Group-Analytic Contexts

September 2017 ISSUE NO 77

Newsletter of
THE GROUP-ANALYTIC SOCIETY
International

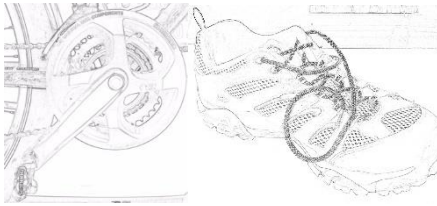
© the Group-Analytic Society International

Looking Back on Berlin…

…..and forward to Barcelona

160 Km in 3 Days: Hiking and Biking the Berliner Mauer

By the participants, edited by Teresa von Sommaruga Howard



After our three days together, I had the idea of writing about the experience and asking everyone else to add their reflections and photographs also. What has emerged is very richly coloured 'patchwork quilt'. It is long but contains many surprising insights. I am sure my fellow Bikers and Hikers agree with me that we hope it gives you, the reader, a flavour of Berlin from the Mauer.

We began this long journey, Bikers and Hikers on 12 August, just before the anniversary of an auspicious weekend. 56 years ago, Berliners had woken up on the Sunday morning of 13 August 1961 to discover a barbed wire barricade had appeared overnight cutting off East from West.

On the evening before, the Bikers met with the Hikers for our first median group. These were planned for the end of each day and a social dreaming matrix each morning. Next day and after social dreaming the Bikers set off from north-east Berlin in the former eastern sector. A smaller group of Hikers also set off to hike sections of the wall. We had agreed to meet each evening in a median group. As she was as stay in the same hotels as the Bikers, one Hiker, Sarah from Israel, also met the Bikers for social dreaming each morning.

Little did we realise what these two groups would come to represent over the three days. Julie Howley asked the question afterwards is this, “a group or not a group”?

Thoughts Beforehand

From Dale Godby, Dallas, USA: Biker

So why bike and hike the wall? For the Americans who organized the ride, the Berlin Wall resonated deeply in the well of the American Social Unconscious. It was 22 months after its erection on August 13, 1961 that American president, John F. Kennedy, speaking in Berlin on June 26, 1963 said, “Ich bin ein Berliner”. On June 12, 1987, American President Ronald Reagan, at the site of the Brandenburg Gate said, “Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!” And more recently, during his election campaign, Donald Trump, said, “I will build a great wall -- and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me --and I'll build them very inexpensively. I will build a great, great wall on our southern border, and I will make Mexico pay for that wall. Mark my words".

But when the Americans mentioned they were designing T-Shirts for the bike and hike trip, we discovered the difference between the social unconscious that exists between nations. The Americans were used to having a T-Shirt for events like the hike and bike tour and were surprised when they began receiving hesitant responses about not wanting to all wear the shirts and concerns about looking like team. This all began to make sense when we started to learn about how the post WWII Germans think about uniforms. We were off to a good start as our dialogue began to unfold. Prior to our ride an article, ‘Berlin Walls’, written by Winnicott in 1969 and published after his death in 1986 came to light. He argues for the importance of ‘Berlin Walls. He sees the developmental need for walls within the individual to keep the good and bad forces apart; until the time when healthy development allows for their integration. He sees the wall as a dividing line, “which at its worst postpones conflict

and at its best holds opposing forces away from each other for long periods of time so that people may play and pursue the arts of peace. The arts of peace belong to the temporary success of a dividing line between opposing forces; the lull between times when the wall has ceased to segregate good and bad."[7]

Melissa Black, Dallas, USA: Biker
As the person organizing the logistics for the bike ride from across the Atlantic I am going to focus on some of the unusual parts of my role. It took a great deal of imagination, some teamwork from our Berlin member, and a little bit of luck! I enjoy the anticipation of an adventure, so playing in my mind with hotels, luggage obstacles and forming new friendships was a fun past time for the months leading up to the ride. I tend to be detail oriented and a bit Type A, so it can also be a challenge for me to play well with others when organizing events. Thankfully, my co-organizers are well known to me and we play on each other's strengths very well.

David Loader, Dallas, USA: Biker
Being the only non-member of the GASI group was not as intimidating as one might imagine because I have had the pleasure of similar adventures with Dale Godby, Bob Bennett and of course, Melissa. I was very intrigued to get to do this with such a diverse group of people from different countries with different experiences from my own. I did not have any idea of what to expect from the SDM or median group experiences but everyone was extremely accepting and encouraged my participation in the experience.

Teresa von Sommaruga Howard, London, UK: Biker
It was daunting in prospect and reality, but not to be missed. The idea of biking around my father's birth city with group analytic colleagues and starting each day with a social dreaming matrix and ending with a median group was almost too good to be true. Then the daunting part. Doubts about whether I could cycle so far began to set in. So, each day I took my bike out to cycle around my neighbourhood in London and I did get stronger but perhaps not strong enough. I had to

---

[7] Winnicott, D., (1986). 'Berlin Walls', *Home Is Where We Start From: Essays by A Psychoanalyst*. Ed. Winnicott, D., Shepherd, R. & Davis, M. New York: Norton. p. 224

deal with being the slow coach!

Julie Howley, Wexford, Ireland: Hiker
When I realized that I couldn't take on the biking of the Wall Trail I proposed the idea of a parallel hiking event. This was agreed to as long as I took on the organization of it. I did this with enthusiasm and trepidation in equal measure. My idea, communicated to the Hikers who had signed up, was always that the hike would be like a pilgrimage, that it would unfold as we walked and that the Crossing Borders theme might be inspired by the Berlin Wall but would emerge from our walking and talking together across our own international borders. And, so it proved.

Mary Cullen, Dublin, Ireland: Hiker
My expectation was of a hike, of getting to know some people before the Symposium and of re-visiting some of Berlin's history on this my second visit. I had been in Berlin two years ago and was looking forward to more exposure to a city which I liked a great deal. I was also somewhat apprehensive because of the history which because of the time that I was born and perhaps other reasons was very much part of the culture of my growing up in Ireland. I wondered how the Symposium event might deal with all of this.

Fiona Parker, Northern Ireland, UK: Hiker
I had opportunities in the period between 1988 to 1989 to visit Berlin. As I was living in Hannover as a British Army wife, I could accompany my husband who was able to pass easily through check-point Charlie in uniform with his military ID card. He was instructed to only speak to Russian soldiers and not to acknowledge GDR personnel. I had the freedom to move between these two worlds in a way that East and West Germans were not. I recall the stern immobile faces of the GDR Guards and found the Russian soldiers intimidating. It was an uneasy experience walking through Checkpoint Charlie into the very different landscape of East Berlin, seeing 'No-man's land' with the Reichstag looking dilapidated and buildings covered in shrapnel from the Second World War. I recall the shops being empty and being looked upon with suspicion by shop keepers. My only claim to fame is that I slept through the wall coming down! I remember looking out the window early the next morning and seeing

lots of Trabants on the road, people queuing outside banks and then we listened to the news.

