Collecting Christmas Commerce: Material Culture Related to German Christmas Markets Held in German Museum Collections

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German Christmas markets form an integral component of the seasonal calendar. Given the significant role Christmas Markets play in German society, we ask the question whether and to what extent objects from these markets have been and/or are being collected by German cultural institutions. In doing so, the authors surveyed museums in all German communities that held Christmas markets before the intensified proliferation period of the late 1970s. Only 15.7% of responding museums specifically collected material culture related to Christmas markets. In the majority of cases, such collections occurred opportunistically and non-systematically, resulting in collection gaps. The majority of collected material culture was flatware (photographs etc). Three dimensional objects (cups, models etc.) were generally underrepresented, with cups, models and other market-specific unique items being collected. The proportion between documented and collected items was very low for the majority of German museums.

Keywords: seasonal markets; material culture; Christmas markets; souvenirs;

Introduction

In Germany as well as German-speaking communities in surrounding countries, Christmas markets (Christkindlesmarkt, Weihnachtsmarkt) form an integral component of the seasonal calendar. Originating in the Medieval period and often set in historic locations, Christmas markets, deeply rooted in tradition, are regarded as a quintessential event in the lead-up to

Christmas. Whilst continually operating markets have existed since the fifteenth century,[1] a review of the reestablishment and proliferation of Christmas markets in post-World War II Germany found that 83.8% of all German Christmas markets commenced after 1970, a period that concided with a wave of nostalgia that affected German society in the face of significant social, political and ecomic change.[2] In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Christmas markets proliferated first in smaller medium-size towns (20,000–50,000 inhabitants) and larger small towns (10,000–20,000), but in the following decade (1990s) increasingly also in smaller small towns (5,000–10,000) and villages (less than 5,000).[3] Now located in over 2,000 locations across Germany,[4] ranging from long-established markets in historical town squares such as those of Dresden or Frankfurt, to markets in pedestrian zones of smaller communities such as Offenbach's,[5] these markets attract large numbers of local, domestic and international visitors.[6]

Christmas markets, especially German Christmas markets, have been the focus of social,[7] historical,[8] heritage,[9] economic[10] and tourism research.[11] Although rooted in a mercantile tradition, and fulfilling that function again during the austerity period of the immediate post-World War II era,[12] Christmas markets became seasonal fixtures in a community's event calendar during the second half of the twentieth century. Through intergenerational transmission, the annual visit to one or more local Christmas markets developed into familial and community

[1] WOZEL, Heidrun. Der Dresdner Striezelmarkt. Geschichte und Tradition des ältesten Deutschen Weihnachtsmarktes. In: Karlheinz Blaschke (ed.), *Geschichte Der Stadt Dresden*. Stuttgart: Theiss Verlag, 2005, 332–335.

[2] SPENNEMANN, Dirk H. R. Commercial Christmas Cheer: The reestablishment and proliferation of Christmas Markets in post-World War II Germany. In: *Journal of Urban History* (subm.).

[3] Town size classes after Stadt- und Gemeindetypen in Deutschland. Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumfoschung, Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung (BSSR) 2022, accessed December 12, 2023, https://www.bbsr.bund.de/BBSR/DE/forschung/raumbeobachtung/Raumabgrenzungen/deutschland/gemeinden/StadtGemeindetyp/StadtGemeindetyp.html.

[4] Die schönsten Weihnachtsmärkte 2023 in Deutschland entdecken, Wintertraum GmbH & Co. KG, 2023, accessed May 1, 2024, https://web.archive.org/web/20231205094156/https://www.deutsche-weihnachtsmaerkte.de/weihnachtsmarkt/ [via wayback Machine].

[5] PARKER, Murray, SPENNEMANN, Dirk H. R., and BOND, Jennifer. A multisensory puzzle: Sensory and multisensory heritage perceptions across five European Christmas markets (forthcoming).

[6] SPENNEMANN, Dirk H. R. Longer-term effects of COVID-19 on the visitation of German Christmas markets. SocArXiv preprint (2025). doi: https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/aq9d7_v3.

[7] PARKER, Murray, and SPENNEMANN, Dirk H. R. Stille Nacht: COVID and the ghost of Christmas 2020. In: *Heritage* 4, no. 4 (2021), https://doi.org/10.3390/heritage4040172; MARCHER, A., ERSCHBAMER, G., and PECHLANER, H. Escaping from the event? Residents' perception of Christmas markets in Northern Italy. In: *Event Management*, 23 no. 4-5, 2019.

[8] PERRY, Joe, Nazifying Christmas: Political culture and popular celebration in the Third Reich. In: *Central European History* 38 no. 4 (2005), https://doi.org/10.1163/156916105775563562; SPENNEMANN, Commercial Christmas Cheer…

[9] SPENNEMANN, Dirk H. R. Intangible Heritage and Its Associative Objects as Exemplified by the Materiality of the Portable Material Culture of German Christmas Markets. In: *Heritage* 7, no. 7, 2024, https://doi.org/10.3390/heritage7070166.

[10] BRIDA, Juan Gabriel, MELEDDU, Marta, and TOKARCHUK, Oksana. Use value of cultural events: The case of the Christmas markets. In: *Tourism Management* 59, 2017; PARKER and SPENNEMANN, Stille Nacht…

[11] BRIDA, J. G., MELEDDU, M., and TOKARCHUK, O. Use value of cultural events…; LONČARIĆ, D., CEGUR RADOVIĆ, T., and SKENDROVIĆ, P. Who attends Christmas Markets and why? Analysis of visitor structure and motivation for attending two Christmas markets in Croatia. In: *Ekonomski vjesnik: Review of Contemporary Entrepreneurship, Business, and Economic Issues*, 33 no 1, 2020; PARKER, Murray, SPENNEMANN, Dirk H. R., and BOND, Jennifer. Using destination reviews to explore tourists' sensory experiences at Christmas markets in Germany and Austria. In: *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 19, no. 2, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2023.2284332.

[12] SPENNEMANN, Commercial Christmas Cheer…; Die schönsten Weihnachtsmärkte…

tradition. While the number of Christmas markets proliferated,[13] iconic markets with a longer history and being set in picturesque historical town squares attracted increasing numbers of domestic and international tourists. Today the visitation to these markets by locals and tourists has become increasingly experiential, so much so that Christmas markets can be considered to be annual social and community events[14] that are widely acknowledged for their contribution to societal culture.[15] The visitors to Christmas-market events are transitional, and often trans-communal, transnational and even transcultural consumers in terms of services and discretionary foods and drinks, as well as material objects exchanged in that space.[16]

Given that Christmas markets are primarily intangible cultural experiences where visitors engage in a variety of sensory and social interactions that create a unique experiential episode, much of the extant cultural research has so far focussed on the intangible dimensions of these markets.[17] While there is also a considerable body of material culture associated with Christmas markets, this has seen only limited attention in the literature, being focussed primarily on the conceptual assessment of material culture held in private hands.[18]

The portable material culture of Christmas markets

The intangible heritage manifestations of German Christmas markets, framed in terms of their mercantile, social and experiential dimensions, are symbolised, mediated or exemplified by objects of material culture. The experiential dimension of Christmas markets relies on the presence and use of mediatory items of material culture, such as cups for mulled wine (Glühweintassen) and tokens (Figure 1). The social dimension is also reflected through these items, as well as through symbolic objects such as lapel pins and adhesive stickers. The conceptual dimension pertains to the recognition and value of Christmas markets, through the understanding that they exist and what they represent, to a person who does not attend them. The material culture associated with this dimension includes pictorial items such as postcards, telephone cards and stamps, as well as medals and posters (Figure 2). As discussed elsewhere,[19] the items of portable material culture associated with the German Christmas markets can be grouped into four main categories:

portable material culture of Christmas markets (e.g. Figure 1)
portable material culture about Christmas markets (Figure 2)
portable material culture for sale at Christmas markets
portable material culture enabling Christmas markets

