

MODEL SOCIALIST TOWN, TWO DECADES LATER:
CONTESTING THE PAST IN NOWA HUTA, POLAND

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ABSTRACT

This work examines people's experiences of the postsocialist transformation in Poland through the lens of memory. Since socialism's collapse over two decades ago, Poland has undergone dramatic political, economic and social changes. However, the past continues to enter into current politics, economic debates and social issues. This work examines the changes that have taken place by looking at how socialism is remembered two decades after its collapse in the Polish former "model socialist town" of Nowa Huta. It explores how ideas about the past are produced, reproduced and contested in different contexts: in Nowa Huta's cityscape, in museums, commemorations, and the town's steelworks (once the cornerstone of all social life in town), as well as in the personal accounts and recollections of Nowa Huta residents of different generations. Through this, it links together memory, place and generation in postsocialist East-Central Europe.

This work shows that the process of remembering at times of major political, economic and social changes always entails contestation. It argues that the postsocialist period in Poland has been characterized by a complex and paradoxical relationship to the socialist past. On the one hand, there are attempts to delineate the socialist past as distinct and radically different from the present, and to set it aside in favour of present concerns. For example, a generational divide is perceived between people who have experienced life in socialist Poland and those who have not. On the other hand, the past is deployed to validate the political and economic reforms that ensued. Hegemonic accounts thus characterize the socialist period as a time of repression, resistance and inefficiency, although these representations do not go uncontested.

Nowa Huta is a site that embodies these contradictions in memory and representation. In Nowa Huta, there are presently two major trends in representing the past: one seeing to downplay the town's association with socialism by highlighting its legacy of resistance against the socialist system, the other enumerating its socialist-era accomplishments such as architecture, an industrial tradition, and a legacy of work.

Keywords: memory, socialism and postsocialism, generation, East-Central Europe

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INTRODUCTION

For much of the second half of the 20th century, socialism¹ has been the defining framework shaping political, economic and social life in East-Central Europe. Now, twenty years after its collapse, socialism is largely relegated to history, with those wanting to learn “what it was like” directed to museums, archives, movies, popular and scholarly literature, and even “communist tours.” I begin my excursion into Poland’s socialist past by going on such a tour.

Crazy Guides is a tour company offering what they call “communist tours” around Nowa Huta, a district of Kraków, Poland initially built as a “model socialist town.” The tours target primarily foreign tourists, and their price, at 43 Euro per person, is steep by Polish standards. I meet today’s tour group, a British couple in their twenties, at their hotel in Kraków’s historic core. Piotrek, a tour guide in his mid to late twenties, dressed in labourer’s overalls, pulls up in a little black Trabant and we squish inside. Trabants were East German cars popular on Polish roads from the 1960s to 1980s, now virtually extinct. Riding in such a car is bound to be an adventure, for they shake, rattle and puff, giving the overall impression of being perpetually on the verge of breaking down². Later on, the guide will pull over an empty sideroad on the outskirts of Nowa Huta and allow us to drive the car for ourselves, so that we may experience the thrill of driving a “typical communist car” with no power steering.

¹ In Polish popular and scholarly discourses, the terms socialism and communism are generally used interchangeably. Anthropologists writing on the subject generally speak of “socialism” and “postsocialism”, noting that Eastern European states considered themselves socialist, and only on the road to communism, which was never actually realized (eg. Hann 2002: 21, Verdery 1996: 235). In this work, I generally follow their lead, except when quoting sources who do otherwise.

² For a colourful description of Trabants and their social life in postsocialist Eastern Europe see Berdahl (2010).

For now, we arrive in the heart of Nowa Huta. Our first stop is *Stylowa* (literally “Stylish”) restaurant, Nowa Huta’s oldest remaining restaurant built in 1956. “Typical communist restaurant” the guide tells us, and indeed, the décor seems to reflect the taste and style of decades past: pillars, marble floors, red tablecloths, clouds of cigarette smoke hanging in the air. We sit at a table that has not been cleared of dirty plates; Piotrek asks the waitress to clear the table and take our orders, but when she disappears without doing either, he does it himself and goes searching for someone who can relieve him of dirty plates and bring us drinks. I ask him for a Diet Coke. Piotrek laughs: “we are capitalists now but not that capitalist,” he tells me.

Over beer, he describes to us Nowa Huta’s history, beginning with the town’s construction in the late 1940s/early 1950s, and ending with stories of martial law, shortages, strikes and repressions in the 1980s. His account incorporates some personal reflections; for example, he tells us of the time during the tumultuous 1980s when his father, who was a member of Solidarity (the political opposition) did not come home for two days. The entire family was worried sick that he had been arrested, until he finally returned, proudly bearing a sewing machine. It turned out that he waited in line for two days to buy it, and did not want to leave the line for fear of losing his spot.

After the history lesson, we drive to the outside of Nowa Huta’s steelworks, once the cornerstone of all social life in town. We do not have permission to go in and the guide instructs us to snap pictures quickly before we get harassed by security guards. We also visit Arka Pana (the Lord’s Ark) church, the first church built in the “model socialist town” that was Nowa Huta, and an important symbol and site of local resistance against the socialist government.

