the same, which can be an explanation for not finding competing narratives. This indicates that, in this case it did not matter through which kind of memory a narrative is constructed, the social and political goal seem to serve as stronger factors in creating a similar narrative.

Another explanation for finding similar narratives is that I focused on the presentation of the narratives, meaning the interaction results are gained from information that is visible on the surface. This methodological approach to data collection leaves out other factors that operate "behind the scenes" that might be of importance in creating "one" narrative. For example, Stein (2016) mentioned that there are instructions for guiding the tours which include a standard historical narrative that has to be explained. The "Guidelines for the Content and Form of Guided Tours through the Former Detention Prison of the Ministry for State Security" outlines what and where topics should be discussed (Stein, 2016). These instructions could have influenced the authority of a former prisoner in their own narrative and therefore influence the interaction between the two investigated narratives. Knowing this, there could be more factors influencing the interaction, which could have led to different results. An example could be the "communicative memory" of employees who work as tour guides at the memorial museum. They communicate with each other regularly and could therefore unconsciously influence each others narratives (Stein, 2016), which could have led to similar narratives. Considering the research questions of the presented narratives, the results provide valid answers. However, further research should focus on the "behind the scenes", to understand how the presented narratives came to be.

Even though this research was able to contribute to knowledge of how the presented personal narratives interact with the presented master narrative at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen, further research should focus on how this interaction affects the perceiving of the master narrative by visitors. Understanding how it is presented does not indicate how it is actually perceived, therefore, further research should focus on the effects of this interaction on visitors. The effects of the complementary feature of former prisoners and their ability to reject certain parts, on the way that visitors actually perceive the master narrative, should be investigated. This would elucidate how much effect this interaction actually has on the visitors and how this memorial museum takes on its role as educational leader.

Whereas the exhibition follows a clear timeline with important episodic narratives, the personal narrative are more biographical (McLean & Syed, 2015), which entails episodic memories that are bound to the perspective of a certain person (Assmann, 2004; 2006). The results showing that the master narrative and the personal narrative differ in following an episodic and biographical narrative is in line with previous literature, stating that great historical events are not that present in personal memory as they are in collective memory (Lahusen, 2011). The fact that personal chronology and collective chronology are not in line with each other (Lahusen, 2011), was recognized by the fact that episodic events that the exhibition regards as important, were not similarly presented in personal narratives. These differences did however not lead to contrasting narratives, but rather to complimentary narratives. The biographical narratives were complimenting the episodic narrative of the exhibition.

Hochman and Spector-Mersel (2020) explained the ability of personal stories to counter narrate aspects of master narratives. By rejecting parts of a master narrative, people are able to change them. In line with this theory, the results show that individuals are indeed able to provide information that is not in line with the master narrative. This means that, the visitors who were listening to the personal stories that are rejecting the master narrative, receive an adjusted form of the presented master narrative. In addition, the tour of G. indicates that people are able to accept and reject a master narrative at the same time, which support the model of McLean and Syed (2015), who argue that a master narrative is not rejected as a whole, but rather in parts. G. has a clear political agenda by showing his opinion about torture, which is in line with the exhibition. However, he then rejects other parts of the

exhibition with his critical reflection on different clichés and on the attribution of responsibility.

One way that former prisoners complemented the master narrative was by using *I-*focused stories. Concerning the theory of Hochman and Spector-Mersel (2020), *I-*focused stories are effective to implicitly reject a master narrative. However, this research suggests that, when in line with the master narrative, these implicit stories can be used as a powerful supportive source to accept and compliment the master narrative. This indicates that the master narrative of the memorial museum can rely on the personal stories as a resource to support the master narrative. At the same time, the personal *I-*focuses stories do implicitly reject another narrative, namely the one that follows the *Fortschrittsgedächtnis*, the type of memory that views the GDR as a legitimized state that provides an alternative against capitalism (Sabrow, 2009). In this way, they also support the master narrative in rejecting another narrative.