Overnight Checkpoint Charlie had changed with streams of people arriving from East Berlin, people were clapping their arrivals either on foot or by car, the guards seemed more human and Marlborough were there handing out cigarettes as a welcome to the West. There was a relief in the air that it had all happened so peacefully.

Sue Lieberman, Edinburgh, Scotland: Biker for two days Hiker for one Day

It was my fourth time in Berlin. My first visit there was for a few days at the end of December 1989. Late on that New Year's Eve I was hauled up by excited hands to join a throng of drunken, jubilant Berliners teetering unsteadily on top of the Wall. This could have been my first experience of a Large Group.

On my second trip some six years later, the whole of central Berlin had become a building site, yielding nothing recognisable from that earlier visit. 17 years on, friend Sheena and I spent five days in the city, at a time when I was recovering from wrist surgery and feeling delicate. I had just finished writing *After Genocide,* and much of our time was devoted to visiting sites embodying this part of Germany's heavy past: the Holocaust Memorial, the Holocaust Museum, the Jewish Museum. Even the new glass tower that rises over the Reichstag, Sheena told me, had been intentionally placed so that the Bundestag and its federal politicians would always overlook these painful reminders. Unified Berlin is, for the moment, conceptually inseparable from the unsettling reality that underneath even the most cultured exterior can lurk the most destructive and murderous hatred.

Now it was time for another perspective. The Symposium theme of crossing borders, cycling and hiking the commemorative route of the old Wall, would, I imagined, present ways of absorbing the impact of other dimensions of Germany's turbulent and difficult recent history on lives past and present.

Theo von der Marwitz, Bremen, Germany: Biker

My personal motivation to join the trip was the chance to come together with all these unknown people willing to approach this congress in this specific way: from the remainders of history laying around everywhere in and around Berlin, from the periphery to the centre.

It was my first GASi-congress and before, I was a bit afraid about the dangers of incohesion there, so for me, these meetings were of central importance, not only the biking.

Sarah Kalai, Jerusalem, Israel: Hiker
I was apprehensive about taking part in the symposium for two reasons. The first was that Berlin was the city of the state that brought huge destruction to my family, my people, the world. The second were memories of the Lisbon symposium reminded me of how uneasy it was for me.

So, I was glad to join a group, some of whom I knew from the forum, to help in my first contact with the city and later with the symposium. In addition, the structure that included a median group and social dreaming promised containment.

Fiona Parker, Northern Ireland, UK: Hiker
It was lovely to meet everyone on the first evening in the median group and the bike/hike shirts were a delight – the logo was perfect as were all the greetings in different languages on the back. I felt a little bit of an outsider to start with in the median group and on hearing Irish voices knew that I was being given an opportunity to think about my own crossing of borders in relation to growing up in Northern Ireland. It was really important for me to hear German voices at this group and being told to speak slowly; preparation for the conference.

Markus Schirpke, Berlin: Biker
When I heard about the project of bike and hike the wall it was tempting and daunting to have a three-day physical and psychological experience with people I mostly didn´t know before.

Sarah K. Small, Portland, USA: Hiker
I was inspired to attend the GASi conference, initially, for the chance to meet some dear colleagues whom I'd only known in tele conferences for a year or two, but not yet in person. It would also serve to celebrate the completion of some long complicated personal projects; and a chance to visit family & friends in England as well. Also, it's true that Groups are a lively edge of my psychotherapy practice here in Portland, Oregon and I'm ever glad to learn more about groups.

Two Groups on the Journey

Dale Godby, Dallas, USA: Biker
So, we began our ride with a sense of adventure and with two subgroups: Hikers and Bikers. Being a liaison between the two subgroups gave me a sense of empathy for leaders. Let me explain. Because the Hikers and Bikers took separate routes with the desire to meet each evening for a median group it was necessary for the groups to communicate. Communication was hampered by cell phone problems and the difficulty of predicting how long the biking route would take. So, twice we had to reschedule or cancel our evening meetings due to little or incomplete opportunities for communication. I remember being on the phone and as the representative for the Bikers saying we need to meet at this specific time. It left little time or opportunity to consult with the Hikers. They had little chance to respond other than to agree. This led to a dominant/submissive dialectic, which I didn't intend, but due to time and communicational constraints was true nevertheless. I hated the feeling of dictating the terms and at the same time felt it necessary to decide in real time. This emerged in our median and social dreaming matrix as a reflection of the German East-West matrix. We sought to process it, but I feel sure there are feelings remaining, which I hope we will examine in this written reflection.

Melissa Black Dallas, USA: Biker
Once we began the ride we were happy to let Björn take control of the day and the route. But each day as we made our way along the route I found myself feeling a bit anxious for the as yet unknown hotel that would appear. Had I chosen a good place? Was our luggage going to arrive at the correct spot? Would everyone be satisfied with their room? Thankfully I have lived long enough to realize that I cannot control the personality variables inherent in these questions so I settled for finding satisfaction that we all had a clean and comfortable room and that most needs were met to satisfaction! I jumped through a couple of hurdles with a few of the hotels, but hopefully nobody noticed too much of the 'drama'.

Along the route I enjoyed the seesawing nature of the line of bicycles. Conversations ebbed and flowed over the course of the days as motivation, route and the weather changed as often as our riding partners. We laughed, we solved the international issues facing our planet, we made world peace and even had a fight or two along the way. At the end of the day, I feel certain that I walked away from the

bike and into the Symposium with new friends and many great memories.

Teresa von Sommaruga Howard

To begin we took photos of the group in the sunshine. Although the light was bright as we got on our bikes it was soon cold, rainy and grey. That first day did not provide the sunny adventure I had envisaged. The light, plastic capes, not unlike big plastic bags, thoughtfully provided by Berlin on Bikes, proved invaluable not only to keep out the wet but also the wind. The morning was spent zig-zagging our way around the city with our guide Björn giving us fascinating titbits of history. We saw a lot and discussed a lot but we did not make many kilometres.

Our first stop was in Prenzlauer Berg where Björn explained the idealistic planning history of Berlin. In the 1920 there was a clear policy to build mixed communities, not integrated but mixed. The buildings have survived pretty-much intact since that time. The houses were built around an inner court with a front house and a 'hinter' house behind. The working class lived in the rear house while the middle class lived in the front. My father and his mother lived in a Hinterhaus, which I learnt later from relatives was always a source of shame for my grandmother. Björn observed that Berlin still had a policy of ensuring that those who worked in Berlin could afford to live there. Only 10% of housing is privately owned in Berlin. The current policy is "Keeping Berlin what it is: a liveable, forward-looking city and a good place to live!" But, people earn lower wages in Berlin than in the rest of Germany. Björn compared this aim of mixing communities with other capital cities in Europe such as Paris where the poor live on the outskirts in shanty towns or ghettos. Such places seed opposition and riot.