The guide then takes us to an “authentic communist apartment” in Nowa Huta, decorated in the 1970s style. I recognize classics that every Polish person over thirty years of age remembers having in their home, such as the legendary wall unit *meblościanka*. I identify objects virtually identical to those I remember from my childhood, such as an old typewriter, meat grinder, and paintings of Pope John Paul II. The walls of the apartment are decorated with propaganda posters that promote “building socialism together” and pictures of Lenin. The apartment also contains an assortment of objects ranging from Solidarity membership cards to school objects such as notebooks and crayons. Piotrek turns on a black-and-white television set and puts on a movie entitled Destination Nowa Huta! (*Kierunek Nowa Huta!*), a propaganda classic made in the early 1950s depicting the town’s construction. As we watch, we are treated to some vodka and pickles – a “typical” communist-era treat.

Our last stop on the tour is a milk bar. Milk bars were the equivalent of fast-food establishments of the socialist era: government-subsidized eateries that were intended to provide quick and cheap meals for workers away from home. They are a rapidly disappearing phenomenon, but every town still has a few remaining. This is where we go for a “typical Polish meal.” We feast on *pierogi* (perogies) and *gołąbki* (cabbage rolls), then wash them down with *kompot*, a sort of lukewarm diluted fruit juice with pieces of fruit floating in it. The British couple are not asking questions; they seem overwhelmed by everything they’ve seen and heard today.

Vodka and pickles, dilapidated cars, dirty labourer’s uniforms, and stories of shortages, waiting in lines, strikes and arrests – this is communism for Western tourists. But how do “real” Polish people remember socialism, twenty years after its collapse? Is

Nowa Huta really seen as a socialist theme park, frozen in time? Or is the phenomenon of communist tourism “proof that the country has nothing to do with communism any more” (Stanek 2007)? And what about the youngest generation, too young to have any first-hand memories of the socialist period – do they also associate socialism with Trabants, shortages and posters of Lenin? It is these questions that led me to explore memories of socialism in Nowa Huta.

* * *

The collapse of socialist governments across East-Central Europe in 1989 brought major political, economic and social changes to the region. Central to the “transformation” project were the creation of a multi-party political system and a capitalist market. However, anthropologist Katherine Verdery cautions that the political and economic transformation was “more than a technical process,” also including “meanings, feelings, the sacred, ideas of morality (and) the nonrational” (1999: 25). She argues that it entailed a “reorganization on a cosmic scale” and “the redefinition of virtually everything, including morality, social relations, and basic meanings. It means a reordering of people’s entire meaningful worlds” (1999: 35).

While each former socialist country took a somewhat different path on the “transformation” route, Poland opted for political reforms modelled after western democracies, as well as rapid economic reform known as “shock therapy”, based on rapid privatization of formerly state-owned enterprises, the freeing of prices, withdrawal of price subsidies, and free trade (Humphrey and Mandel 2002). This earned the country praise from the Western international community, who hailed Poland as a “success story”

of the postcommunist transformation and the new “European tiger” (Hardy 2009). These reforms were framed in terms of Poland’s desire to “return to Europe,” a dream which came true in 2004 when the country joined the European Union. A lot has changed over the past twenty years; Poland is now proudly part of the “new Europe.” At the same time, the past continues to enter into current politics, economic debates and social issues.

Major political upheavals and transformations are prime occasions where issues of memory come into play (eg. Cole 1998, Dubois 2005, Gready 2003, Jorgensen 1990, Natzmer 2002, Passerini 1984, Resina 2000, Walsh 2001). Two decades after its collapse, socialism has become “an object of significant historical curiosity, memory making and contestation” (Berdahl 2010: 123), with its “social life informed by large-scale political shifts, economic developments, and cultural dynamics” (ibid). This work examines what Berdahl has termed the “social life of socialism” in Poland. It asks how memories of the People’s Republic of Poland (PRL)³ inform current projects, actions and identities, and in turn, how present conditions inform how the socialist period is remembered, forgotten or silenced. It also examines how ordinary people situate their own stories within the larger historical process and to what extent these stories draw on, contradict, or represent alternatives to hegemonic and/or officially propagated⁴ versions of the past.

³ In both scholarly and popular Polish discourses, the socialist period is often referred to by the keyword “PRL”, an acronym for People’s Republic of Poland (*Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*), which was the country’s official name from 1952–1989. As such, the term PRL often becomes a convenient shorthand for referring to the socialist period, similar to the expression “GDR” in the former Eastern Germany. In this work, I use the term PRL whenever it was used by my interlocutors as well as in other sources on which I draw in this work.

⁴ Hegemonic and official memory, while related, are not the same. In this work, I define official memory as state-sponsored efforts at memory creation and dissemination (Gready 2003: 4). As for hegemony, I understand it in a Gramscian sense, as pertaining to social and political ideas of the dominant class that are widely accepted and perpetuated through consensus and consent, though they may also be met with resistance (Gramsci 1971). As such, I understand hegemonic memory as representations of the past that are connected to dominant institutions and are thus privileged, although they too can be contested (Popular Memory Group 1982). A more in-depth discussion of my use of the hegemony concept will follow later in this chapter.

My research was carried out in the former Polish “socialist town” of Nowa Huta. Built by Poland’s socialist government after World War II as a “model socialist town,” over time Nowa Huta became a site of resistance against the socialist government. Following socialism’s collapse, many political, economic and social changes characteristic of the transformation period have played out particularly vividly in Nowa Huta. As such, the history of Nowa Huta can be seen as sort of a “microcosm” of Poland’s postwar history (Stenning 2008). Nowa Huta, therefore, is more than just a geographical location in which I conducted fieldwork. Throughout this work, I treat it also as an object of inquiry, since much can be learned about people’s experiences of socialism and the postsocialist transformation in Poland by looking at Nowa Huta’s history and the ways in which people narrate their lives with reference to local events and places. To put it differently, this work is not only *set in*, but is also *about*, Nowa Huta. It argues that place constitutes an important referent for the construction of identity and memory. People’s identities and memories of past events are constituted by, and articulated with relation to, places. And in turn, places are inscribed with meanings and memories, which are often multiple, contradictory and subject to change.