[13] SPENNEMANN, Commercial Christmas Cheer…
[14] SPENNEMANN, Dirk H. R., and PARKER, Murray. The changing face of German Christmas markets: Historic, mercantile, social and experiential dimensions. In *Heritage* 4, no. 3, 2021, https://doi.org/10.3390/heritage4030102.
[15] BROECKERHOFF, Aurélie, and GALALAE, Cristina. Christmas markets–marketplace icon. In: *Consumption Markets & Culture* 25, no. 1, 2022; PARKER, SPENNEMANN and BOND, A multisensory puzzle…
[16] SPENNEMANN, Dirk H. R., and PARKER, Murray. "Endlich wieder Strietzeln": The restart of German Christmas markets after the COVID-19 pandemic. In: *International Journal of Event and Festival Management* [under review]; SPENNEMANN, Intangible Heritage and Its Associative Objects…
[17] PARKER, SPENNEMANN, and BOND, Using destination reviews…; SPENNEMANN and PARKER, Changing face of German Christmas Markets…; TRANDBERG JENSEN, Martin, and FUSTÉ-FORNÉ, Francesc. It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas: Exploring the sensescapes of food experiences in Tivoli. In: *Food, Culture & Society*, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1080/15528014.2023.2289744.
[18] SPENNEMANN, Intangible Heritage and Its Associative Objects…
[19] Ibidem.

While the first three categories are items that can be acquired and/or collected by visitors, the latter category tends to be large-sized objects, comprising the stalls as well as market feature elements, such as nativity scenes, oversized Christmas trees, merry-go-rounds and pyramids (Figure 3). None of these, although moveable and (trans-)portable, can be acquired and taken away by a visitor.

A prior survey and analysis of the alienable material culture of Christmas markets discussed the ontic and ontological dimensions of the materiality of the items.[20] Many, if not all of the items, which can fulfil multiple roles from mediating interaction to symbolic representation, can become collectibles and, more generally, souvenirs. Table 1 sets out the portable material culture of and about Christmas markets as well as material culture for sale. As the material culture enabling Christmas markets tends to be non-alienable by the visitor, it is not included.

When evaluating items as being significant objects for the understanding of Christmas markets, the terms "genuine" and "authentic" are often confused and used interchangeably.[21] For material culture of Christmas markets, all items, except foreign- (mainly Chinese-) made Christmas ornaments, are considered genuine. These items truly represent the essence of a Christmas market, meaning they are not counterfeit or fake. An item is deemed authentic if it is not only genuine but also confirmed and validated as true or real.[22] This particularly pertains to objects that can only be acquired at the Christmas market, requiring a person's physical presence at a specific location and time. These items maintain their authenticity even if they are later given as gifts or traded.

A common feature of all souvenirs is that they are objects acquired at a specific location and possess a wide range of ontological characteristics, which are attributed to them either by the person acquiring the souvenir or by the receiver if the souvenir is purchased as a gift.[23] Souvenirs that represent Christmas markets can be categorised into several types: pictorial images of the location or event (such as postcards and snapshots), symbolic shorthand souvenirs (including both functional and nonfunctional manufactured items that reflect the location or event), markers (everyday items that become mementos through inscriptions indicating their place of origin) and local products (merchandise and crafts typical of the market.[24]

Items of material culture can be considered representative of a particular Christmas market if they embody the essence and significance of that particular local market. This perceived representativeness of these items will depend on whether a visitor views their experience at a Christmas market primarily as a commercial, a social or an experiential event. The different aspects of the material nature of these objects help determine whether they represent specific markets.

When considering the above, all items of alienable material culture listed in Table 1 can be regarded as genuine, to represent symbolic shorthand souvenirs and, with the exception of beer mats, are all also representative of Christmas markets as a commercial event. When

[20] SPENNEMANN, Intangible Heritage and Its Associative Objects…

[21] SCHOUTEN, Frans. The process of authenticating souvenirs. In: Melanie K. Smith and Mike Robinson (eds), *Cultural tourism in a changing world: Politics, participation and (re) presentation*. Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2006.

[22] NEWMAN, George E. An essentialist account of authenticity In: *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 16, no. 3-4, 2016; JIN, Liuhe, XIAO, Honggen, and SHEN, Haili. Experiential authenticity in heritage museums. In: *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management* 18, 2020.

[23] SWANSON, Kristen K., and TIMOTHY, Dallen J. Souvenirs: Icons of meaning, commercialization and commoditization. In: *Tourism management* 33, no. 3, 2012.

[24] GORDON, Beverly. The souvenir: Messenger of the extraordinary. In: *Journal of Popular Culture* 20, no. 3, 1986; HUME, David. *Tourism art and souvenirs: The material culture of tourism*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

focussing on items assessed as authentic in the prior study,[25] then the object universe is reduced by half. Of these, four are representative of Christmas markets as a commercial event: commemorative cups, exonumia (tokens) and lapel pins, as well as items for sale at stalls (Table 1). Only two, however, as are also representative of Christmas markets as an experiential event: commemorative cups and exonumia (tokens).

Tab. 1: *Classification of the alienable material culture of Christmas markets.*[26]

	Authenticity		**Class of Souvenirs**						**Representativeness**		
Object Groups	**Genuine**	**Authentic**	**Pictorial Images**	**Symbolic Shorthand**	**Markers**	**Local Products**	**Commercial**	**Social**	**Experiential**
Adhesive decals	✔			✔	✔		✔	✔	
Beer mats	✔			✔	✔			✔	
Coin sets	✔		✔	✔			✔		
Commemorative cups	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Exonumia (medals)	✔			✔			✔		
Exonumia (tokens)	✔	✔		✔	✔		✔	✔	✔
Items for sale at stalls	✔	✔		✔		✔	✔	✔	
Lapel pins	✔	✔		✔			✔	✔	
Postcards	✔		✔	✔	✔		✔		
Posters	✔		✔	✔			✔		
Special postmarks	✔			✔	✔		✔		
Stamps	✔		✔	✔	✔		✔		
Telephone cards	✔	✔		✔	✔		✔		
Toy sets	✔	✔		✔			(✔)		

Given the significant role Christmas markets play in German society, the question arises as to whether, and to what extent, objects from these markets have been and/or are being collected by German cultural institutions. After all, community and social history collections should, in the ideal scenario, reflect the history and the cultural and social conditions of a community.[27] To assess the extent to which objects from Christmas markets are being collected, the authors carried out a survey of museums in all communities that held Christmas markets before their

[25] SPENNEMANN, Intangible Heritage and Its Associative Objects…

[26] Ibidem.

[27] LUCASSEN, Jan, SANDERS, Huub, and BLOK, Aad. *A Usable Collection: Essays in Honour of Jaap Kloosterman on Collecting Social History*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014.

intensified proliferation in the late 1970s. The underlying premise was that communities with a longer history of Christmas markets would conceivably be more likely to place a higher value on these and that, in consequence, these may feature in the respective collections.

By correlating the actual holdings with a previous conceptual assessment of the universe of alienable items of portable material culture of, about and for sale at Christmas markets,[28] this paper will demonstrate that existing collections in German museums are largely unrepresentative, considering the available and existent material culture of these markets in Germany.