Björn reminded us that it was only in 1871 that Berlin became the capital of the newly unified German Empire and Bismark became the first German chancellor. I later read that the Berlin Ringbahn (railway) began operating then too. At that time, the population was 826,341. Now it is about 3.5 million. Before the wall was built, Berlin was still the capital, an industrial and financial centre.

But this moved to Bonn after the wall was built.

Our next stop Bernauerstrasse symbolises the social split between East and West. It is the place where the overnight construction of the Wall put a violent end to everyday life for former neighbours. From one day to the next, people could no longer travel freely to visit neighbours, friends and relatives. The house across the street suddenly became part of another political system and inaccessible. Unwittingly the people living here were caught up in an episode of post-war German history. Many desperate to escape, jumped out of windows and paid with their lives. Here it is possible to see the only section of the Berlin Wall preserved in its full width; two walls that in themselves were difficult to climb over and the 'death strip' between. Björn commented that it is still not as easy to move back and forth from East to West as it was after the war before the wall was erected. Something was destroyed that Is not easy to fit together. He explained that when East Germans read newspapers they see it as an official state voice whereas those from the West see it as a personal opinion. He went further, "We hear and read the same words but the pictures in our minds are different". One titbit that I did not know: apparently Kennedy did not do anything to prevent the building of the wall, believing it would have precipitated a third world war.

Imagining the wall, I had always thought of it as a clearly defined straight line with East and West easily identifiable but it was not as simple as that. In many places, the wall took a convoluted route and it was often difficult to tell which side was which. Björn gave us clue to look for newly planted birch trees but even so it was difficult. Björn suggested we look for where the bars and theatres were. That did not help me either. After I got back to Berlin I bought myself a map to track where we had been. It is a long route that doubles back on itself in many places. The journey from East to West is long! Björn told us that in the 9 years he had been a guide he had only been asked to do this trip 5 times.

The first day was hard, not only because of the weather but also because we had to do most of the kilometres after lunch in one hard push along bumpy country paths all the while dodging and encouraging some very exhausted looking runners going in the opposite direction. They were competing in an extreme marathon around the whole wall in one day to commemorate the building of the wall. We finally made it to Teltow as it was getting dark just after eight o'clock exhausted. Almost all our hiking colleagues had given up waiting for us. Our attempts to make contact with them had not been successful. This was our first experience of learning that relying

on mobile phones across national borders did not work! So, no Median group that night! Just a dinner together and bed.

The next day began first with a social dreaming matrix and then a median group but with only one hiker as the others were staying elsewhere. We set off in sunshine along streets lined with trees, pretty houses and gardens towards Potsdam and close to Wannsee, then across the Havel River on the Glienicker Brucke past the Schloss Babelberg on the hill. That day we cycled through meadows full of wild flowers, yellow and mauve, along the banks of the river, through and fresh shady forests, past huge and amazing houses lining a street called Karl Marx Strasse. The irony was not lost on us.

Every so often we passed grey watchtowers, remnants of the wall, memorials to those murdered trying to escape 'the giant prison of the East' where for this special weekend many fresh flowers had been laid. Every time an escape succeeded, further reinforcements resulted. Along the Havel, a net was even placed along the dividing line to prevent divers from a diving school crossing over from the West. People living in the East dreamt of freedom but when it finally came many lost their jobs and became unemployed. They learnt that freedom comes at a price also.

David Loader, Dallas, USA: Biker

When we picked up our bikes the day before the ride began we were able to meet and visit with our guide Björn. Always up for an adventure I was really excited to begin the journey after our initial meeting with such an interesting character serving as a guide. Melissa and I had also visited the 'Day in the Life of the GDR' museum before the ride so I had a limited idea of what life must have been like during the time of the wall. Björn did a great job of melding the practical and emotional life experiences of everyday people while explaining the politics and history of the wall. It almost became a game for me and others to attempt to always know what side of the wall I was riding on – was I in the East or the West? I was surprised by the eerie feeling I would get when it was explained that we were actually riding between the two walls in what was known as the 'Death Zone'.

On the last day near the end of the ride Björn told the story of the young mother who was one of the first ones who was allowed through the gates on 9 November 1989. She had put her baby to bed and left them alone to go see what was happening as more and more people were congregating at the gate. After a lot of confusion and no real idea of what they were supposed to do with the people, the guards started letting a few people through the gate. After handing over her

papers to the guards, she went on what she believed would be a short visit to the west. When she tried to return home to the East without her papers, she was denied re-entry. Her obvious distress that she was not going to be allowed back through the gate to her sleeping child became the cause that people on both sides of the gate embraced. With all the confusion, no clear orders and citizens on both sides of the gate yelling and demanding she be let through, the guards gave up and opened the gates to everyone. This story really brought a human element to the events of November 9th and I found myself able to imagine the stress and fear of the young mother and the joining of both sides to reunite this mother and child.

Julie Howley, Wexford, Ireland: Hiker

The hiking group set up as a group with permeable boundaries – we could be joined and we could be left. We had four to five core group members and up to eight on one day. Each day we first hiked a section of the Wall Trail, then travelled to meet the Bikers for the median group experience and lastly travelled back to our various resting places in the city. The importance for us of the meeting with the Bikers is perhaps illustrated in the fact that I actually cut the length of each day's hike in order to allow more time for the necessary travelling. Foulkes (1957) talks about how, in the development of group analysis, he moved away from a focus on the group's occupation so that the dynamics of the group could emerge. The focus then moves from the *occupation* to the *preoccupation* – what is it that is moving us, inspiring us, provoking us….? Before the Hike and Bike began, in our online sharing, there was a desire for there to be a single group with two distinct sub-groups. At the median group on the first evening both subgroups were gathered together. I think now that the overall group struggled to develop cohesion and that the preoccupations may have been different. I think that the hikers, because of their core occupation of travelling to meet with the bikers, had a preoccupation with the unity of the overall group. I wonder if the same preoccupation existed for the bikers whose core occupation was to travel from A to B, taking in lots of information, with the group event happening at the end of a long day's cycling? The absence of most of the hikers from the Social Dreaming Matrix in the mornings also constituted a loss although it was good to know that we had a

representative present! When the Bikers were late the first evening I noticed my own reluctance to leave the venue. I felt concern – was everyone alright? And I was reluctant to give up the concept of the 'one group' by leaving even when it became clear that we had to go.

Theo von der Marwitz, Bremen, Germany: Biker

My contribution started with an answer to Julie about her presumptions about the different priorities in our groups concerning our meetings.

Only after arriving I fully realised the existence of the two groups and that there was a remarkable difference between them: we, the Bikers, had an external leader – you, the Hikers, had to find your way alone, we were privileged, well fed with information all over the day - you moved like scouts in an unknown territory, we had two leaders – Björn for the biking and Dale for the group – you, Julie, had to bring together both functions in your person.