In this work I explore people’s memories of the past with particular attention to the concept of generation. I ask how the socialist period is remembered by people who have lived through it, but also how it is perceived by people too young to have any personal remembrances of it. I argue that in Poland, socialism’s collapse constitutes a major rupture that creates a generational division between those who have had substantial life experiences (and memories of these experiences) during the socialist period, and those who do not. Existing literature in the area of memory teaches us that, at times of

major changes or upheavals, the younger generation engages with the past differently than their elders (Bertaux and Thompson 1993, Hirsch 2008, Welzer 2010). In the Polish case, the younger generation is oriented towards the future and distances itself from the socialist past, although their knowledge of local places, events and people (what I term “community memory”) provides avenues for a different engagement with the past. The case of Nowa Huta also illustrates that generation is a fluid and relational category, and within each generation there can exist multiple cohorts. Generational boundaries are porous, with people situated along the fault lines of different historical generations constituting a bridge between them. Finally, the concept of generation can also be used to speak about change, and to mark distinctions, for example between socialism and postsocialism, in a way that makes particular moral claims about the past and present (Shevchenko 2008).

My combined interest in the postsocialist transformation and questions of memory arose out of my personal experiences. I was born and raised in Poland but left the country as a child in 1990, the year following socialism’s collapse. As such, I remember the last few years of the socialist period and the very beginning of the postsocialist transformation. I remember the fever surrounding the “Roundtable Talks” in spring 1989 and seeing Solidarity flags everywhere. Around that same time, an impromptu market arose on the street in front of our local post office, where private entrepreneurs sold a variety of goods off the back of their vans, the most interesting and memorable of which to me at the time was German chocolate *Milka*. For my ten-year old self, change was thus symbolized by Solidarity flags and good-quality chocolate. The other changes that followed I was not there to experience first-hand.

My very infrequent visits back to Poland over the next twenty years inevitably occasioned comparisons between the past I remembered from my childhood and the present I encountered, especially as these were often stimulated by questions on the part of curious family members and acquaintances, along the lines of: “so Poland is a lot different now, isn’t it?” Such questions invited me to interrogate my own observations about what has – or has not – changed since 1989.

Another reason behind my decision to pursue questions of memory and change in my research was the fact that my fieldwork period in the year 2009-2010 would coincide with several important historical anniversaries. The year 2009 marked the 20th anniversary of the collapse of socialist governments across Eastern Europe (including Poland), as well as the 60th anniversary of the town of Nowa Huta. Since anniversaries are “conjunctures in which memories are produced and activated” (Jelin 2003: 64), it was a particularly fortuitous time to explore questions that lie at the juncture of memory and postsocialist transformation. My interest in issues of memory was further stimulated by the fact that the previous year (2008) had brought a worldwide real estate crash and an ensuing global economic recession. With governments across the world suddenly talking about the responsibilities of states and corporations to citizens, and even the United States debating a public health care program, I wanted to see if similar debates were also taking place in Poland and whether they would draw on the country’s fairly recent experience of a fundamentally different political-economic system to address pressing economic issues (as it turned out, they were not and they did not).

In this work I argue that the postsocialist period in Poland has been characterized by a complex and paradoxical relationship to the past. First, rapid political and economic

changes occupied both the ruling elites and “ordinary people” with present concerns and questions about the future. As a result, the past has been demarcated from the present and set aside. At the same time, it could not be dismissed altogether, since it continues to surface in political debates, economic issues and the accounts of “ordinary people.” Contemporary hegemonic representations of the socialist period frame⁵ this past largely in terms of repressions, resistance and inefficiency,⁶ although these representations do not go uncontested. Nowa Huta is a site that embodies these contradictions in memory and representation. In Nowa Huta, there are currently two principal trends in representing the past: one seeking to downplay the town’s association with socialism by highlighting its legacy of resistance against the socialist system, the other highlighting its socialist-era accomplishments such as architecture, an industrial tradition, and a legacy of work. These contradictions are evident in local representations as well as in the accounts of Nowa Huta residents.

Memory in Poland: background

Following socialism’s collapse, Poland eagerly adopted political and economic reforms modelled after Western neoliberal democracies. Underpinning this direction was “the idea that change for the good equals more like Western Europe or the United States” (Dunn 2004: 162, emphasis removed). The “return to Europe” discourses embraced by the country’s new elites were informed by an image of “the West” as a “dreamworld”

⁵ I borrow this expression from Irwin-Zarecka, whose work *Frames of Remembrance* (1994) examines the different ways in which past is “framed” in, and through, various representations and practices.

⁶ At present, many representations of the socialist period highlight the inefficiencies of the socialist government. This can be seen, for instance, in accounts of ubiquitous empty shelves and long lines, or stories of pervasive bureaucracy. In Poland, such accounts are often subsumed under the umbrella term “absurdities,” although in this work I opt for the less value-laden term “inefficiencies”.

(Buck-Morss 2000) of “prosperity, civility and freedom brought about by a self-regulating market economy and liberal democracy” (Brandstadter 2007).