Next to the master narrative and the personal narratives fighting against the *Fortschrittsgedächtnis*, a personal narrative showed rejection of the *Arrangementsgedächtnis* as well by saying that if people believe that the GDR had positive aspects, they should visit the memorial museum to understand the horrors that the communist regime committed. This indicates that the memorial museum is fighting for dominance against two other conflicting narratives. This is in line with the theory of conflict-supportive narratives:

> Because the societies in conflict typically develop opposing conflict-supporting narratives, and because additional counter-narratives may appear in each society, groups initially try to maintain the dominance of their own narratives among the in-group members and also make efforts to persuade other groups of their narratives' truthfulness (Bar-Tal, et al. 2014).

The exhibition and the former prisoners are the group that try to maintain the dominance by expressing the importance of democracy. Additionally, they make efforts to convince the visitors that their narratives are the "right" ones. These results contribute to a clearer understanding of the applicability of the conflict-supportive framework on narrative construction of Bar-Tal et al. (2014). It shows that their framework is useable in a post-conflict setting and indicates that themes on which such a narrative builds are present at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen. Even though it was not a goal to demonstrate whether the memorial museum creates conflict-supportive narratives, the results indicate that,

concerning the conflict in the past, they provide a conflict-supportive narrative in both the master narrative and the personal narratives.

The effort to convince visitors to follow their narrative was seen in the use of supportive resources in both the exhibition and the personal narrative. The use of resources is a specific feature in autobiographical stories, since they have a tendency to rely on empirical evidence to back up their stories: "They all emphasize clearly and repeatedly the transparency of their statements, and make reference to their clear and untainted sources" (Lahusen, 2011). Also, the prison itself was used in both the exhibition as the personal stories to support the truthfulness of their narrative that follows the *Diktaturgedächtnis*. Additionally, due to the complementary character of the personal narratives, the former prisoners serve as a "supportive resource" that motivate visitors to engage with the master narrative that the memorial museum is focusing on.

The results show that there is a lack of a feeling of collectiveness. The use of *I*-focused stories entails that people mainly refer to themselves as individual agents. There was only one person who used *we*-focused stories, positioning himself as a being part of a community and referring to a collective experience (Burdelski, 2016). This would suggest that in general, people did not experience the imprisonment as a collective experience together with the other prisoners. This is in contrast to previous literature, stating that engagement with a certain master narrative is the basis for forming a shared identity (Hammack, 2008) which adds the strong emotional aspect of belonging and otherness (Bar-Tal, et al., 2014) and creates in and outgroups. The fact that there were mainly *I*-focused stories, questions the ability to see the prisoners as a group. This could be explained by the fact that, in historical perspective, they were not seen as an ingroup, but rather as the outgroup. In addition, the repressive regime, the isolation torture techniques and the environment of mistrust and loneliness that the Stasi created could explain the fact that former prisoners did not experience it as a collective event, but rather individual. These results provide new information about the feeling of collectiveness between former prisoners. According to Hirschberger (2018):

> Collective memory of trauma is different from individual memory because collective memory persists beyond the lives of the direct survivors of the events, and is remembered by group members that may be far removed from the traumatic events in time and space. (Hirschberger, 2018)

Future research should focus on this feeling of collectiveness of former prisoners in the GDR in order to understand the impact of it on transgenerational transmission of traumatic memory.