Fig. 1: *Items of portable material culture of Christmas markets that can be alienated by the visitor.* A) Adhesive decal issued for the Hochdahl Christmas market 1981, 97 × 150 mm; B) recto and verso of a beer mat issued in 2017 by the organisers of the Weihnachtsmarkt Ulm (95 × 95 mm); C) Weihnachtsmarkttasse in the shape of a boot, produced for the Frankfurt Christmas market 2004, glazed pottery height 100 mm, orifice diameter 70 mm; D) Exonumia – "Eu-Glüh" token, Aachen, recto, ø 25 mm, 4 g, brass; E) special commemorative philatelic cancel, Bochum Christmas market 1982.[29]

[28] SPENNEMANN, Intangible Heritage and Its Associative Objects…

[29] Ibidem.

Fig. 2: *Items of portable material culture about Christmas markets that can be acquired by the visitor.*
A) Printed postcard of Weihnachtsmarkt Trier in the 1980s (Verlag Arbeitsgemeinschaft Trierer Weihnachtsmarkt); B) telephone card, Weihnachtsmarkt Berlin-Spandau, issued on May 1, 1995 by Deutsche Telekom with a nominal value of 6 DM; C) philatelic miniature sheet issued in 2008 by the private German carrier Nordkurier with stamp depicting the Greifswald Weihnachtsmarkt 2008; D) poster issued for the Peißenberg Christmas market 984, 594 x 841 mm; E) coin set produced for the international tourist market with motif of the Frankfurt Weihnachtsmarkt; G) commemorative exonumia issued for Christmas Market Mayence (Mainz), medal 1991, bronzed cupro-nickel, ø 31 mm, 8.1 g; G) lapel pin, Bochum, 1999, pressed metal and enamel, 25 x 30 mm ; H) Ferrero Kinder Surprise model kit "Spielzeugbude auf dem Weihnachtsmarkt" (type 618 675), 60 x 75 mm, plastic.[30]

[30] Ibidem.

A

D

B

C

E

Fig. 3: *Items of portable material culture enabling Christmas markets that cannot be alienated by visitors.*
A) Market stall Christmas Market Bamberg; B) Carousel Market Frankfurt; C) lighting installation, Christmas Market Mainz; D) Schwibbogen, Strietzelmarkt Dresden; E) Pyramid Christmas Market Mayence (Mainz). (Photos DHRS 2023).

Considerations of the collectability and museum value of the portable material culture of Christmas markets

Collections are accumulations of objects ranging from the unstructured accumulations of a hoarder to the highly specific, curated collections of a specialist.[31] Commonly to all collections is that as an entity in themselves they form cultural artefacts which reflect the interests and values of the collector, or, in the case of public collections, the interests and values of the curator.[32] In the case of collections developed across generational time, the collections' foci may have changed subject to curatorial interests, changing collections opportunities and socio-economic conditions. Whether objects are deemed to be collectible is circumscribed by the collections and accessions policies that define the purpose, scope and curation of a collection. These policies can be anchored in the remit of the museum and be formally promulgated as guidance to staff and the general public wishing to donate, or they can "exist" as informal conceptualisations in the heads of private collectors.

As noted above, the portable material culture associated with Christmas markets can be conceptualised as material culture of, about, for sale at or enabling such markets. The representativeness of these has been addressed in the previous section. As manifestations of social practices, often with considerable historic depth, the material culture associated with Christmas markets fits into the remit of museums that focus on local/regional history, cultural history or social history. Whether objects of a specific thematic aspect should be collected per se will be defined by the collections policy, whereas whether specific objects themselves are deemed to be of museum value tends to be governed by personal curatorial interest.[33] A common denominator, as with all heritage, is that objects, buildings and places are deemed collectible and preservable if they are determined to be culturally significant based on an assessment of their cultural values – which in turn relies on a passage of time.[34] Collecting purely based on hindsight methodology runs the risk that objects associated with significant events may no longer be available even though they were abundant at the time. Objects and paraphernalia associated with the 2020–2021 SARS-Cov-2 pandemic (COVID-19, Corona) spring to mind, most of which would have been lost were it not for the contemporary collecting of material.[35] Despite the existence of collections policies, the personal epistemological framework of museum curators and heritage specialists will colour whether objects (or heritage places) are

[31] SATTERTHWAIT, Leonn. Collections as artefacts: The making and thinking of anthropological museum collections. In: N. Peterson, L. Allen and L. Hamby (eds), *The Makers and Making of Indigenous Australian Museum Collections*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2008, pp. 29–60.

[32] VILKUNA, J., Museum value or museality: Only a theoretical concept or a concrete, practical tool? In: *Information Research,* 21 no. 1, 2016.

[33] Ibidem.

[34] ICOMOS AUSTRALIA 2013. *The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS charter for places of cultural significance 2013*. Burwood, Vic, Australia: ICOMOS Inc. International Council of Monuments and Sites, 2013.

[35] SPENNEMANN, Dirk H. R. Curating the contemporary: A case for national and local COVID-19 collections. In: *Curator*, Vol. 65, 2022, pp. 27–42; SPENNEMANN, Dirk H. R. COVID-19 on the ground: Heritage sites of a pandemic. In: *Heritage*, Vol. 3, 2021, pp. 2140–2162; SPENNEMANN, Dirk H. R. Collecting COVID-19 ephemera: A photographic documentation of examples from regional Australia. *Institute for Land, Water and Society Report*. Albury, NSW: Institute for Land, Water and Society, Charles Sturt University, 2021; SPENNEMANN, Dirk H. R. The Material Culture of the COVID-19 Pandemic. A Descriptive Catalogue of SARS-Cov-2 Rapid Antigen Tests Collected for the Albury Library Museum. Albury, NSW: SAEVS, Charles Sturt University, 2023.

recognised as collectable in the first instance and thus whether curatorial energy will be spent on them.[36]

Christmas markets have become seasonal, widely acclaimed fixtures on communities' event calendars and they are widely acknowledged for their contribution to societal culture. We posit, therefore, that the material culture of Christmas markets is a tangible manifestation of social practices associated with and taking place in these markets and that therefore that material culture is worth collecting. Given that the material culture associated with Christmas markets is not static, but undergoes change,[37] contemporary collection is indicated. The question arises to what extent this is actually the case.

Methodology

Sampling Frame: The sampling frame was comprised of the cultural or local history museums of all German towns that had hosted Christmas markets before 1970. As highlighted earlier, the time cut-off was derived from an analysis of the establishment of Christmas markets in post-World War II Germany.[38] The initial sampling frame comprised 93 museums in German communities, which was expanded by snow-balling (due to respondent referral/ recommendations) to a total of 98 museums. All German states bar Berlin (no thematic museum) and the Saarland (no pre 1970s market) were represented (Table 2).

Tab. 2: *The sampling universe of museums surveyed (non-responses in parentheses).*[39]

	City		Medium Town		Small Town			
	large	small	large	small	large	small	Village	
Population (k)	> 250	100 < 250	50 < 100	20 < 50	10 < 20	5 < 10	< 5	n
State								
Baden-Württemberg	1	—	1	—	1	—	(1)	3 (1)
Bavaria (Bayern)	4 (1)	6 (1)	2 (3)	2 (1)	2 (1)	—	1	17 (7)
Berlin	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Brandenburg	—	—	—	(1)	(1)	—	2	2 (2)
Bremen	(1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	(1)
Hamburg	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	3
Hesse (Hessen)	1	2	—	1	(1)	—	—	4 (1)
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern)		(1)	1	—	—	—	—	1 (1)
Lower Saxony (Niedersachsen)	2	1 (3)	2	1	(1)	1 (1)	—	7 (5)

[36] SPENNEMANN, Dirk H. R. The usefulness of the Johari Window for the Cultural Heritage Planning Process. In: *Heritage* 6 no. 1, 2023.

[37] SPENNEMANN, Intangible Heritage and Its Associative Objects…

[38] SPENNEMANN, Commercial Christmas Cheer…

[39] Town size classes after BBSR, Stadt- und Gemeindetypen in Deutschland.