In the course of the first day, especially during the long lasting and tiring second half of the trip, I noticed a sort of regressive process within myself, probably in the group too. Questions of my childhood, during lengthy mountain-walks with my parents, came back to my mind: 'Is it still far away?' 'I need a rest, a place for ... !' The first day, Björn would not give us exact answers, an ominous half an hour was promised several times, and the group helped herself shouting, encouraging shouts for the groups of runners who came the opposite way – encouraging for ourselves too, signals to the others, warnings for holes or slippery parts in our way, "Traffic!", the sound of the group developed. Here you are right, Julie, during these hours of our tour the aim of the meeting was lost, all our energy had to be concentrated to make the trip, to stay together as a group.

The question of leading became crucial: Björn's preoccupation was to bring us safe to the hotel, the aim of the group-meeting with the hikers at this point did not belong to his priorities.

Fiona Parker, Northern Ireland, UK: Hiker

We met on the first day at Potsdammer Platz train station, it was wet and cold so we took shelter in the Spy museum, we got our bearings and then set off. We were able to quickly connect with the wall, the memorial stones that still trace the line of the wall and in visiting the outside memorial at the Topography of Terror. It was a good place to start – a very visceral memorial. The guard house at Checkpoint Charlie remains but the surrounding terrain now has a carnival feeling with the Trabant fairground close by. I found it difficult to assimilate

my experiences of Berlin both then and now. I am glad that the trail of the wall has been marked in spite of the wish of some to eradicate it completely. I have only had a very small experience of East and West Berlin but it is right inside of me both then and now. The as yet untold traumas, separations and loss during the cold war era as well as the process for East Berliners and East Germans having to transition from one way of life to another.

Over the three days there was a warm and comfortable closeness in the hiking group, with different people joining each day. We seemed to work best as a five, like a family grouping. We got to know each other through conversation, companionship and the sharing of roasted almonds from Israel, gifts of perfectly formed petite roses from a local park and the ritual ceremony at Glienecke Bridge burning sage and Native American sweet grass. In thinking about the East/West divide gave me an opportunity to think and talk about the north/south divide in Ireland.

Sarah Kalai, Jerusalem, Israel: Hiker

I was glad that Julie took the organization in her hands and did it so well. During the walks, I leaned on her a lot and felt the freedom and obligation to take part in answering the question: where are we right now?

So, I came to our tour with almost no knowledge about Berlin, I cut myself (as much as possible) from current life and dived into a new reality. It was great.

I learned about East/West, had to change some ideas I had about it. The questioning as we went along the trail, "Are we in the East or West?" I was reminded of those moments this week. I was walking in Jerusalem with a British woman, trying to explain her where is the Jerusalem from before 67, the different populations and so. Such a destruction is going on here, destruction of better relationship in the future. So probably, there was also envy in my heart while walking in a city that is peaceful now.

I found myself in between the two groups hikers and bikers. Partly the story of my life. When the bikers were late at the end of the first day, and I was the only hiker who stayed in the same hotel as the bikers in the same time I felt the anger of hikers who waited hours and left disappointed, and the concern about the bikers who were so late. The meetings around a table in dinners were meaningful for me.

Hiking for hours invited talking. These were occasions for

profound discussions. I have a special feeling about our last day. I joined Julie and Fiona talking about painful events in Ireland. I can close my eyes and hear the tone of their voices. Also touring Berlin, looking for Kathe Kollwitz with Theo and Ingrid as guides, was so meaningful.

Sarah K. Small, Portland, USA: Hiker
I chose to walk rather than bike because one of the people I'd hoped to meet was to be walking. Our times together proved to be some of the more meaningful parts of the entire conference. If life were a tapestry, a weaving, where relationships form the weft and warp, here on this hilarious trek were some soul deep cords of the Intimate, irritating, companionable, entertaining, persevering, curious, kind & exhausting; with some genuine bit of awe and gratitude, that seemed to weave us all together. We were silenced together, taking in the horror of the 'topography of terror'. The very walls where someone my mother or grandmother's age were tormented and worse. We walked the streets and came upon discreet bronze plaques in the sidewalk, bearing the names of residents, Jew, Catholic or Gay, who had been taken from this very address. Right here, from this doorway dragged away. In Potsdam, the cobblestone indication of the old wall cutting through the middle of the road; a beautiful residential road, breaking a village in half. Amazing.

Mary Cullen, Dublin, Ireland: Hiker
I was glad to say yes when asked if I would go along on the hike. Retrospectively, I can see that Julie was handed a big task to co-ordinate the hiking group and had done huge preparation beforehand which informed all of us on the hike, much to our advantage. My only preparation had been to re-read Primo Levi's book- If This Is a Man- one which I have always held in high regard. So, I was somewhat ashamed of my lack of preparation and inability to contribute some of the historical information particularly in relation to the East-West division and its impact post-war. Additionally, I was feeling a little rude in relation to my reticence about wearing the generously proffered T-shirt. Somehow, I had a fantasy that we would wear this T-shirt - as a group - and it conjured up images for me not just of boarding school uniform but behind all of that, given that we were in Berlin, the enforced wearing of other garments which would identify me/us as part of an acceptable/ unacceptable group-insiders/ outsiders- or perhaps as part of a theme later to emerge - resourced or under-resourced.

Thanks for the T-shirt! It is interesting the fantasies it evoked in advance which coloured my/ our perceptions as we went along.

Markus Schirpke, Berlin, Germany: Biker
The second day in social dreaming the metaphor appeared that the bike ride is a kind of womb experience before we are born into the symposium.

While trying to write about 'bike and hike the wall' this metaphor seems important to me. We had three days-time to be close together and explore ourselves and the others during riding; telling stories, asking questions, listening, sharing food, swimming, telling jokes, discussing politics and also more personal stories. The stories Björn told us were almost new for me as well. I liked the story about the wall, which is still standing inside a building of the parliament. In this building Björn told us are two important committees of the Bundestag. One is the committee for controlling the secretary of the interior and his federal agencies. The other committee is for controlling the intelligence services. In this building above the wall East and West Germans (former enemies) work together to control the government and ensure a democratic country.

Reflections

Julie Howley, Wexford, Ireland: Hiker
I also wonder about the 'leader' of the biking group, Björn, not being present at any of the groups?[8] What was the meaning and the impact of this absence? Several contributions here have named the difficulty of communication between the two groups with the emphasis on the technology of communication. I wonder if the best communication possible was available to us what the content of that communication would have been and, indeed, if it would have been any different from, as one contribution put it, a dominant-submissive content?

I have several associations to the theme of Crossing Borders as it emerged both within the hiking group and between the Hiker and Biker subgroups. The emphasis in the hiking group on using and sharing our own resources led to some powerful, warm, and indeed quite hilarious experiences. A strong, collegial bond developed in the

[8] Björn was invited to join us but felt he needed to get back to his family.

group despite the change in membership over the three days and this bond was nurtured by the four or five core members. In our group, there were a few borders of note – that between Jerusalem and the West Bank and that between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Inspired by the story of the Berlin Wall the pain of our own experiences of division, of otherness, of conflict became highlighted and a dialogue began which I feel will not end now that our hike is over. In our relationship with the bikers there was much reference in the median group to the relationship between East and West Berlin – the resourced and the unresourced, the powerful and the weak. For me there is little doubt that we became caught up in a German matrix of the illusion of unity alongside persistent division. But there is another analogy too I think and that is of the European Union with its powerful, policy-determining centre and its weak and vulnerable margins. This matrix is also one that is pervasively shaped by power relations and it is clear that the power is at the centre and that, at the margins, an anger has been building for some time. I felt this anger myself as we walked along Karl Marx Strasse (Potsdam) beside the lakeside villas where the private owners have sealed off lakeshore access to the public. My fantasy was that perhaps these were the private bondholders who the Irish, Greek, Portuguese and Spanish tax payers were forced to bail out by the austerity policies imposed from the centre.