Practical implication

This research shows that the memorial museum presents a conflict-supportive narrative that is supported by the powerful tool of eye-witnesses. Former prisoners interact with the master narrative synergistically, which enhances the memorial museums focus on one narrative solely, that of the *Diktaturgedächtenis*. Because of the synergistic relationship, they are forming a strong force in the fight for dominance over the other two types of memory circulating in the society: *Fortschrittsgedächtnis* and *Arrangementsgedächtnis*. Knowing that this memorial museum is one of the most important actors in the field of remembering the GDR (Ludwig, 2011), they could create awareness about the narrative they follow and explain which other narratives are circulating in the society. In this way, they could still pursue their social and political goals, that are clearly presented at this site, but also provide insights in the other ways that people perceive this conflict. This could for example be approached by extending the timeline of the exhibition to the point where the political, academical and social debate on remembering can be explained, and how this plays a role in German society. They could then reflect on their own role within this debate, elucidating what they fight for and against within this debate. Hereby, they serve their function as cultural leader (Earle, 2013) in an open-minded way, without distancing themselves from their goals. The site might represent their narrative about the history of the GDR in a more inclusive way, tackling the ideas of this memorial museum being the center of controversies (Stein, 2016).

Reflection and limitations

Considering the research for this thesis, I want to reflect on a positive aspect, the process, and the limitations. Speaking the language was an aspect that has contributed greatly to the data collection process. Because of this, I had direct contact with the former prisoners, since there was no translator needed. This left out an intermediate stage where content could have been misinterpreted or wrongly transferred by using "own words". In addition, it enabled me to conduct research independently and flexible.

An aspect within the process I want to reflect on is that of field note-taking. Regarding the ethnographical approach of partially participant observation, there was much information to be gathered in a relatively short amount of time during the tours. The amount of field note-taking was dependent on the fastness of the tour guide. Some tour guides did not talk while

walking to another area of the site, but some continued to provide information, which created less space for me to write my notes down. The amount of information made it more difficult to focus on other features of the tour that contributed to the personal narrative besides the content of the narrative. In addition, former prisoners provided sensitive personal information, sometimes while sitting down with a small group of other visitors. During these emotional moments, it felt uncomfortable to be note taking, therefore, these stories were written down afterward. Furthermore, I became skilled in taking field notes along the process, which enabled me to take faster and more inclusive field notes later in the data collection.

Another aspect that I want to reflect on is the corona virus, which had impact on the process of data collection. When moving to Berlin in March 2022, the corona measurements in Germany were still in effect. This led to difficulties for gathering data. First, I was only allowed to be there physically four times during my whole research. After measurements got less strict, this was not a point of attention anymore. In addition, some parts of the exhibition were closed in the beginning and the walking routes were adjusted to a single route you could follow. These routes were changing over time, which created an instable factor concerning the data gathering and begged for a flexible approach to it. Next to this, I was infected with the corona virus upon arrival. This slowed down the starting process of my research. Nonetheless, I managed to collect data of the exhibition in a complete manner. I collected data of the exhibition divided over time, following the changes of the corona measurements. This limitations eventually turned into an advantage due to the need to visit the exhibition many times, which created a more inclusive image of the exhibition.

Due to the methodological feature of random sampling, there was a broad variety of different ages of former prisoners, where the youngest was 59 and the oldest was 78. When following a tour, the age was not mentioned and not of importance for the visitors, since they are all former prisoners, however literature shows that different generations experienced the GDR in a different way (Lehmann, 2011; Fulbrook, 2011). Both Lehmann (2011) and Fulbrook (2011) put the generations difference in thought about the GDR in historical context. Within this research, it was out of the scope to focus on the different ages in connection to differences in personal narratives. Therefore, I recognize the advantage of random sampling, which created a homogenous group based on the fact that they were former prisoners, which was the focus of this research. However, considering the literature, future research concerning different narratives should take into account the different historical context that the different former prisoners grew up in and experienced imprisonment in.

A limitation was that the results on personal narratives were based on partially observational research, due to the inability to audio record the tours. By doing observational research, I invariably took my own assumptions into the observation. In order to answer the specific research questions, theory was used as objective guidance through the observation of the tours. By selecting theory, in this research the conflict-supporting themes and methods of narrative construction by Bar-Tal et al. (2014), the selected themes attribute meaning to certain aspects within the tour and leaves out others. This could have limit the focus on other themes that might have been of importance. However, I recognize the benefits of having done observational research. First of all, by doing observational research, the former prisoner did not adjust their tours to a specific research aim, since there were no questions leading them to this. Additionally, by recognizing and utilizing the preconstructed themes to focus on, I was able to structure my observations and because of coding for these themes in my analysis afterwards, I made sure that personal interpretations where not included.