North Rhine-Westphalia (Nordrhein-Westfalen)	2 (1)	3 (1)	2	3	—	2 (1)	1 (1)	13 (4)
Rhineland-Palatinate (Rheinland-Pfalz)	—	(1)	—	(1)	—	—	—	(2)
Saarland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Saxony (Sachsen)	2	1	2	3 (1)	1	1 (1)	—	10 (2)
Saxony-Anhalt (Sachsen-Anhalt)	—	2	—	2	—	—	—	4
Schleswig-Holstein	—	1	1	—	—	—	1	3
Thuringia (Thüringen)	—	(1)	1	2 (1)	—	—	—	3 (2)
Total	14 (3)	17 (8)	12 (3)	14 (5)	4 (4)	4 (3)	5 (2)	70 (28)

Data collection and response rate: A total of 98 museums were approached by email (in the German language) and asked to respond in open ended form to the following questions:

Have you / the museum ever collected or considered collecting items/elements, paraphernalia or photography associated with Christmas markets?

If yes, in what form (e.g. pictorial, physical objects, other)? Please outline further.

If yes, have you ever displayed these as part of an exhibit or a special exhibition? Please share details.

The survey was based on three-week intervals with an additional week between the initial mailout and the first reminder to allow for Easter holiday closures. The initial mailout occurred on March 24, 2024, with reminders sent on April 24, 2024 and May 14, 2024. The survey was closed on June 3, 2024.

The response rates were 39.2% after the initial mailout and 58.8% after the first reminder, with a final response rate of 72.2%. On a state-by-state level, response rates were not uniform, ranging from 50% (Brandenburg) to 100% (Hamburg, Saxony-Anhalt and Schleswig-Holstein). No responses were received from museums in Bremen and Rhineland-Palatinate (Table 3).

Tab. 3: *Response rates (in %) by state*

	Initial mailout	1st reminder	2nd reminder	sent (n)
Baden-Württemberg	75.0	75.0	75.0	4
Bayern	16.7	41.7	70.8	24
Brandenburg	25.0	25.0	50.0	4
Bremen	0.0	0.0	0.0	1
Hamburg	33.3	66.7	100	3
Hesse	80.0	80.0	80.0	5
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	50.0	50.0	50.0	2
Lower Saxony	41.7	58.3	58.3	12

North Rhine-Westphalia	41.2	52.9	76.5	17
Rhineland-Palatinate	0.0	0.0	0.0	2
Saxony	50.0	83.3	83.3	12
Saxony-Anhalt	50.0	100	100	4
Schleswig-Holstein	66.7	100	100	3
Thuringia	40.0	60.0	60.0	5
Overall	38.8	58.2	71.4	98

Results

Of the 70 museums that responded, only eleven (15.7%) specifically collected material culture related to Christmas markets. Of these, two were located in small cities (Gernsbach and Wenigerode) and the remainder in large cities (Table 4). Of those respondent museums that did not actively collect (59 museums), about a third (34.5%) had objects related to Christmas markets in their collections, primarily photographs (in 75% of all cases) and artwork (25%) as well as brochures and posters (10% each). Common to these is that they are flat objects which can be readily added into the archival files. Only seven museums that did not specifically collect material culture related to Christmas markets had three-dimensional objects in their collections (Table 5).

Several of the museums that collect material culture related to Christmas markets do so either as part of general social history and everyday culture thematic space (Hannover, Leipzig, Nürnberg) or opportunistically and non-systematically, which resulted in gaps (e.g. Bochum). The Museum Industriekultur in Nuremberg (Nürnberg) collects material culture related to Christmas markets as part of its collection of items of everyday culture, but also as part of its company-specific collections, such as the gingerbread manufacturers for which Nuremberg is famous. A major exception is the Museum in Hamburg-Altona, which between 1975 and 2015 had a major research focus on the cultural history of Christmas and thus collected accordingly.

Several museums that do not specifically collect material culture related to Christmas markets have topical items in their collections of general social history and everyday culture (e.g. Bayreuth, Frankfurt, Meissen) but do not consider collecting these as part of a (sub-) focus. Only the Kulturgeschichtliches Museum Osnabrück signalled that collections could be contemplated by stating that "basically, for us the topic is worth collecting and exhibiting.… It would be conceivable to collect the collector's cups produced for the Christmas market over several years, photos, etc."[40] That special collecting may pose problems was outlined by the response of the Museum Bayerisches Vogtland in Hof, which noted: "unfortunately, we do not yet have any objects related to the Hof Christmas market in our collection. This is also a bit difficult: The stalls are too big, the goods are sold, and the vendors usually do not sell anything specific to Hof."[41]

What objects are being collected by museums that specifically collected material culture related to Christmas markets?

As noted, the majority of the collected material culture is flatware. Most museums that specifically collected material culture related to Christmas markets had photographs in their

[40] Personal communication Thorsten Heese.

[41] Personal communication Magdalena Bayreuther.

collections, with five museums also owning paintings and other artworks (Dresden, Hannover, Leipzig, Nuremberg). Others held postcards, posters and brochures (Table 4). Particularly rich are the flatware collections in Dresden, where the Strietzelmarkt is documented not only by "publications of various kinds (Advent calendars, event programmes and posters, invitations, leaflets, brochures, posters, craft sheets)" but also "company documents with advertisements for the sale of products at the Strietzelmarkt or for events around the time of the Strietzelmarkt (postcards, posters, etc.)".[42] A notable subsection of flatware items are Advent calendars bearing imagery of Christmas markets that are held in some collections (Dresden, Hannover, Leipzig, Nuremberg) (Figure 4). The Spielzeug Museum Nürnberg owns a whole series of such calendars dating back to 1935.

It is known that numerous communities issue cups for mulled wine (Glühweintassen) (Figure 1C),[43] often on an annual basis.[44] Four of the museums that specifically collected material culture related to their community's Christmas markets held such cups in their collection, namely Bochum (3 cups), Dresden (unspecified), Hannover (6) and Leipzig (11). Other market-specific collectible items include commemorative medals and other exonumia made from silver and cupro-nickel, issued by several communities (Figure 2F),[45] although these were only collected by museums in Bochum, Nuremberg and Ulm. The latter issued "Christmas market medals" made from glass, examples of which are collected by the Ulm Museum and Archive. As highlighted above, the Museum Industriekultur in Nuremberg holds in its collections of materials related to the gingerbread manufacturers a number of gingerbread biscuit tins (Lebkuchen Schmidt and the Schöller company) with Christmas market motifs. Other notable three-dimensional objects collected include: Reifenengel (angels), Schwibbogen (candle arches) and Pflaumentoffel (prune men) (Stadtmuseum Dresden); snow globes (Historisches Museum Bochum); and Christmas tree ornaments (Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig, Museum Industriekultur Nürnberg, Stadtmuseum Halle).

Those museums that specifically collect Christmas market paraphernalia acquired many of their objects at the markets themselves or obtained these via donations. Most of these can be regarded as more generically "Christmas-related" than Christmas market-specific. The Museum Stralsund, for example, noted that "our collection includes around 150 objects directly related to Christmas, such as nativity scenes, Christmas tree stands, candle holders, papier-mâché Santas and angels, globes and pyramids. These items have been collected since 1930, mostly through donations."[46] Likewise, the Stadtmuseum Halle owns a number of items that had been "sold at vendor stalls, such as toys, Christmas tree decorations, Christmas-themed room decorations and handicrafts, which became a separate collections area in its own right".[47] Similar objects are held by the Stadtmuseum Dresden and the Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig.

