



PEGIDA, Dresden, Memory & Me: Research Progress in 2020

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1. Overview of Fieldwork Period, Research Questions, Aims



Basic Info

Interpretive ethnographic fieldwork

- Physical: September 2019 to February 2020
- Virtual: March to June 2020
- Semi-standardized participant and non-participant observation of structures, symbols, behaviors, and communications
- Immediate & mediated recording such as note taking, photos, videos, flyers, demo memorabilia, research on social media, etc.

Participant and non-participant observation of:

- 12 public street events organized by PEGIDA in Dresden,
- 8 public events organized by PEGIDA on Youtube (www.lutziges.de),
- 4 events organized by other far-right actors in Dresden and the region,
- ca. 6 (official) memory events related to the 30th anniversary of the 1989 East German 'Peaceful Revolution' in Dresden, Leipzig, and Berlin,
- ca. 10 (official) memory events related to the 75th anniversary of the destruction of Dresden in Dresden.



Basic Info

Overview field no. 1: PEGIDA's public events on the streets and online, September 2019-May 2020

Date	Time	Place	Movement	Event	Reflexivity
11.02.2019	18:30-20:30	Central Station	Petersburger Straße	Demo	Observation from the margins
18.02.2019	18:30-20:30	Neumarkt	Old Town	Demo	Observation from the margins
02.09.2019	18:30-20:30	Central Station	Petersburger Straße	Demo	Observation from the margins
07.10.2019	17:30-20:30	Neumarkt	Old Town	Demo	Observation from the margins
20.10.2019	14:00-17:00	Neumarkt	none	Anniversary	Observation in and outside
04.11.2019	18:30-20:30	Neumarkt	Old Town	Demo	Participation (marching)
18.11.2019	18:30-20:30	Central Station	Petersburger Straße	Demo	Participation (marching, clapping)
02.12.2019	18:30-20:30	Central Station	Petersburger Straße	Demo	Participation (marching, clapping)
15.12.2019	14:00-17:00	Theaterplatz	none	Christmas carols	Participation (marching, clapping)
20.01.2020	18:30-20:30	Neumarkt	Old Town	Demo	Participation (marching, clapping)
03.02.2020	18:30-20:30	Neumarkt	Old Town	Demo	Observation PEGIDA, participation in counter-demo
17.02.2020	18:30-20:30	Neumarkt	Old Town	Demo	Participation (marching)
02.03.2020	18:30-20:30	Neumarkt	Old Town	Demo	Observation of livestream and chat
06.04.2020	18:30-19:30	YouTube	none	Virtual	Observation of livestream and chat
13.04.2020	18:30-19:30	YouTube	none	Virtual	Observation of livestream and chat
20.04.2020	18:00-18:20	Neumarkt and YouTube	none	Demo and virtual	Observation of livestream and chat
27.04.2020	18:30-19:30	YouTube	none	Virtual	Observation of livestream and chat
04.05.2020	18:30-19:30	YouTube	none	Virtual	Observation of livestream and chat
11.05.2020	18:30-18:50	YouTube	none	Virtual	Observation of livestream and chat
13.05.2020	18:30-19:30	YouTube	none	Virtual	Observation of livestream and chat
18.05.2020	18:20-19:00	Altmarkt	none	Demo	Observation of livestream and chat



Research Questions & Aims

Questions:

- How and why does PEGIDA draw on memory and heritage in its public protest events?
- What is the deeper meaning of PEGIDA's mobilization of the memory of the East German 'Peaceful Revolution' in 1989?

Aims:

Understand why PEGIDA appeals to certain memories, historical symbols, traditions, etc., specifically those related to 1989, in its public protest events: understand strategies and underlying reasons.



2. FATIGUE Book Chapter

“Contested Memories of 1989: Populist Politics of Memory in the PEGIDA Movement”



PEGIDA's Use of Memory



Peaceful Revolution
Leipzig, 1989



PEGIDA's five-year anniversary
Dresden, 20 October 2019



PEGIDA's Use of Memory



Peaceful Revolution
Leipzig, 1989



PEGIDA public event
Dresden, 20 January 2020



PEGIDA's Use of Memory



Joseph Wirmer
Berlin, 1944



PEGIDA's five-year anniversary
Dresden, 20 October 2019



PEGIDA's Use of Memory



André Malraux
Paris, 1974



PEGIDA public event
Dresden, 20 January 2020

„Wer in der Zukunft
lesen will, muss in der
Vergangenheit
blättern. (A. Malraux)
Wacht auf ! ! !“

“Who wants to read in
the future, has to
browse in the past. (A.
Malraux)

Wake up ! ! !”