Another limitation was that this research was nonexperimental. This implies that regarding the aim of finding the "interaction with", it was not possible to make causal claims (Rohrer and Arslan, 2021). Rohrer and Arslan (2021) especially mention that when data was gathered observational, and none of the variables were manipulated, showing causality is difficult. This means that the results did not provide information about the causal effects of the found interaction. More specifically, the results do not imply that the synergistic interaction of the personal narratives with the master narrative also means that the personal narrative affects the master narrative. However, considering the feasibility of this research, controlling one or both variables was not possible. Next to this, the aim was to investigate how personal narratives interact with the master narrative and not what the interaction is between the two narratives or what the effects are on each other. Understanding that the research question does not beg for a causal relationship to be confirmed indicates that the results are valid for answering "how" the personal stories interact with the master narrative, namely, synergistic.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

For this research, I aimed to identify how individual stories interact with the presented master narrative at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen. The results from this qualitative research approach, mainly being ethnographical, show that the former prisoners engage with the master narrative by mainly accepting it. It was found that the personal narrative have a complementary character, which lead to the conclusion that personal narratives of former prisoners interact with the master narrative in a synergistic manner.

In order to focus on the two phases of remembering, communicative and collective memory, that exist simultaneously at the memorial museum, I choose to observe personal narratives of former prisoners during tours and analyze the master narrative presented in the exhibition. Considering the focus on presented narratives, the ethnographic methodology was an effective approach, since it clearly shows the "visible" narrative. However, it raises the question of how such narratives came to be, the "behind the scenes". Future research should therefore consider the different features, such as tour guidelines, that might influence the found interaction. In addition, to further build on the conclusions from this thesis, research is needed to understand the effects of the found interaction on visitors.

The results from this research show that the personal narratives of former prisoners mainly accepted the presented master narrative at the Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen. The results also show the ability of former prisoner to reject a part of the master narrative, but at the same time accepts other parts during the tour. This confirms the theory of McLean and Syed (2015) that a master narrative does not have to be rejected completely. Hereby, the results confirm the master narratives' ability to change. This research also shows that the framework of Bar-Tal et al. (2014) on conflict supportive-narratives can be applied on a post-conflict situation. In addition, it confirms the function of the three strategies of rejecting a master narrative that Hochman and Spector-Mersel (2020) introduced, however, in contradiction to their model this research shows that the implicit strategy of master narrative rejection could also function as a source to accept and even compliment the master narrative. Therefore, the implicit strategy should be handled with care when looking into rejecting strategies. This research also contributes to more societal knowledge about the role of eyewitnesses in remembering. The results show that the former prisoners are a powerful source in strengthening the master narrative due to their complimentary nature.

Therefore, they play an important role in maintaining or even amplifying the narrative that is remembered, in this case, the one that follows the *Diktaturgedächtnis*.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Information on participants

Former prisoners	Gender	Age	Year of imprisonment	Year of release
Tour A.	Male	63 years	1981	1983
Tour B.	Female	78 years	1974	1977
Tour C.	Male	70 years	1986	1987
Tour D.	Male		1985	1986 (bought)
Tour E.	Male	75 years	1964	1964 (poor physical cond.)
Tour F.	Male	77 years	1985	1986
Tour G.	Male	63 years	1980	1980
Tour H.	Male	59 years	1984	1984