Theo von der Marwitz, Bremen, Germany: Biker

Your question, Julie, why we did not include and invite him to our meetings is really an important idea for future planning of such trips. As well as the question of having two leaders in our group, one saying good bye in the evening, the other taking over. During the day, Björn mostly biking in front, Dale often at the end of the long lane trying to keep us together.

These differences contributed a lot to our missing each other, perhaps together with all the divisions and old frictions of the Berlin-matrix, we were exposed to: 'We were out to Berlin in the green, in the green, where the ruins are rotting in the sun ...'

It's a place where the grandchildren of the former losers of history nowadays turn out to be the winners, and at the end, the winner takes it all. Perhaps our difficulties in discrimination – where was East, where was West – may find also an additional explanation partially in the simple fact that the former East with all the subventions of 'Aufbau Ost' meanwhile looks more western than the shabby former West ...

Again, and I say this as a German, we needed the external

guide.

For me, there is another unsolved question: Why such a small number of German colleagues joined us? Markus, do you have an idea? You also mentioned that you did not know much about the wall before, not much more than the others from abroad. That was the same with Ingrid and me. Especially we had no idea about the function of the 2 walls, to capture the 'Republikflüchtlinge' alive trapping them in between.

Several times during the trip I felt so ashamed, about these blind spots in my memory, in my knowledge, about my avoidance to deal with this important part of our history. A western avoidance, the people from the East had no other chance than to confront themselves.

Mostly young men were shot and many more went to prison, young men which would be in my age today. I remember my need for crossing borders and I had the chance to do so, especially in this time of my life. It is perhaps a mixture of guilt and feelings of shame, that we left them alone. Even today, the confrontation with this part of our history is painful, so the thin layer of vegetation covering the former "Todesstreifen" may function like an incomplete repression – you better don't touch.

Markus Schirpke, Berlin, Germany: Biker

In the womb experience with the Bikers and (Hikers) the biking, the landscape, the history and Björn's stories can be seen as triangulating objects, which also framed the group and helped us to grow together and handle the differences. So, I had time to get used to speak English the whole day and realise my (West) German identifications. For example, I didn´t know that the GDR tried to avoid as hard as possible to kill people at the wall, because every killed person was bad for the propaganda war. Coming to education (comparing values/systems in Germany and the US) I suddenly felt not West German but German and in the mirror of the other Europeans – European. I realised that the identifications (also influenced by propaganda) are a reason for difference and even not understanding the other. On the other hand, some of the participants were able to speak and understand German, which surprised me. I hadn´t anticipated this. So, during the biking on the remains of the separating and imprisoning wall, nourished and protected by the womb, I found new similarities, connections and differences I hadn´t thought about and a bunch of siblings.

Karen O'Shea, Sligo, Ireland: Hiker for One Day

My immediate association with my hiking experience was the warmth

with which I was met as I joined the hiking group on the last day of their walk along the path of the Wall. As we walked, I began to make connections with each member. I don't think I had realised until then, how much I desired a group within the large group of the symposium. I began to recognise how it linked with decision to go to the Symposium, a desire to extend myself beyond my Irish group analytic community and begin to build an international one. I wanted to move beyond familiar shores

As an Irish woman, there is always a sense, maybe even an anticipation, that if you can place some-one you might actually know something about them, 'Ah, you're from x - well I lived there once for a while', 'Oh, is that right, I had a cousin who was married to a woman from there'... and so I attempted to weave my web of connectivity by discovering where my fellow walkers were from.

While I could feel my desire to be recognised and visible as a member of this new community I was also in touch with something of what it means to be the 'newly arrived'. The anxiety, checking my understanding of the norms and customs, as in ringing Julie to find out if I needed to bring lunch or did we buy it en-route and the desire to make a contribution, like helping to read the map. And just when I thought I had begun to land with the 'hikers', I landed into the median group, and came face to face with the 'bikers' none of whom I had spent time with. Ah regression, how I know thee so well!!!

A few thoughts from my day of walking: the notion of escape, was a theme that particularly took hold. The idea of getting beyond the wall and all that this could take. I began to think about the drive involved in the risk to cross over to the other side. The photographic images of people being pulled in both directions - on the one side by those helping them escape and on the other by those demanding that they stay. The small plaques on the footpaths marking the names of individuals and families that had tried and failed to make that perilous journey. The bravery and the sense of loss intertwined in each one.

Fiona Parker, Northern Ireland, UK: Hiker

The Berliner Mauerweg gave us an opportunity to explore are own personal complexities of identity, culture, political affiliation and lived histories. We were sensitive to emotive ‘hotspots’ weaving in and out of spaces together to allow for on-going dialogue. Walking together enabled us to move in and out of different configurations both physically and psychologically, it was a very special experience. Eating together in the evening after the median group also developed the closeness of the hiking group but meant that we missed out on

spending time with the bikers.

The Glienicke bridge stands out for me in thinking about the dynamics or our little group. I was struck afterwards that we had not crossed the bridge, the group felt fractious and cranky and I now wonder why, what were we picking up unconsciously? We seemed hemmed in somehow. The Glienicke bridge has a long history and became known as the Bridge of spies during the cold war as it became a meeting place for the exchange of spies. The East German government claimed the bridge as the Bridge of Unity. I felt compelled to return on my own to cross the bridge and felt freer in doing so, the landscape was surprisingly beautiful. I have fond memories of finding the lovely little social neighbourhood with buildings made out of recycled material, the gorgeous lunch and unexpectedly meeting up with the bikers and then their arrival at Spandau as we rested in the park. On the final day, we stopped for lunch at a Kantine and I wondered if this was a tribute to life in East Berlin with the workers all eating together. Throughout the hike I was constantly wanting to know which side I was on and it felt important for me to walk on the East side of Berlin as much as possible. I did not mind when the Bikers referred to us as the East Berliners as we did have a richness of community spirit and a pool of internal resources within the group. When the Bikers did not return on time on the first evening I thought of the 'disappeared' both in Germany and in Ireland. I was sad when we were not able to have a final meal together.