PEGIDA's Use of Memory



Myth of Martin Luther
Wittenberg, 1517



PEGIDA public event
Dresden, 3 February 2020



Strategic Reason: Collective Action Framing

Collective action frames as social interpretation schemes (Goffman 1986), through which social movements challenge hegemonic world views and coin new meanings (Benford & Snow 2000)



PEGIDA's Christmas event,
Dresden, 15 December 2019

Populist interpretation scheme framing collective action as “legitimate resistance against an illegitimate regime”

Video: “Widerstand” (resistance)



Underlying Reasons (1/2)

Insights from my FATIGUE deliverable “Substantive chapter: Application of the ‘delayed transformational fatigue’-hypothesis to Dresden and eastern Germany, thirty years after the revolution and reunification” (November 2019):

In 2019, eastern Germans still suffer from the shortcomings of the transition of the former GDR (Kollmorgen, 2005; Weisskircher, 2020) – therefore high demand for right-wing populist politics:

- Memory of the transition as a ‘shock therapy’ and ‘colonization’ by West Germany (Kowalczyk, 2019; Ther, 2019)
- Ongoing underrepresentation of eastern Germans in the German political, economic, and cultural elites (Bluhm and Jacobs, 2016)



Underlying Reasons (2/2)

Dimensions of demand for right-wing populist politics in eastern Germany:

- Economic grievances: high levels of unemployment due to the large-scale and abrupt privatization and shutdown of eastern German public companies coordinated by the 'trust agency' (Böick, 2018; Manow, 2018), still lower annual salaries, pensions, levels of personal wealth
- Political grievances: incorporation of the GDR into West Germany rather than 'reunification' – result: no new, common constitution (Vorländer, 2011), prominent feeling of being a 'second-class citizen' (infratest dimap, 2019), simplified understanding of democracy as a 'delivery service' (Vorländer, Herold, Schäller, 2018)
- Social grievances: loss of socio-economic status (Mau, 2019), large-scale emigration towards western Germany, particularly of the young, well-educated, and women
- Cultural grievances: ideological void (Backes, 2016), sudden confrontation with multicultural society, fear of 'foreign infiltration' (Foroutan, 2019)

Conclusion: PEGIDA's activism displays and catalyzes the increasing societal and political demand for right-wing populist politics and the contestation of the legacies and outcomes of the transitional period – culture plays a more important role than economics



Counter-Hegemonic Activism (1/3)

Hegemony & Counter-Hegemony

- “hegemony refers to that aspect of power relationships which is not produced or guaranteed by coercion but by the acceptance (even if fragmentary and not fully conscious) of the rulers’ definitions of reality by the ruled” (Kubik, 1994, 11)
- Relative dominance of a hegemonic model of reality over counter-hegemonic models (Scott 1990)
- Two aspects of hegemony: semiotic (saturation) and psycho-social (resonance) (Aronoff & Kubik, 2013, 82)



Counter-Hegemonic Activism (2/3)

Construction of field no. 2: Official ('hegemonic') commemoration of 1989 in Dresden – Saxony – Germany

Date	Event	Time	Place	Organizers
24.09.2019	Launch of the GDR film project "Open Memory Box"	18:00-19:30	Bundesstiftung Aufarbeitung, Berlin	Bundesstiftung Aufarbeitung
28.09.2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Zug der Freiheit" between Dresden and Prague• Commemoration Prague Liben• "Fest der Freiheit", German Embassy• "Fest der Freiheit", Dresden Hbf	Whole day	Dresden Central Station – Prague Liben Station – German Embassy Prague – Dresden	Kommission „30 Jahre Friedliche Revolution und Wiedervereinigung“
03.10.2019-22.10.2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Symposium "Art and Revolution"• Exhibition "1989"• Plays and screenings ("Fidelio" and "Die Ritter der Tafelrunde")		Dresden Staatsschauspiel and Semperoper	Dresden Staatsschauspiel and Semperoper, Stadt Dresden, Dresdner Geschichtsverein
09.10.2019	Festival of Lights: Gathering Augustusplatz, march around Ring	17:00-21:00	Leipzig Augustusplatz, Leipziger Ring, "Runde Ecke"	Stadt Leipzig
04.11.2019-10.11.2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exhibitions "1989"• Guided tours		Berlin Alexanderplatz, Schlossplatz, Brandenburger Tor, Stasi-Gedenkstätte	Stadt Berlin
09.11.2019	Demokratiekonferenz	10:00-17:00	Dresden Johannstadthalle	Stadt Dresden, Dresdner Geschichtsverein
09.11.2019	Fall of the Berlin Wall-livestream	19:30-23:30	World Wide Web – places along the former inner-German border	Kommission „30 Jahre Friedliche Revolution und Wiedervereinigung“



Counter-Hegemonic Activism (3/3)

Hegemonic discourse

- “1989” as Germany’s only successful revolution thanks to the East German freedom fighters (specifically, the “Embassy refugees”, “Monday demonstrators”, “artists”) as well as the European neighbors (specifically, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia)
- Successful realization of liberal democracy, (social) market economy, and individual freedoms in the Federal Republic since 1990
- PEGIDA as far-right and local actor – adoption of the “1989”-symbolism as farce and affront

Counter-hegemonic discourse

- “1989” as successful democratic revolution thanks to the entirety of East Germans (apart from the representatives of the state socialist regime and later leftist politicians)
- Decline of democratic values (specifically, freedom of speech) in the Federal Republic in the Merkel-era
- “Central Germans” (PEGIDA) as true democrats – “West Germans” as namby-pamby and “left-green filthy”
- PEGIDA as a civic, grassroots-democratic and transnational movement – adoption of the “1989”-symbolism legitimate due to historical and systematic parallels



Souvenir from the field. PEGIDA anniversary, 20 October 2019

Thank you for your attention!

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