Appendix 2: Map of memorial museum site
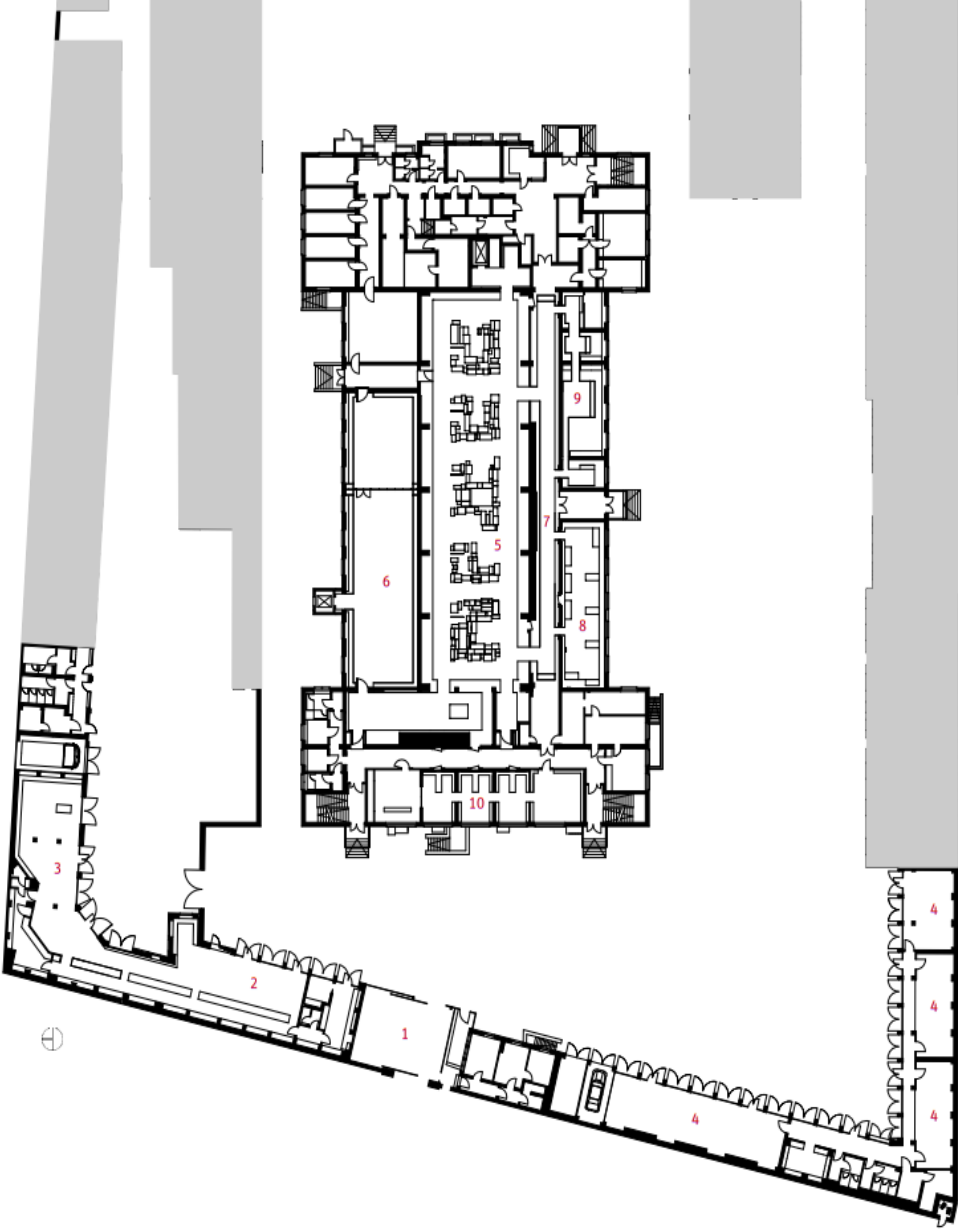
1. Entrance
2. Reception and Bookshop
3. Cafeteria
4. Seminar Room
5. Permanent Exhibition
6. Temporary Exhibition
7. "Hallway of prisons' leaders"
8. Side Area "perpetrator"
9. "Leaders' room"
10. Library

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