Galasińska and Galasiński (2010) describe this process in the following way:

The unquestioned certainties of where the region was to go after the fall of communism were... transferred onto the economic direction. ‘We all’ knew that we wanted capitalism, that capitalism was the only viable alternative to socialism. We wanted the full shelves, big cars, televisions and houses. Just like we saw on TV watching *Dynasty*, *Columbo* or *Kojak’s Chicago*. There was never any debate as to where to go, nor indeed, was such a debate possible (Galasińska and Galasiński 2010: 2).

As Susan Brandstadter aptly observes, the new neoliberal order that ensued after 1989 defined itself in direct opposition to the socialist one that preceded it, just as the socialist revolution in the first half of the 20th century had defined itself directly in opposition to capitalism (2007: 133). This “radical attempt to construct or ‘write’ an entirely new social, political and economic order” (2007: 133) required changes that went beyond the creation of a stock market or a multi-party political system. Indeed, the reforms also affected identities, values, morals, and memories. Both revolutions, argues Brandstadter, attempted to “dislodge” its past as “negative other” (2007: 134), and Katherine Verdery notes that the transformation process has been characterized by a “reordering” of morality, that is, “making the new order a moral one in contrast with the old” (Verdery 1999: 111).

The creation of an entirely new political, economic, social and moral order requires a reconsideration of the one that preceded it. Writing about the transition from the Franco regime in Spain, Joan Ramon Resina argues that “[i]f... society is itself a form of memory, then a profound reorganization of the state must also reform social memory

along with the institutions that promote it” (2000: 88). In Poland, too, the collapse of socialism and the political-economic transformation that followed brought about a reconsideration of PRL and its legacy. The transformation period has been characterized by two different trends with regards to remembering the past (see also Strzyczkowski 2000). First, official discourses⁷ have attempted to move beyond the past and focus on the present and future. At the same time, however, in order for an entirely new political and economic system to be constructed, legitimized and “made moral,” the preceding one has to be negated. In this section I show how these two trends play out in state practices and policies which shape official memory.

Immediately after socialism’s collapse, steps were taken to eliminate certain aspects of socialist legacy, primarily in the symbolic domain. For example, streets and schools named after socialist heroes or events had their names changed, monuments of socialist heroes were toppled, the eagle on the national emblem regained its crown that was removed during the socialist period, and socialist holidays (eg. July 22) were eliminated and pre-socialist ones reinstated (eg. May 3, November 11). At the same time, however, some claimed that while the first postsocialist government instituted symbolic changes, it was not doing enough to rid the country of the underlying political and economic structures of socialism (Śpiewak 2005). For example, when Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the first premier of postsocialist Poland, embraced a so-called “thick line” (*gruba kreska*) principle, advocating that a “thick line” be drawn between the past and the present, his critics interpreted it as a call to forget past wrongdoings (Koczanowicz 2008).

⁷ Throughout this work I define discourse in a Foucauldian sense, both as statements that provide a language for talking about a particular topic, and as a system of representation (that is, the rules and practices that regulate what is or is not talked about). Discourse, therefore, defines and produces the object of our knowledge, since it governs what can be talked about, and how (Foucault 2002 [1972]).

They accused his government of not doing enough to stop former party members from taking over state enterprises (*uwłaszczenie nomenklatury*), as well as for allowing most communist bureaucrats to retain their positions, and state security agency (SB) to destroy some of its records (Śpiewak 2005). A similar tendency to deliberately not delve into past injustices in the interest of building a peaceful present and future has also been identified in other places experiencing major political changes, such as Spain. Writers on the subject agree that the first two decades following the end of Franco's regime were characterized by a deliberate "disremembering" (Resina 2000), done not so much in order to forget, as to not let the past affect the future (Labanyi 1997).

The cornerstone of Poland's transformation process was an orientation towards the future, embodied in the country's efforts to "catch up" and "return to Europe" (Galasińska and Galasiński 2010). Mazowiecki, for instance, portrayed himself as "premier of all Poles"; that is, his politics focused on overcoming past differences and building a new system together regardless of past political affiliations (Śpiewak 2005). The idea of looking to the future was also readily embraced by members of the left-wing, former socialist party; in fact, in 1995 its leader Alesander Kwaśniewski was elected to the presidency with the slogan "let's choose the future" (*wyberzmy przyszłość*).⁸

Although the principal orientation in the first years of the transformation period was towards the future rather than the past, the implementation of major political and economic reforms required that the socialist past be separated from the present, and somehow "dealt with." In 1997, with the return to power of right-wing post-Solidarity

⁸ Incidentally, the victory of a former member of the socialist Worker's Party (PZPR) to the presidency only six years after the collapse of the socialist government suggests that the socialist legacy must not have been so abhorrent to the majority of voters. In fact, for the first fifteen years after socialism's collapse voters regularly oscillated between right and left-wing parties, and it is only since 2005 that Poland's political landscape has been overwhelmingly dominated by two right-wing parties.

party AWS (*Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność*, or Solidarity Voters' Action) the issue of the past returned to politics. That year, a law on lustration⁹ was passed, requiring public figures (including elected officials, lawyers, judges, university professors, school principals and journalists, among others) to “come clean” about any history of collaboration with the socialist-era security police (SB) they had. (Importantly, the law did not necessarily prohibit people with a history of collaboration from holding public offices, as long as they disclosed their past involvement.) The law triggered numerous controversies, and has been revised several times, but remains on the books until today.