Mary Cullen, Wexford, Ireland: Hiker

The first median group started late which surprised me as already we were crossing the boundaries of my expectations but I found it stimulating and thought provoking. With hindsight, we might have talked about our differing ideas, plans, fantasies with regard to meeting up every night for the median group. Looking back now it seems that we had an unrealistic expectation of a cohesive median group which was not going to be possible and had not been thought about by the combined group(s) as a whole. We did however, send an emissary who represented us every evening and morning at the Social Dreaming Group, which I found comforting, knowing that we were represented in some way. The notion of a transitional space comes to mind, as Alain Vannier (French Psychoanalyst) puts it ---'the future subject (group!) in transit' …I think now of the lost possibilities of a more cohesive experience but also the impossibility of such an experience and the gain in accepting our lack.

Some illusionment and disillusionment then. Already I was disappointed not to be biking and then having to confront the shame of finding that I was holding up the group because I could not walk! What a regressive position to hold for the group. I was discomfited/disturbed, unable to work out directions and know something about the history. Something about being in Berlin got into the group matrix and highlighted for me a diminishment of some kind in the not knowing the language, the route, the leaning on someone who might show us the way.

Karen O'Shea, Sligo, Ireland: Hiker for a Day

The process of reconciliation also came into sharp relief for me. It came through conversation, through landscape, the individual segments of the wall that remain standing and through the memorial sites. The idea of 'not forgetting' in some way marrying a willingness to go further. Finding a way to speak about the past, without remaining in it. It brought home to me how my grandparents never talked about the civil war in Ireland, how in my family, I seemed to learn that 'the less said, the better', how some members of the community in which I now live learned to 'keep their heads down' during the 'Troubles'. It reaffirmed my belief that the work of reconciliation only begins when we can find ways of reaching across borders and can only continue when we risk speaking to each other. I write that as if 'speaking' comes easy - but of course I know the truth of that! So the conference began.....

Mary Cullen, Wexford, Ireland: Hiker

We were an interesting and diverse bunch of people from different places and as has already been written about, all of us with our own borders/boundaries both actual and metaphorical which have impinged in our countries of origin and within ourselves. Paradoxically, I truly enjoyed the fun and camaraderie on the hike, the walks with different sub-groups, the people from different places, the expansion and contraction of numbers on different days, the getting lost, and the not knowing where we were going. We were so surprised to unexpectedly meet the bikers after a fab lunch on our first day. We were leaving and they hadn't yet had lunch with still 60 kilometres to cycle! How unrealistic we were about meeting up later! Of course, over the three days our own dynamics entered in to the equation-tiredness, disappointment, hunger, quest for good wine, wishing for sunshine, for a different type of walk, for grass not concrete, fantasising about the biking group and what it would be like to be part

of it, hoping for a median group at the end of the day to process the experience. At times, we became dispirited in the rain and concrete and needed morale boosting. However, all of the time in this setting what we could not but be aware of in our group matrix is how lucky and fortunate we are, for now. There was great kindness shown with sharing of food, drinks, almonds, fruit, roses(!) rescue tips for ailments(!)maps, aps for directions, rituals. I still have a fragrant piece of wood which I have just now lit to remind me of the attempted ritual on Glienicker Bridge. There I had to abandon the walk temporarily but enjoyed the conversation with the sub-group who accompanied me waiting for the boat to Wannsee and there we talked amongst lots of other things about Bruno Bettelheim's book, *The Informed Heart*, and I read the poem from Primo Levis's book, *If This Is a Man,* totally inapt for the ritual on the Glienicker Bridge but nevertheless in my confusion, the piece that I had chosen, I won't quote it all, just a few lines….

You who live safe-
In your warm houses,
You who find, returning in the evening,
Hot food and friendly faces:
Consider if this is a man-
Who works in the mud-
Who does not know peace-
Who fights for a scrap of bread-
Who dies because of a yes or no.
.....
.....
……
…….
.....
.....
Meditate that this came about:
I commend these words to you.
.....
....
.....
……..

I truly believe that in Berlin there was in the matrix the worry and concern as to how these things came about and so with the return of the repressed, can so easily come about again. In the median group I thought this was very present and underlined our minor disruptions,

discombobulations and lack of integration, our resources and lack thereof, our divisions and impingements as well as our understanding and compassion. Most importantly we were afforded the opportunity to meditate upon these things In Berlin. Thank you everyone who was involved and for all the hard work that went into the Hiking and Biking planning and for the participation on all of our parts, a rich mix. The cycle(!) continues then; Illusionment; Disillusionment; Re-Illusionment.

Joan Fogel, London: Biker
I kept wondering what Berliners feel about the scar of the wall being turned into a bike path and that the physical scar is being maintained by people. Nature has covered up so much, you would never know about the suffering; it didn't show. Much of the wall about two thirds is rural and beautiful: woods and fields. Around Potsdam especially, a surprise. It had been just a name in a history book for me - the Edict of, the conference of ..

Teresa von Sommaruga Howard, London, UK: Biker
Support of the group enabled me to complete the ride. Despite having ridden since a teenager, I realised that I had no real idea how to use the gears. I had also never ridden with a group. David, Melissa's husband, a man with extreme sports experience, taught me how to make best use of the gears and gave me a gentle push up hills. For me this was a wonderful experience.

In our last median group, something that must have been there all the time emerged, very painfully! It demonstrated just how easy it is to get into conflict even when everybody cares about each other. Something about the German matrix we had all travelled into and along had made itself felt. The final straw for the hikers was when we the bikers realised during the course of the day that arrangements when we got back to Berlin were not so simple. We had to take our bikes back to Berlin on Bikes, collect luggage, shower, have something to eat, all before the programmed median group. As we had also learnt that our timing was somewhat unpredictable, we decided to phone the hikers and suggest that we meet later than planned. After arriving so late on the first evening, we were constantly preoccupied with not keeping the hikers waiting for us. Attempting to make this call, alerted us for the first time that called internationally on mobile phones is not fool proof. Calling from a US phone to an Irish phone in Germany brought an interesting voice mail message. A prostitute perhaps but not the person we were calling! So, we tried on

a German phone and left a message with our suggestion.

Although we intended to ask the Hikers to consider the idea of meeting later, they read it as an imperative as if we had decided and expected them to fit in. They had dreamed of eating dinner together of finishing together on a shared note of achievement but that is not what happened. Understandably they were disappointed and angry, felt pushed around. As we sat in the median group with so many strong feelings flying around I reflected on our last stop when Björn had described the chaos on the Eastern side that had accompanied breaking through the wall. By then a force so great had pushed the wall down.

Sarah K. Small, Portland, USA: Hiker
I didn't understand much about the two median groups I attended. I left both confused as to how that was useful or meaningful. I think of the task of groups being to share thoughts and feelings toward each other. Instead I think ideas were being volleyed, perhaps in an attempt to find meaning or metaphor in happenstance?

Not sure about that but am certain of my gladness to have been with these remarkable women, and one fella, trodding along so easily together as we took in unimaginably difficult stories of the lives who had walked before us.