The Spielzeug Museum Nürnberg (Museum Lydia Bayer) owns a Christmas market playset made of tin, comprised of stalls, customers and streetlights as well as two iconic architectural elements of the setting of the Nürnberg Christkindlesmarkt (Frauenkirche and Schöne Brunnen). Some of these figurines are also held by the Museum Industriekultur Nürnberg.

[42] Personal communication Andrea Rudolph.
[43] SPENNEMANN, Intangible Heritage and Its Associative Objects…
[44] SPENNEMANN, Dirk H. R., *Weihnachtsmarkttassen [Data set]*, School of Agricultural, Environmental and Veterinary Sciences, Charles Sturt University, Albury, NSW, 2024.
[45] SPENNEMANN, Intangible Heritage and Its Associative Objects…
[46] Personal communication Dorina Kasten.
[47] Personal communication Petra Selbmann.

Tin figures were common play sets in the pre-plastic era and thus eminently collectible, as evidenced by the Stadtmuseum Dresden, which owns a tin diorama of the Strietzelmarkt. The Stadtmuseum Halle noted that "unfortunately, we do not have an original market stall, but we do have a smaller stand that a carpenter made for his daughter to play with".[48]

Very recent additions to some collections came about due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the nationwide cancellation of Christmas markets in 2020 and, due to concerns about the rise of new virus variants, also the 2021 cancellation of the markets in the states of Brandenburg, Bavaria and Saxony. Where markets could be held in 2021, organisers required attendees to provide proof of 2G (2G = geimpfte [vaccinated] and genesene [recovered from Covid]) or 3G compliance (as 2G, plus getestete [tested]). The COVID-19 pandemic brought about a range of known pandemic-specific material culture, and among these were the "Corona-Bändchen" – single-use paper armbands issued by organisers that signalled 2G or 3G compliance. One of these bands was specifically acquired by the Historisches Museum Hannover for the collection Weihnachtsmarkt Hannover.

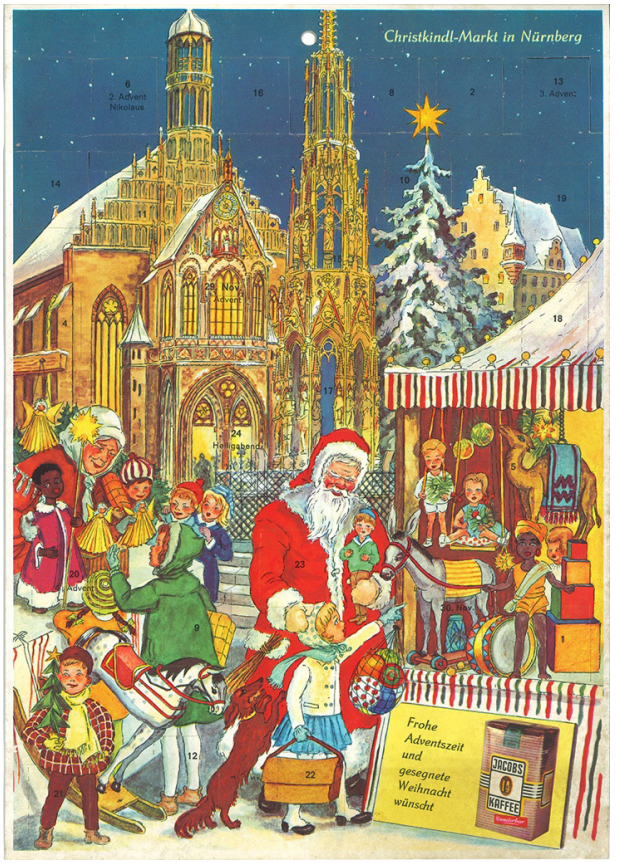

Fig. 4: *Imagery of the Nürnberg Christmas market on an advent calendar produced by Jakobs Kaffee. The calendar is comprised of a sandwiched set of papers with the front image having small, perforated windows that are numbered with calendar dates and can be opened in sequence* (ca. 1965, 200 x 280 mm; coll. DHRS).

[48] Personal communication Petra Selbmann.

Tab. 4: *Material culture of Christmas markets held by museums that specifically collect such items.*

	Flat objects					Three-dimensional objects							
	Photos	Art	Postcards	Posters	Brochures	Models	Cups	Bags	Items bought at CM	Corona Band	Commemorative coins	Paper plates	Other Xmas items
Stadtmuseum Dresden	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔		✔		✔		✔		✔
Historisches Museum Hannover	✔	✔	✔	✔			✔			✔			✔
Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig	✔	✔	✔	✔			✔		✔				✔
Kunstsammlungen der Stadt Nürnberg	✔	✔											
Spielzeugmuseum (Museum Lydia Bayer), Nürnberg	✔	✔											✔
Historisches Museum Bochum	✔		✔				✔		✔		✔		
Museum Industriekultur Nürnberg	✔		✔						✔				✔
Stadtmuseum Halle	✔								✔				✔
Museum Ulm	✔			✔	✔						glass		
Altonaer Museum												✔	
Stralsund Museum													✔

Tab. 5: *Material culture of Christmas markets held by museums that do not specifically collect such items.*

	Flat objects					Three-dimensional objects							
	Photos	Art	Postcards	Posters	Brochures	Models	Cups	Bags	Bought at CM	Corona Band	Commemorative coins	Paper plates	Other Xmas items
Historisches Museum Frankfurt	✔	✔	✔			✔	✔						
Kulturgeschichtliches Museum, Osnabrück	✔	✔											
Museum für Hamburgische Geschichte	✔	✔					✔						
Stadtmuseum Kassel	✔	✔		✔									
Stadtmuseum Meißen	✔	✔		✔	✔								
Maximilianmuseum, Augsburg	✔			✔	✔								

	Flat objects					Three-dimensional objects								
	Photos	Art	Postcards	Posters	Brochures	Models	Cups	Bags	Bought at CM	Corona Band	Commemo-rative coins	Paper plates	Other Xmas items
Museum für Bergedorf und die Vierlande	✔			✔									
Volkskundemuseum in Muess (Schwerin)	✔												
Thüringer Museum Eisenach	✔												
Stadtmuseum Pulsnitz	✔												
Museum Bayerisches Vogtland, Hof	✔												
Heimatverein Brackwede e.v.	✔												
Stadtmuseum Fürth	✔												
Historisches Museum Bayreuth	✔												
Harzmuseum Wernigerode		✔											
Stadtmuseum Ingolstadt							✔	Paper					
Industriemuseum, Chemnitz										✔			✔
Schloss Museum Wolfenbüttel										✔			✔
Museum f. Kunst u. Kulturgeschichte, Dortmund				✔				Plastic					
Rosgartenmuseum, Konstanz				✔									
Amtshofmuseum, Gernsbach				✔									

What objects are being held by museums that do not specifically collect material culture related to Christmas markets?

For museums which contain not-targeted items, similarly very common are photos of Christmas markets, as well as paintings and other artworks (e.g. Hamburg, Kassel, Meissen, Osnabrück, Wernigerode). Glühweintassen are on record for three museums; Ingolstadt (3 cups), Frankfurt ("several") and Hamburg (11). Such a result shows active collecting in the area of social history and everyday culture in these museums, albeit not with a specific focus on Christmas markets. As above, collected items are often children's toys that were acquired on the Christmas markets, such as a 1940s puppet house in the form of a farmer's cottage (Frankfurt). Among the more unusual items acknowledged in collections are the decorated cardboard plates held by the Museum Altona. Two museums (Industriemuseum, Chemnitz and Schloss Museum Wolfenbüttel) had also obtained "Corona-Bändchen" at the respective Christmas markets as

part of their general social history collections (Table 5).

Have exhibitions focussing on Christmas markets been curated, and what are the exhibition intentions?