Another measure of “dealing with the past” was the creation of the Institute of National Memory (*Instytut Pamięci Narodowej*, or IPN) that same year. The Institute's mandate was to preserve, manage and disclose material of state security agencies between 1944-1989, relating to both Nazi and communist-era crimes. IPN has three arms: archival, judicial and public education. One of its main activities is lustration of public officials, but it also conducts and publishes research and organizes public education campaigns, exhibits and conferences. It publishes two journals, *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* (Memory and Justice) and *Aparat represji w Polsce Ludowej 1944–1989* (Repression apparatus in People's Poland 1944-1989), and produces educational materials for teachers and historical supplements to major newspapers. In recent months its newest project, a Monopoly-style game entitled *Kolejka* (literally “line-up”, pertaining to waiting in line) dealing with life during the socialist period, made international headlines (eg. Scislowska 2011).

⁹ The term lustration traditionally pertains to purification ceremonies. Since socialism's collapse, the term has taken on a new meaning, and refers to the process of screening the past of influential public figures, in order to limit people associated with the socialist-era secret police from participating in public life.

Since its creation, IPN has received considerable government funding and has a staff of over 1500 employees nation-wide. Because of this, it is influential in both producing and disseminating a particular version of Polish history (Main 2008). Kurkowska-Budzan described IPN's privileged position in this regard using Foucault's concept of power/knowledge, which postulates that discourse is created and perpetuated by those who have the power and means to do so (2010). Her analysis of the content of one of IPN's publications, its monthly Bulletin (*Biuletyn*) reveals that the most frequently-addressed topics relating to the socialist period include the functioning of the socialist state (including the security apparatus) and the history of the political opposition. While it is beyond the scope of this work to conduct my own comprehensive analysis of IPN's representations of the past, in the course of my fieldwork I attended a number of conferences, exhibits, and educational sessions organized by IPN's local branch in Kraków, and over the years I have read many of their publications (including some cited in this work). On the basis of this knowledge, I largely agree with Kurkowska-Budzan's assessment. I would add that the overall sense of the past that emerges through their various representations is that of the socialist period as a time of repression and resistance. Although over the years IPN has been plagued by numerous controversies, it is nonetheless a powerful agent in the production and dissemination of ideas about the past.

Another influential agent in producing research and conducting public education on the subject of the socialist period, is the non-governmental and non-profit organization Karta Center. Karta started as an underground organization during the socialist period, and since 1989 has received funding from the Ministry of Higher Education as well as

many international and Polish foundations. Its activities include creating and managing archives and disseminating information (for example by publishing their research or funding community-oriented projects) on the topic of communist-era oppression and resistance. Although Karta is not related to IPN, it is apparent that its representations of the past are in a similar spirit.

While the above examples illustrate that numerous attempts to “deal with the past” have been undertaken throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, the year 2004 marked what several historians identify as a turning point in the politics of history in Poland (Koczanowicz 2008, Nijakowski 2008). It was in that year that a major corruption scandal in the government was revealed, and subsequently blamed on the vestiges and traces of the former socialist regime that had not been properly resolved (Koczanowicz 2008). The political party in power at the time (incidentally the left-wing post-communist party SLD, *Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej*, or Alliance of the Democratic Left) was swept out in the 2005 elections, and succeeded by right-wing PiS (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, or Law and Justice), whose election program was explicitly based around an active politics of history and what they termed “decommunization.”

The lustration process intensified after PiS’ rise to power, particularly since another scandal electrified the public a few months prior to the election. Bronisław Wildstein, a journalist and former dissident, accessed and made public the contents of the catalogue of Warsaw’s IPN branch, in an act designed to express his frustration with what he perceived as the slow and inefficient lustration process. This so-called “Wildstein List,” which quickly appeared on the internet, contained names of people

included in IPN's records, but did not distinguish whether they were agents, collaborators or victims. Not surprisingly, the list triggered considerable controversy and public debate.

The next few years were characterized by viral lustrations, accusations and counter-accusations. For example, in 2008 two historians employed by IPN published a book accusing Poland's former president and Solidarity legend Lech Wałęsa of collaborating with the secret security agency (Cenckiewicz and Gontarczyk 2008). Regular scandals which threw into question the past of public figures absorbed much of media attention and eventually dampened many people's enthusiasm for "dealing with the past," leading to increased calls for the government to start dealing with more pressing issues in the present.

In 2007, PiS lost the election to PO (*Platforma Obywatelska* or Civic Platform), a liberal right-wing party concerned more with economic reforms and Poland's future in the European Union than with investigating and dealing with the past. Since then, things have calmed down somewhat, although the past continues to surface in current events, debates and discourses. During my fieldwork and at the time of writing, several ongoing issues in Poland have in various ways either stemmed from, or invoked, the socialist past. For the sake of brevity, I will briefly describe only three. One hotly debated topic, for instance, is Poland's retirement system, widely seen as in need of reform. Advocates of reform depict the current system as unsustainable, and, frequently as a communist relict in need of eradication, since it accords special privileges to certain occupation groups (eg. police officers, soldiers, coalminers). Another issue making headlines at the time of writing in May 2011 is the privatization of a coal mining consortium (*Jastrzębska Spółka Węglowa*) in Poland's Silesia region. The privatization is protested by the consortium's

trade unions and questioned by the opposition parties PiS and left-leaning SLD. The party in power, however, is determined to push it through, demonizing the striking coalminers as corrupted by socialist-era privileges and as halting economic progress. A third instance of the intrusion of the past into present issues can be seen in the debates preceding the beatification of Pope John Paul in May 2011. In March, a debate arose whether Poland's former General Jaruzelski (Poland's former First Secretary, the socialist-era equivalent of prime minister) should be invited to accompany the current president at the beatification ceremonies, alongside the country's other former leaders.