Joining the Symposium

Melissa Black: Dallas, USA: Biker
An unexpected effect of the ride was the emotional space I inhabited as the symposium began. We were immersed in both the depth of history and trauma in Berlin as well as our own replicative process leading up to the symposium. I felt a distinct rift between my emotional openness and that of the other participants who were just beginning their process. I was almost spent; as if I were on day 5 of the symposium instead of the opening remarks! Equilibrium followed, as it generally does, but the impact of leaving our cocoon and entering the symposium was jarring!

Sarah K. Small, Portland, USA: Hiker
This time together was the relational foundation for my experience of the conference. My walking buddies I'd seek out in the sea of faces at lunch or the large group. It gave me a feeling of connection, comfort, belonging. And fun. Oh, we had some fun.

Teresa von Sommaruga Howard, London, UK: Biker
Along the way, we cycled in little ever-changing subgroups, which gave rise to many interesting conversations. I found myself deep in discussion with our American colleagues about various group analytic concepts particularly as they related to the median group. We pondered about how the social unconscious is different to the foundation matrix and then on the last day a wonderful example of the social unconscious presented itself. We were sitting in the sunshine enjoying 'Kafee und Kuchen' on the third day on the banks of the Havel river. It started with one of our American colleagues talking about parents putting bumper stickers on their cars when their children got A grades on graduation. We Europeans were a bit amazed. We got into conversation about how you encourage children to study hard. The Americans thought it was important to encourage competition, while the Germans thought it was important for each child to have sense of achievement about having learnt something and demonstrated that to the best of their ability. After a while it became clear that each was expressing something that was evident according to the unconscious mores of their culture and with these thoughts rattling through my mind I joined the symposium!

Theo von der Marwitz, Bremen, Germany: Biker
Well, we were invited to join the trip, it was touching and we are glad that we were able to come with you. Thank you, Melissa, Dale and Bob - Ingrid and I, we are so grateful to share this experience with you and the whole group.

David Glyn, London: Biker for one Day
I was grateful to be included in the first day of your ride - and I got a lot out of joining you.

What was brought home to me was something that I had somehow managed to suppress in my imaginings of post-war Germany. I'm ashamed to confess that, to a great extent, this had always been, 'simply', a picture of post-Nazi re-constitution. It was only when I was brought up against the physical remains of the wall that I was forced to begin to consider how the partition of the country massively complicated the process of confronting the terrible history.

I had always pictured the wall, looking Eastwards - never dawned on me that, for West Berliners, the sun both rose from and set behind the wall.

And then, of course, the discovery that it was *two* walls - designed to create a catching rather than a killing zone.

This was a tremendous way to approach the symposium - one of a band of intrepid explorers, most of whom I suspect were also uncovering unexpected perspectives on recent German history.

Joan Fogel, London: Biker
I learnt about group narcissism. While we were on the ride we spoke about how we would be the subgroup everyone in the symposium would envy and wish they'd been part of. How would we cope? Not a bit of it, most people at the symposium were blissfully unaware there had even been 'preconference' activity!

I missed this group during the Symposium. My heart warmed whenever a fellow-traveller appeared out of the crowd in the Maritim.

And then .. Afterwards

Julie Howley, Wexford, Ireland: Hiker
Despite the failure to develop cohesion in our overall Hike and Bike group it is nonetheless true that our whole experience was a rich and powerful one. I think it is always hard for us to bear conflict and my experience of the Symposium overall was one of closing down conflict or, as in Hopper's fourth basic assumption 'Incohesion: Aggregation/Massification' seeking to massify to avoid our fear of potential annihilation.[9] We may not have been as cohesive as we would have wished but that does not preclude us from trying to bring some meaning to the experience. I had a memorable experience and I made connections and friendships. I learnt a lot about the complexity of crossing borders – borders of nationality, ethnicity, religion, culture, class, power and all that we have internalized through our personal experience and that has been transmitted to us through the foundation matrices of our various peoples. Thank you all!

Sarah Kalai, Jerusalem, Israel: Hiker
In 3 days people who were strangers became people for whom I care. It is a great idea to hike together and I hope to meet you again.

---

[9] Hopper, E., (2003). The Unconscious Life in Groups: The Fourth Basic Assumption: Incohesion: Aggregation/Massification or ba I:AM. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Fiona Parker, Northern Ireland, UK: Hiker
The pre-conference hike gave me a sense of belonging before entering the vastness of the Conference. I felt part of the community and not an outsider. We started important conversations and made new connections. I also fell in love with the Ampelmann, the little traffic men signals in East Berlin that have been preserved.

Melissa Black, Dallas, USA: Biker
For next time? I would have loved to have had more cohesion with the Hikers and I think we have all learned a lot about the need for better subgroup communication, empathy and acceptance when groups are on the move. This experience left me with a great deal to consider as I return to the States and watch our citizens on the move in so many directions every day.

Joan Fogel, London, UK: Biker
I learnt lots of things on this trip. I learnt that when cycling such a long way, that Lycra and gel do work, that you can get really close to strangers on a bike ride: a shared endeavour; and learn a lot about where they come from. I also got some great new expressions, "Dig deep!" when things are getting too difficult. that being physically in a place arouses more curiosity than reading about it.

David Glyn, London, UK: Biker
Thanks so much, Dale. My souvenir T-shirt is proudly folded in my T-shirt drawer.

David Loader, Dallas, USA: Biker
During the long episodes of riding without stops it was great getting to know everyone and also having some great discussions that led to more than one "aha" moment. One of these discussions was comparing the underlying value systems of education in the USA and Germany. I will continue to examine my beliefs from the new vantage points I found along the journey.

Bob Bennett, Dallas, USA: Biker
I've been inspired by reading everyone's contributions and want to add a bit of my thoughts about this wonderful experience, Traveling Die Mauer.

We three Americans were very delighted with the outcome of the Mauer trip especially with the sense of feeling like outsiders from across the pond. We were received in such a warm fashion that

all sense of being an outsider quickly dissipated.

As many have talked about the intimidating fact of riding a bicycle so far seemed daunting but turned out to be quite enjoyable after the first rain filled 11-hour marathon ride. I have fantasies of renting a house in Potsdam and going bike riding again in the in environs of Berlin. I will have fond memories of swimming with Joan and Marcos.

Björn was a great leader more from the historical perspective and the intellectual integration of East and West than his bicycling acumen. I agree wholeheartedly that including Björn in our group would have been a stroke of genius as exemplified by how nice it was to have David, our civilian, in the group. I so wish that we had integrated the Hikers and Bikers at the same hotel so that we could've had morning and evening group meetings. It's about the only thing I would change about our preconference grouping. My memories of sauntering alongside a fellow bike rider until you had to move out of the way of an oncoming marathoner, interrupting the conversation, and allowing for another conversation to take place, is something I look forward to at our upcoming pre-conference hike outside of Barcelona.

In addition to the heavy lifting of the emotional toll discussing refugees about our planet, I was inspired by the observations I made of how open the German people are to processing their traumas from previous world wars. I feel that the current split politically in America is partly related to our struggle to process our previous societal traumas including the massacre of the Indians and the utilization of slavery. Our task as Americans is to help along this process of acceptance of our previous traumas thus facilitating and encouraging our citizenry to become more comfortable with the concept of being a citizen of the planet. Let's hope our Group Analytic conceptualizations can be brought to this task. Greetings from the Group Analytic Practice of Dallas.