The majority of museums that specifically collect material culture related to Christmas markets used their holdings in Christmas-themed exhibitions that they had curated annually, such as the Museum in Stralsund (1989–2014), the Altonaer Museum (1985–2010), the Stadtmuseum Halle (1987–2003), the Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig (1979–2009, Table 6), the Stadtmuseum Dresden (1993–2019, Table 7) and the Spielzeugmuseum Nürnberg (1997–2010). In addition, the Historisches Museum Bayreuth, which does not specifically collect material culture from Christmas markets, mounted the exhibition Bayreuther Weihnacht (Bayreuth Christmas) in 2017, while the Volkskundemuseum in Schwerin-Muess showed a series of Christmas market photographs in the Kulturinformationszentrum, Schwerin in 2018.

Given that the Strietzelmarkt in Dresden is one of the oldest continually operating Christmas markets in Germany (since 1434),[49] it is not surprising that the Stadtmuseum Dresden also has a long history of exhibitions that focus on, or at least include the Strietzelmarkt. From 1967 until 1992, parts of the museum exhibition space were converted into a partial Christmas market, with stalls either selling goods or acting as exhibit showcases. From 1993 onwards, formal thematically focussed exhibitions were organised, with many of these focussing on teddy bears, dolls and other toys (26%), and another 30% focussing on other material objects, including nativity scenes, lights and specific foodstuffs (Table 7). However, the Stadtmuseum took the opportunity during the enforced closure of all museums during the COVID-19 pandemic to review its exhibition strategy. Instead of three special exhibitions of short duration per year (one of which was a Christmas/Winter exhibition), the new concept includes two main exhibitions of 6–8 months duration, with the implication that the Strietzelmarkt will be less represented in the museum's future. Relatedly, the Museum in Stralsund terminated its practice of annual Christmas exhibitions due to a change of museum venue (with a showcase in 2023).

An exhibition specifically on Christmas markets was mounted by the Stadtmuseum Halle (November 1996 to January 1997) under the title 'Wenn Weihnachtsmärkte locken' (When Christmas Markets entice), which showcased the history of the Halle Christmas market as well as of the Christkindlesmarkt in Nürnberg and the Dresden Striezelmarkt. In the following year (November 1997 to January 1998), the Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig explicitly addressed the history of the Leipzig Christmas market through the exhibition 'Budenstadt im Lichterglanz. Zur Geschichte des Weihnachtsmarktes in Leipzig' (Stall city in a glow of lights: On the history of the Christmas market in Leipzig). For a few of these exhibitions, accompanying catalogues (or chapters in catalogues) were published that detailed the history of the local Christmas markets.

In addition, some museums open their doors to function as operating venues for small Christmas markets, commonly focussing on the sale of handicrafts. Examples are the Altonaer Museum and the Museum für Bergedorf und die Vierlande (both Hamburg), while the Museum Industriekultur Nürnberg hosts an annual gingerbread baking event. At that time historic gingerbread tins are shown, while a separate showcase exhibits a selection of Christmas tree decorations.

[49] WOZEL, Der Dresdner Striezelmarkt…

The Spielzeugmuseum Nürnberg took a very different approach. Each year between 1997 and 2016 the Museum curated a special Christmas-themed exhibition near the Christkindlesmarkt (in the Ehrenhalle of the Rathaus). Since 2017 the Spielzeugmuseum has managed a stall in the children's area of the Christkindlesmarkt. For curatorial and material conservation reasons, the exhibits on these stalls are primarily comprised of images of objects in their collection, historic photographs and copies of historic wish lists and Christmas pictures painted by children.

Other museums with or without specific collections focus on Christmas markets exhibited some of their holdings in non-specific contexts, such as the paintings featuring Christmas markets held by the museums in Hannover and Osnabrück. In another example, the Museum für Hamburgische Geschichte exhibited some of the Glühweintassen in its holdings as part of its permanent exhibition on the twentieth century.

Tab. 6: *Themes of the annual Christmas exhibition in the Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig.*

Season	Theme
1997/1998	Budenstadt im Lichterglanz. Zur Geschichte des Weihnachtsmarktes in Leipzig A city of stalls in the glow of lights: The history of the Christmas market in Leipzig
1998/1999	Weihnachten im Alten RathausSchnürbrust und Marinelook – Kinder- und Puppenmode aus zwei Jahrhunderten Laced breasts and marine look: Children's and doll fashion from two centuries
1999/2000	Die Stadt im Kasten. Zur Geschichte des Baukastens The city in a box: The history of the construction kit
2001/2002	Kaufrausch und Rauschgoldengel. Zur Geschichte des Einkaufens in Leipzig Shopping spree and tinsel angels: The history of shopping in Leipzig
2002/2003	Weihnachtswunderland Christmas wonderland
2003/2004	Puppe – Teddy – Eisenbahn. Spielzeug aus dem Stadtgeschichtlichen Museum Leipzig Doll – teddy – train: Toys from the Leipzig City History Museum
2005/2006	Familienbande. - Von der Heiligen Familie bis zur Patchworkfamily Family ties: From the Holy Family to the patchwork family
2008/2009	Adventskalender aus 100 Jahren Advent calendars from 100 years
2021/2022	Schnee von gestern ? Yesterday's news?

Tab. 7: *Themes of the annual Christmas exhibition in the Stadtmuseum Dresden.*

Season	Theme
1993	Der Kaufladen von einst – Puppenwelt und Wirklichkeit The shop of yesteryear: Doll world and reality
1994	Weihnachtszeit – Märchenzeit Christmas time: Fairy tale time
1995	Oh, es riecht gut. Rund um die Küche, das Kochen und Backen Oh, it smells good: All about the kitchen, cooking and baking
1996	Morgen Kinder wird's was geben. Die Tradition des Schenkens Tomorrow, children, there will be something: The tradition of giving
1997	Weihnachtliche Kindheitsträume Christmas childhood dreams

1998	Mein Teddybär My teddy bear
1999	Eine Welt im Kleinen – Puppen und Spielzeug A world in miniature: Dolls and toys
2000	Alle Jahre Wieder … Weihnachtliche Traditionen Every year again… Christmas traditions
2001	Ein Kind ist geboren – Krippen und weihnachtliche Volkskunst A child is born: Nativity scenes and Christmas folk art
2002	Komm, wir spielen! Spiele für Groß und Klein Come, let's play! Games for young and old
2007	Im alten Dresden zur Weihnachtszeit In old Dresden at Christmas time
2008	Unser Weihnachtsbaum. Lichter, Kugeln und Lametta Our Christmas tree: Lights, baubles and tinsel
2009	Glaubt ihr an den Weihnachtsmann? Wir schon! - Kulturgeschichtliches von Nikolaus, Do you believe in Santa Claus? We do! Cultural history of St Nicholas, the Christ Child and Father Christmas
2010	Macht auf die Tür – Adventskalender und Erzgebirgische Volkskunst Open the door: Advent calendar and Erzgebirge folk art
2011	Kripperl schau'n. Das Salzburg Museum zu Gast in Dresden Looking at the nativity scene: The Salzburg Museum visits Dresden
2012	Dresden, deine Kinder. Kinderleben in der Stadt gestern und heute Dresden, your children: Children's life in the city yesterday and today
2013	Schokoladenstadt Dresden. Süßigkeiten aus Elbflorenz Dresden, the chocolate city: Sweets from the Florence of the Elbe
2014	Die Welt im Kleinen. Kinderspielzeug aus zwei Jahrhunderten - Sammlung Elke Dröscher, The world in miniature: Children's toys from two centuries; Elke Dröscher collection, Hamburg
2015	Wege zum Licht − Leuchten in Dresden Paths to light: Lights in Dresden
2016	Winterfreuden in Dresden Winter joys in Dresden
2017	Mit Teddy durch Dresdner Spielzeugland With Teddy through Dresden's toy land
2018	Vom Märchen, das auszog, erzählt zu werden About the fairy tale that set out to be told
2019	Konferenz der Plastiktiere Plastic animal conference

Discussion

As the survey of museums in all German communities that held Christmas markets before the 1970s proliferation has shown, only 11 museums (11.2%) specifically collect material culture associated with Christmas markets. Major collections exist in Dresden and Nuremberg (multiple museums), which is not surprising given that both are communities with major historic Christmas markets. Yet the museum in Frankfurt, another such community with a significant historic Christmas market, does not specifically collect such objects. While 28 museums did not respond to the survey, we can assume that they would have responded if Christmas markets had been a collections focus, with no response indicating a probable lack of collection. Importantly,

among these communities were some where Christmas markets were historically significant, such as Bautzen (on record since 1374), Hildesheim (1806) and Würzburg (1800), as well as large and well-resourced cities such as Bonn, Bremen and Munich.