The image of the socialist past that emerges from the political actions, representations and debates outlined above is an overwhelmingly negative one, framed primarily in terms of repression and resistance. One explanation for this, I suggest, is that in order for a new political and economic system to be established and legitimized, the old one has to be, if not rejected outright, at least moved aside in favour of present and future concerns. This also requires that positive aspects of the previous system be forgotten or at least minimized. A particular kind of memory and forgetting thus becomes part of the process that economist Jane Hardy terms "constructing consent for liberalism" (2009). She writes:

From the national level to the workplace, those in privileged situations have attempted to marginalize old ways of doing things, especially if they involve notions of collectivity, and engender what are regarded as new and appropriate understandings that are compatible with the market and integration with global capitalism (2009: 55)

In order for "new" values such as private property, competition and individualism to become naturalized, the "old" have to be if not outright demonized, at least taken off

the public agenda as viable alternatives. As such, accomplishments of the socialist period such as near-universal employment, education and literacy, postwar rebuilding and industrialization, are typically either undermined, explained away, or at the very least dismissed as small compensation for “greater evils” such as censorships and political repressions (Majmurek and Szumlewicz 2010).¹⁰ In a tongue-in-cheek manner Kozłowski (2008) summarizes this trend by saying: “Everything that could be considered an achievement happened in spite of, or against, the regime.” Economic and political strategies associated with the socialist system (eg. a well-developed public sector, or a separation between state and church) are presented as radical and communist, even though these same solutions exist in a plethora of contemporary capitalist states (Majmurek and Szumlewicz 2010). The dismissal of even positive areas of life during the socialist period is made possible by the relative absence of alternative accounts from official discourses (ibid). Sociolinguist Bill Johnston writes:

Today, the discourses of communism would provide a counterdiscourse to the dominant discourses; yet they are thoroughly discredited (for good reason) and cannot provide the counterbalance necessary for an effective dialogic relationship – they lack any authority and to a large extent were never internalized. Discursively speaking, they barely exist (2004: 136).

It remains to be acknowledged that while official discourses depict the socialist period primarily in terms of repressions and resistance, alternative accounts do exist (eg. Czubiński 2000, Majmurek and Szumlewicz 2010, Rakowski 2000). Publications such as *Krytyka Polityczna* (Political Critique), *Przegląd* (Overview) *Zdanie* (Opinion), *Bez Dogmatu* (Without Dogma), or the Polish edition of *Le Monde Diplomatique*, offer

¹⁰ An interesting debate on the positive aspects of the socialist period that exemplifies these trends, can be read on the online discussion forum <http://forum.historia.org.pl/topic/10742-dobre-strony-prl-u/>

critiques of current political and economic events and hegemonic discourses from the perspective of the left. For the time being, however, these voices do not achieve much resonance, and tend to be articulated within a narrow circle of supporters. This should not come as a surprise; after all, it is the victors who get to write history (Burke 1989). As such it is primarily the new ruling elite – many of whom are former members of the political opposition in the 1980s – whose voices are reflected in the institutions, archives, research and media, that shape official accounts of the past (Marcheva 2010). Writing about the hegemony of neoliberal and conservative discourses in Poland, Majmurek observes that it was actually the political right, and not the left, who “did their homework on Gramsci” (2009: 141; my translation), created and educated their own “organic intellectuals” and built a network of institutions that would reproduce these discourses.

So far, my discussion has focused on representations of the past in official discourses such as state institutions and academic publications. It is also noteworthy, however, that over the past few years a growing number of popular accounts (eg. books, movies) have also addressed various aspects of life in socialist Poland. These include accounts of everyday life, stories of “the absurd” such as bureaucratic inefficiency or shortages, depictions of cult objects (toys, clothes, cars), dictionaries of “socialist lexicon,” or compilations of socialist-era jokes (eg. Kot 2008, Rychlewski 2006, Szmit-Zawierucha 2004). Often written in an ironic style, these sources remind readers of the absurd aspects of life in a socialist state, and/or invoke fond memories of objects or activities treasured at a time of repressions and shortages (Main 2008).

The above discussion seeks to show that the image of the past that emerges from mainstream representations fit into the themes of repression, resistance, or inefficiency.

On the one hand, institutes such as IPN focus on issues dealing with repression and struggle against the socialist system, presenting the socialist period as “the darkest period of regional history” (Czepczyński 2008:183). On the other hand, many representations intended for a popular audience focus on the absurd, such as shortages and bureaucratic hurdles. Historian Radosław Poczykowski describes existing representations of the socialist period as oscillating between either “a happy arcadia or an empire of absolute evil” (2008: 28), whereas philosopher Jan Hartman (2010) speaks of the reduction of PRL to either “martyrology” (ie: stories of repression and resistance) or to satire.

Whereas public/official representations oscillate between accounts of repressions, resistance and inefficiency, my work is concerned with how “ordinary people” draw on, contest, and/or contribute to these representations. Geographer Mariusz Czepczyński argues that “[m]any people are lost between official anti-communist propaganda and popular memories and connotations” (Czepczyński 2008: 183), although to date there are relatively few academic sources that give us a good sense of what “ordinary people” think and feel. In Poland, memory of the socialist past is a subject taken up most frequently by historians and sometimes sociologists, rather than anthropologists, who only sometimes delve into the topic, usually only tangentially, as part of their research on other aspects of the postsocialist transformation (eg. Górny 2003, Robotycki 2003, Buchowski 2001, Pine 2002a; c.f. Kabzińska 2006). The majority of existing research in this area takes the form of surveys or public opinion polls, rather than ethnographic research. While public opinion polls give us but a very limited glimpse into “what people think” - and, problematic as they are, should always be read critically - they can nonetheless be useful in sketching out some general trends.