On Bikes, Boots and Borders from Sue Lieberman, Edinburgh, Scotland: Biker for two days Hiker for one Day

As others on both elements of the trip have described, there was a lot of learning on this tour: of the history, of personal stories (including those of our guide Bjorn), of the sheer physicality of the Wall's route and its place in divided Germany. I became very perplexed one day when it seemed that no matter which direction we headed in, eastern Germany was always on our left. Surely some of the time our left (ie. west of the city) should have been western Germany? This was, of

course, a graphic demonstration of the fact that the city and surroundings of Berlin formed an enclave within eastern Germany: something that history books will have told me but which at some level I hadn't fully grasped. My mental image of Berlin had been that it sat literally ON the border between east and west. Now I had to digest the fact that borders aren't always where you expect them to be… And sometimes (often, in the case of twentieth-century Europe) they shift.

Amidst the learning, the conversations, the puzzles and perturbations, and the pleasure of making or renewing connections, it is the question of borders and relationships, of how borders influence identities and identifications and vice versa, that has had the greatest impact on me. For several reasons.

One was that the three-day tour formed a transition point – a border in its own way - between "normal" life and the intense experience of the Symposium. I had left home in the wake of a distressing conflict that had erupted just before I left. At the other side, the Symposium was to be the place where I would address the assembled masses of Group Analysts in my response to the first evening's keynote speaker. Thus, the tour was a kind of border between my personal and professional life, between what is unseen and what is publicly visible, echoing a symbolic dimension of the Wall itself. Although (as we learnt) the Wall was not one wall but two, the so-called "dead zone" inbetween was also a transitional zone between different kinds of reality; a zone with elements of both and neither; a kind of No Man's Land where it is possible both to get lost and be found. (Many of those whose deaths are recorded along the line of the Wall lost their lives but are found in history).

I had initially joined the cycling group, but the first day's late and lengthy distance, coupled with the heavy bikes and the lack of toe-clips, caused an old knee injury to flare up. So on day two I "rested" with the walking group, rejoining the cycling group on day three for the final pedal back into the city. I thus experienced both groups. The cycling group was more enclosed, drawn into a protective bubble under Bjorn's leadership. The walking group seemed more fragmented, as different people came and went, and sub-groups made different choices as to their routes, accommodation and company; but in some ways the group was also more open, more willing to adapt. This evokes thoughts of the old east (the cycling group?) and the old west (the walkers?); and more currently of Brexit (let's make our own decisions) and the rest of Europe (struggling to deal with the tensions between nationalism and internationalism). It is uncanny how easily

and unconsciously we re-create the very phenomena we question.

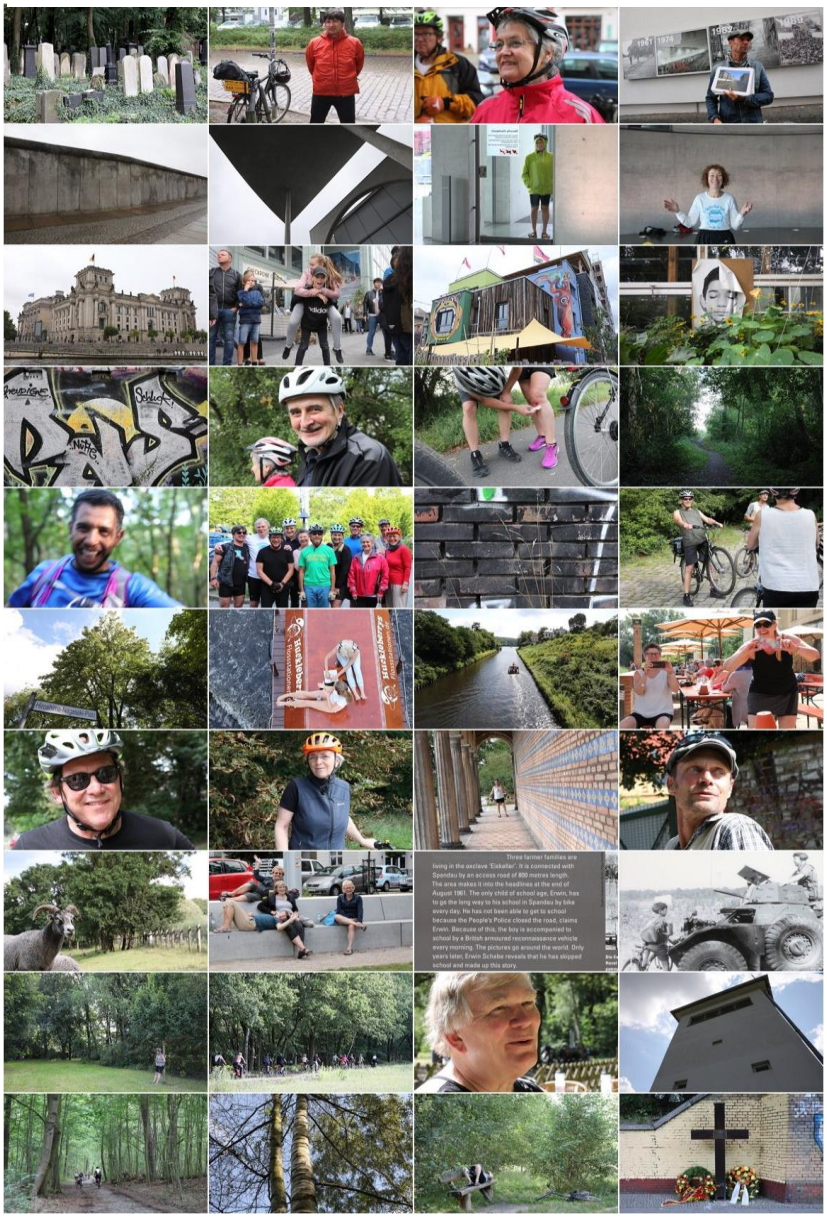
Lastly, the whole experience had resonances for me around identity and belonging. Several "national" groups were involved in this journey: from Ireland, Israel, Germany, Scotland, London[10] and the US (Dallas), most of which share histories – or currently struggle with current realities - to do with Walls, actual or conceptual. Over the past five years my personal journey into GASi has brought me into close contact with people in most of these countries and deepened my sense of connection to their troubled histories; this three-day tour was a strange reminder of how strongly we can be pulled towards histories, even other people's histories, where paradoxically we may feel "at home".

---

[10] As the Brexit vote showed, London has its own quasi-national (and international) identity. It is also the origin and centrifugal point of Group Analysis in the UK, and all the England-based cyclists came from London. In various ways, it makes sense to consider London a kind of city-state in its own right, distinct from England.

Photo Review of the Hikers' Journey

Robert Hsiung, Chicago, USA: Biker



11