As is the case in other instances, in the absence of formal collections mandates or policies, the individual priorities and agency of curators may well be a critical factor in developing topical collections and exhibitions. While local social history forms a collections focus for the museum in Herne, for example, the Herne Christmas market was neglected in favour of a summer market (Cranger Kirmes) which was deemed more significant. A good example for the opposite is the Altonaer Museum, which, when compared to other towns, is a comparatively small museum. Here, the curator, Torkild Hinrichsen, almost every year from 1985 to 2010 not only curated an exhibition on a Christmas theme but also widely published on the topic.[50]

Another factor for the seeming level of inertia may be that while the history of Christmas markets has been quite well researched,[51] the cultural heritage aspects of Christmas markets had never been formally theorised until very recently.[52]

The prior survey of the items of portable material culture of Christmas markets and the associated examination of the various manifestations of materiality of these objects[53] provides an avenue by which to examine the nature of potential collections and to correlate this with the extent of the actual holdings. With the addition of flatware items such as paintings and photographs not included in that survey, a total of 15 classes are now identified (Table 8). The documented range of possible collection items can be classified into four groups. Both items for sale at stalls and photographs of the markets can be sourced at any future market, while photographs can also be sourced retrospectively through a call for public participation. The second group comprises advertising posters (available for 84.8% of all communities listed in Table 8) and commemorative cups (89.4%). The third group of possible collection items is comprised of picture postcards showing the local Christmas market (available for 31.8% of all communities), special postmarks (24.2%), paintings and artwork (22.7%) and medals and other, non-token exonumia (19.7%). The remaining categories are represented to 6% and less.

[50] HINRICHSEN, Torkild, and JODAT, Sylvia. *Weihnachten in Europa: Entdeckungsreise und Bild-ABC zu Unterschieden und Gemeinsamkeiten;[erschienen aus Anlass der gleichnamigen Ausstellung im Altonaer Museum in Hamburg-Norddeutsches Landesmuseum]* (Husum: Druck-u. Verlag-Gesellschaft Husum, 2004); HINRICHSEN, Torkild. Weihnachten in Norddeutschland. In: Gerhard Kaufmann (ed.), *Ein Bild-ABC zu alten lieben Geheimnissen.* Husum: Druck-u. Verlag-Gesellschaft Husum, 1999; HINRICHSEN, Torkild. *Barbie und der Weihnachtsmann: ein ungewöhnliches Paar;[aus Anlass der gleichnamigen Sonderausstellung im Altonaer Museum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte-Stiftung Historische Museen Hamburg].* Husum: Druck-u. Verlag-Gesellschaft Husum, 2009; HINRICHSEN, Torkild. *Die Rose von Jericho: Blumen, Pflanzen und Früchte im Paradies der Weihnachtsstube.* Husum: Druck-u. Verlag-Gesellschaft Husum, 2010; HINRICHSEN, Torkild. *Spielzeug zum Staunen: Schätze im Weihnachtsparadies:[aus Anlass der gleichnamigen Ausstellung im Altonaer Museum in Hamburg-Norddeutsches Landesmuseum].* Husum: Druck-u. Verlag-Gesellschaft Husum, 2002; HINRICHSEN, Torkild. *Im Knusperhaus: Lebkuchen aus Europa;[erschienen aus Anlass der gleichnamigen Ausstellung im Altonaer Museum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte (Stiftung historische Museen Hamburg].* Husum: Druck-u. Verlag-Gesellschaft Husum, 2008; HINRICHSEN, Torkild. *Weihnachtsbriefe und Wunschzettel vom 18. Jahrhundert bis heute.* Husum: Druck-u. Verlag-Gesellschaft Husum, 2010; HINRICHSEN, Torkild. *Das Kuchenherz.* Husum: Druck-u. Verlag-Gesellschaft Husum, 2009; HINRICHSEN, Torkild. *Das ist die liebe Weihnachtszeit.* Husum: Druck-u. Verlag-Gesellschaft Husum, 2007; HINRICHSEN, Torkild. *Weihnachten in Dänemark. Dansk Jul. Ein Bild-ABC zu Festbräuchen, Liedern und Rezepten.* Husum: Druck-u. Verlag-Gesellschaft Husum, 2003; HINRICHSEN, Torkild. *Im Schatten des Glanzes ; das Weihnachtsfest der Weihnachtslosen.* Husum: Druck-u. Verlag-Gesellschaft Husum, 2012.

[51] WOZEL, Der Dresdner Striezelmarkt.

[52] PARKER, SPENNEMANN, and BOND, Using destination reviews…; PARKER and SPENNEMANN, Stille Nacht…; SPENNEMANN, Intangible Heritage and Its Associative Objects…

[53] SPENNEMANN, Intangible Heritage and Its Associative Objects…

However, with regard to the first group (items for sale/photographs), it must be noted that there are significant limitations of assumptions that these can be sourced easily at future markets. Firstly, generational change and COVID-related complications have been acknowledged to affect both stall offerings (fewer handicrafts) and stall layouts (configurational change) in many markets across Germany.[54] Secondly, markets (as all cultural events) are in a constant state of flux, and it would be incorrect to assume even under the status quo that any specific Christmas market would be of similar consistency, appearance and composition across future years.

When considering the actual collections holdings as reported by the museums as a proportion of the total identified possible collection items for that community, then none of the museums hold a collection that covers all bases. The greatest representation was observed for Dresden (77.8%) and Leipzig (75.0%), both of which specifically collect material culture of Christmas markets, as well as Bochum (71.4%) which does not. Among the remaining five museums with a special collections focus, the coverage of possible items ranged from 55.6% (Hannover) to 3% (Stralsund) (Table 8). None of these collect the readily obtainable commemorative cups, either in toto or as a representative sample, nor do they seem to collect advertising posters.

It can be posited that the dissonance between the collectible universe and the actual holdings is defined by the conceptual understanding of what is collectable and what is not. Much of the material culture may well be deemed too mundane (i.e. adhesive decals, beer mats, coin sets, lapel pins, stamps and telephone cards) or not within the common understanding of material culture (i.e. special philatelic cancels). This may well explain why none of these object classes are represented in the collections.