While hegemonic representations of the socialist past portray it largely in negative terms, studies indicate that popular opinion is both divided and more complex. For example, recent opinion polls suggest that roughly 45% of the population perceives the socialist period positively, 45% negatively and the remaining 10% is undecided (eg. CBOS 2009, Kwiatkowski 2008). However, the proportion of the population reporting a positive impression of socialism seems to be declining; for example, it has dropped from 63% in 1987 to 40% in 2006 (Kwiatkowski 2008). This seems to suggest that after political and market reforms have somewhat stabilized and after Poland entered the European Union, more people are satisfied with the outcomes of the postcommunist transformation. In a 2009 public opinion poll a full 80% of respondents indicated that they believed that changing the system in 1989 was “worth it,” and that over the past twenty years things have on the whole changed for the better (CBOS 2010).

In popular surveys, factors associated with a more negative evaluation of PRL include young age, higher education, and high income, whereas old age, lack of higher education and low income are typically associated with positive memories of socialism. This latter group is most often made up of manual workers, farmers, homemakers, retirees and pensioners (Kwiatkowski 2008, CBOS 2009 and 2010). We can observe some correlation between people’s attitude towards the past and their experiences of the political-economic transformation: the urban, highly-educated, and gainfully employed are widely cast as the “winners” of the postsocialist transformation, whereas rural dwellers, unskilled workers, former industrial workers, farmers and the elderly (or those living on fixed incomes) are its primary “losers” (Jarosz 2010).

Surveys indicate that when asked about the positive aspects of socialism, people mention factors such as job security, absence of unemployment, universal education, social support (for example, company-arranged vacations or meal plans in the workplace) as well as post-war rebuilding and industrialization. Some people also cite closer family relationships and social networks (more time for family and friends), and “order” (for example, low crime rates). On the other hand, people are critical about lack of political freedom and freedom of speech, lack of human rights and civil liberties, forcible enforcement of official ideology, poor work ethic, and lack of economic progress (Kwiatkowski 2008).

The plethora of views on the past that exist in popular opinion is summed up in the words of anthropologist Czesław Robotycki, who writes that “there are as many depictions of the People’s Republic of Poland as there are authors” (2003: 67; my translation), and historian Piotr Wojciechowski, who writes:

Everyone who lived in the People’s Republic will reject the assessments of politicians and historians, will mock their synthesis, will be outraged by praise, will undermine critiques. Every one of us knows better what it was really like (1996: 53; my translation).

Robotycki and Wojciechowski’s comments nicely capture the spectrum of views that I encountered in the course of my own fieldwork. As I will show throughout this work, people’s accounts of the past are more complex and nuanced than the narratives of repression, resistance and inefficiencies which dominate official discourses, although people’s stories are in part shaped by (and, it can be assumed, in turn shape) these narratives.

The above introduction sought to illustrate that the socialist past in Poland is a dynamic and contested terrain. Questions over whether to look back to the past or towards the future, to remember or to forget, and how the socialist past is to be remembered, continue to surface in political debates, media discourses and the lives of ordinary people. At the same time, it is worth remembering that memory “can be simultaneously multivocal and hegemonic” (Misztal 2003: 66). That is, while complete uniformity or consensus is impossible, certain representations of the past do gain dominance, even if they are not completely accepted and continue to be contested (see also Billig 1990). At present, the prevailing “structure of feeling” (Williams 1977) views the socialist period primarily in terms of repression, resistance or inefficiency. At the same time, throughout this work I will show that this does not preclude the existence of alternative memories and contestations.

Methodology

Ever since I began planning my research project I knew I wanted to carry it out in Kraków, the city of my birth. When I went to Kraków for a preliminary research trip in the summer of 2008 and talked to people about wanting to study “how PRL is remembered,” I kept getting directed to Nowa Huta. Around the same time I came across the work of British geographer Alison Stenning (2000, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2009) who has been conducting research in Nowa Huta on other issues related to the postsocialist transformation. For the first time it occurred to me that Nowa Huta could be interesting.

Having spent my childhood in Kraków, I was not unaware of the existence of Nowa Huta, the city’s industrial district. Several of my distant family members lived

there but I only went there on occasions such as name-day celebrations. I also knew that my mother was born and spent her childhood in Nowa Huta, and that it was popularly perceived as an inferior part of town.

Once I began to consider the possibility of doing my research in Nowa Huta, I discovered more family connections. My grandfather had been one of the so-called “builders” of Nowa Huta, meaning one of the founding residents who arrived in the area in the early 1950s as part of a mandatory youth work brigade to work on the town’s construction. He began as a manual labourer, then worked in what now would be termed “human resources,” that is, recruitment and retention of workers. In Nowa Huta he met my now-deceased grandmother, who similarly moved there from a nearby village for work. My father also once lived in Nowa Huta for several months as a university student, while doing a mandatory internship¹¹ at what was then called Lenin Steelworks (*Huta im. Lenina*).