Whilst potentially representative of any given market, such collectibles are not the only objects with significance. The nature of collection, whether by donation or active sourcing of objects, ultimately determines museum creation – naturally under guiding control. If community and social history collections should ideally reflect the history and the cultural and social conditions of a community as highlighted earlier, items of, about, and for sale at specific Christmas markets should follow from significances as determined by society. The Stadtmuseum Dresden gives an excellent example here, not only through the multi-decadal Christmas exhibitions on offer between First Advent and Epiphany, but through physical collections connected with strong significance attached to the Dresden Striezelmarkt – Stollen knives, Schwibbogen and Pflaumentoffel. Furthermore, museum exhibitions and physical collections hint at the multisensory experiential dimensions of Christmas markets rather than being overly visual-centric, with the multisensory recognised as important to visitors and locals alike[55] – with exhibition references to cooking and making smells (1995), Christmas tree lights and decoration (2008), and local chocolate Christmas sweets (2013). Whilst the multisensory experience is in itself intangible and cannot be collected and exhibited per se, material culture enabling such experience can be – for example, unique light ornamentation, Christmas trees and distinct regional products of Stollen, Glühwein or gingerbread. Also, exhibitions or events celebrating processes using and creating material culture can also hint at the multisensory (smell, touch, taste) – for example the gingerbread baking event at Museum Industriekultur Nürnberg.

However, there are reasons and issues for which such items are not being actively collected, with the first being, as highlighted above, the relative recentness of the theorisation of cultural

[54] SPENNEMANN, Dirk H. R., and PARKER, Murray. "Endlich wieder Strietzeln": The restart of German Christmas Markets after the COVID-19 pandemic. In: *International Journal of Event and Festival Management* (subm.).
[55] PARKER, SPENNEMANN, and BOND, Using destination reviews…

heritage aspects of Christmas markets. Other reasons are identified through participant texts. The Museum in Hamburg-Bergedorf, for example, noted that "the majority of sales [At Christmas markets] also consist of edible items, which also do not find their way into the collection. This is probably one of the reasons why the object category is higher for flatware than for three-dimensional objects. This would explain why the proportion in museums is generally rather low, even though it is considered worthy of preservation."[56] Responses from the Maximilianmuseum in Augsburg state that three-dimensional objects are generally not accepted into collection to the city archive, and it is expected that this focus might be common across more German museums. Most interesting here is the recognition of the significance and worth of collecting such items by the curator of the museum in Hamburg-Bergedorf, despite perceived barriers which currently prohibit it.

Social history collections of museums should reflect the various manifestations of a community's social and cultural development across time. Christmas markets form an integral component of the seasonal calendar and play a significant role in German society. The changing nature of the Christmas markets from a mercantile to an increasingly experiential event highlights the need to document the recent past as well as the status quo, and to collect at least those examples of material culture that exemplify the essence of the local Christmas market.

Conclusions

This study sought to answer the question of whether and to what extent objects from Christmas markets have been and/or are being collected by German cultural institutions. We found that a small percentage of German museums (15.7%) specifically collect material culture related to Christmas markets, with the majority of collections taking place either as part of general social history and everyday culture thematic space, or opportunistically and non-systematically. When collected, material culture was predominantly flatware, in the form of photographs, artworks, postcards, posters and brochures. Three dimensional objects collected included cups, models and other market-specific unique items (candle arches, angels, tinware) but were generally underrepresented. The proportion between documented items and items held in collections was very low for the majority of German museums. This has important implications considering the significance of the Christmas market experience to German society, and that intangible heritage manifestations of these markets are habitually symbolised, mediated or exemplified by objects of material culture. Clearly, for most of the surveyed museums there is room to reevaluate current collections policies and to consider including a collection of material culture of the local Christmas market as part of the social history remit.

[56] Personal communication Anna-Lena Räder.

Tab. 8: *Correlation between the classes of documented items of material culture of Christmas markets and the items actually collected in the responding museums (incl. the proportion of possible collection items).* • *— documented to exist;* ✔ *— present in collections. Museums that specifically collect objects from Christmas markets are shaded in grey*

Sources: augmented by systematic on-line searches.

Town	Adhesive decals	Beer mats	Coin sets	Commemor. cups	Exonumia (medals)	Exonumia (tokens)	Lapel pins	Postcards	Posters	Special postmarks	Stamps	Telephone cards	Items for sale at stalls	Paintings	Photos	Proportion in Collections
Augsburg				•	•			✔	✔	•			•		✔	42.9
Bad Bevensen				•									•		•	—
Bad Hersfeld				•					•				•		•	—
Bad Oeynhausen				•					•				•		•	—
Bayreuth				•					•				•		✔	25.0
Bergedorf				•					✔				•		✔	50.0
Bochum				✔	✔		•		✔	•			✔		✔	71.4
Brackwede													•		✔	50.0
				•					•	•			•		•	—
Cham									•				•		•	—
Chemnitz				•				•	•			•	•	•	✔	14.3
Darmstadt				•				•	•				•		•	—
Döbeln									•				•		•	—
Dortmund	•			•	•		•	•	✔	•			•	•	✔	20.0
Dresden			•	✔		✔		✔	✔	•			✔	✔	✔	77.8
Duisburg				•	•				•				•		•	—
Eisenach				•					•				•		✔	25.0
Erlangen				•					•				•		•	—
Flensburg				•					•				•		•	—
Frankfurt			•	✔		•		✔	•	•			✔	✔	✔	56.6
Fürth				•					•				•		✔	25.0
Gernsbach									✔				•		✔	66.7
Goslar				•				•	•				•		•	—
Halle				•				•	•				✔		✔	40.0
Hamburg				✔					•	•			•	✔	✔	50.0
Hamburg-Altona				•					•				•		•	—
Hannover		•		✔	•			✔	✔			•	•	✔	✔	55.6
Herford		•		•					•	•			•		•	—

Town	Adhesive decals	Beer mats	Coin sets	Commemor. cups	Exonumia (medals)	Exonumia (tokens)	Lapel pins	Postcards	Posters	Special postmarks	Stamps	Telephone cards	Items for sale at stalls	Paintings	Photos	Proportion in Collections
Herne				•					•				•		•	—
Ingolstadt				✔	•				•				•		✔	40.0
Jülich				•					•				•		•	—
Kassel				•				✔	•				•	✔	✔	50.0
Konstanz				•				•	✔	•			•		✔	33.3
Lauenburg													•		•	—
Leer				•					•				•		•	—
Leipzig				✔				✔	✔		•		✔	✔	✔	85.4
Lübeck				•	•			•	•				•		•	—
Magdeburg				•					•				•		•	—
Meißen				•				•	✔				•	✔	✔	50.0
Memmingen				•									•		•	—
Mühlhausen/ Thür.				•					•				•		•	—
Neumarkt i.d.OPf				•					•				•		•	—
Nürnberg			•	•	•			✔	•	•		•	✔	✔	✔	40.0
Osnabrück				•	•				•	•			•	✔	✔	28.6
Paderborn				•	•				•	•			•		•	—
Passau				•		•			•				•		•	—
Plauen				•									•		•	—
Pulsnitz				•				•	✔				•		✔	40.0
Regensburg				•	•				•	•			•		•	—
Rothenburg o.d.T.			•	•				•					•	•	•	—
Schwerin				•									•		✔	33.3
Siegburg				•									•		•	—
Solingen				•					•				•		•	—
Stadt Hof				•				•					•		✔	25.0
Stralsund													•		•	—
Stuttgart	•			•				•	•	•			•		•	—
Ulm		•		•	✔			•	✔				•		✔	42.9
Unna				•					•				•		•	—
Velbert				•					•				•		•	—

Town	Adhesive decals	Beer mats	Coin sets	Commemor. cups	Exonumia (medals)	Exonumia (tokens)	Lapel pins	Postcards	Posters	Special postmarks	Stamps	Telephone cards	Items for sale at stalls	Paintings	Photos	Proportion in Collections
Weimar				•					✔				•	•	•	20.0
Weißenfels									•				•		•	—
Wernigerode				•	•				•				•	•	✔	16.7
Wolfenbüttel				•					•				•		✔	25.0
Wurzen									•				•		•	—
Zittau				•					•				•		•	—
Zwickau				•				•	•				•	•	•	—

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