I thus entered the field in the somewhat ambiguous position of simultaneous insider and outsider, or what Abu-Lughod has termed a “halfie” (see also De Soto and Dudwick 2000, Narayan 2009). I was born in Kraków and familiar with Polish social and cultural conventions, and I speak Polish fluently. While some people commented on having picked up a foreign accent in my speech, others were surprised to hear that I permanently live in Canada, and have done so for the past twenty years – in fact on a few occasions people who were unfamiliar with my life story complimented me on my English skills. At the same time, being “from Canada” has opened up many doors. People

¹¹ At the time my father attended university (late 1960s/early 1970s) it was mandatory for university students to do internships at various industrial workplaces in order to develop an appreciation for the country’s working class, the so-called backbone of socialism. My father, a math student, was assigned to work in the steel factory’s electrical department.

were intrigued as to why I was interested in Nowa Huta, and impressed that “people in Canada want to know about us.” It certainly did not hurt that for decades, Canada has held a somewhat romanticized place in the Polish imagination (this is particularly true for the older generations), seen as the epitome of prosperity and the “good life.” Several people commented that being “from Canada” made me more trustworthy, since I was seen as an outsider to local political agendas and networks. To this day, the socialist period in Poland continues to be a charged topic for some people, and being seen as “outside” political alliances was decidedly helpful in procuring interviewees. Lastly, I felt that my ignorance in certain matters, occasional gaffes and what could be perceived as “stupid,” “obvious,” or “inappropriate” questions, were more readily forgiven than if I were seen as a 100% native researcher.

I conducted fieldwork in Nowa Huta from August 2009 to June 2010. Although I did not reside in the district itself (for both financial and personal reasons I decided to stay with my grandfather who resides in the centre of Kraków), I spent virtually all my time there. I volunteered with local organizations, including two local museums and the cultural centre OKN (*Ośrodek Kultury Norwida*, or the Norwid Cultural Centre¹²). I helped the museums with translations and with organizing exhibits and educational programming, and I organized a weekly English conversation circle at OKN for the centre’s employees. I attended various community events, including commemorative ceremonies, monthly information meetings organized by the municipal government for local stakeholders to address various local issues, meetings of local organizations pertaining to Nowa Huta revitalization initiatives, and cultural events such as movie

¹² The Centre is named after famous Polish poet Cyprian Kamil Norwid.

screenings, theatre productions and exhibit openings. I attended educational programs or talks dealing with different aspects of Nowa Huta's heritage, and went on numerous walking and bus tours around the district, usually organized by the local museum or OKN community centre. I reconnected with family members who lived in the area as well as discovered some new family connections. I gave English lessons to three Nowa Huta residents who ended up becoming friends and key informants. When I had time to spare between meetings and events I would pop into the local coffee shop to read the local newspaper and catch up with the owner, or stop by one of the organizations where I volunteered, where someone would always find time to offer me tea and fill me in on the latest gossip.

In addition to participant observation in Nowa Huta, I also conducted interviews with Nowa Huta residents or people who had strong work or personal attachments to the district. Since I was closely connected to several cultural institutions, many of my contacts were people who, as it is said in Polish, "worked in culture." Because of Nowa Huta's identity as a former steel town, I also made a special effort to seek out people who worked for the steelworks in various capacities, from front-line steelworkers to people in managerial/administrative positions. Finally, I was interested in what the youngest generation knows and thinks about the socialist period, and as such I sought out young Nowa Huta residents, particularly through cultural centres/institutions which organize a variety of programs targeting school-aged youth.

In total, I interviewed sixty-four people, although I held informal conversations with many more. My interlocutors ranged in age from high-school age students to Nowa Huta's first builders who are now in their eighties: I interviewed twenty-three high school

students under the age of twenty, ten young people in their twenties and early thirties, seventeen middle-aged individuals, and fourteen retirees in their mid-sixties and up, of which four were Nowa Huta “builders” in their eighties.

Occupation-wise, seven of my interlocutors were “cultural workers,” all but one of them female (the “cultural” domain in Poland being largely feminized). Five of my interlocutors were history teachers. Many of my interlocutors were in some way connected to the steelworks (it is worth mentioning here that the steelworks used to own virtually everything in town, including the OKN cultural centre where I volunteered). From the people directly employed at the steelworks itself, whether presently or in the past, I interviewed seven people who could be classified as “front-line steelworkers” in either factory-floor or technical-type jobs. One of them was female, the rest male (in a direct reversal of the “cultural” domain, the majority of steelworkers were, and continue to be, male). At the steelworks, I also interviewed three people in management positions (all male), two union leaders (one male, one female), a former director of social services (male), two administrative workers (both female), and two male artists (yes, in the past the steelworks hired artists for “propaganda work,” such as making posters and banners for parades). Aside from “cultural” workers and steelworkers I also interviewed people in other occupations, including teachers, small entrepreneurs, and a retired photographer.

Depending on the age and life situation of my interlocutors, I talked with them about their own and their families’ histories in Nowa Huta, their work or school, different aspects of Nowa Huta’s life in which they are involved (many of my interlocutors were involved in various cultural or athletic initiatives such as sports clubs, environmental groups, scouts, or other cultural/artistic initiatives), as well as their perceptions of the

issues currently affecting the district. Most of these interviews were one-on-one, although I occasionally interviewed couples or families together, and I conducted five group interviews with small groups (3-4) of high school students, which were organized by their teachers. Many of my interlocutors were apprehensive about being tape-recorded and preferred me to only take notes during our conversations. I also did not tape-record students and only took notes during our conversations. All the names used throughout this work are pseudonyms. A few of my interlocutors expressed concern about having their identities revealed, and so for those individuals I changed certain identifying information in order to better protect their confidentiality.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

My research question is situated at the juncture of two broad thematic areas in anthropology: postsocialism and memory. I am interested in the postsocialist transformation in East-Central Europe and I seek to approach it through the lens of memory. Through the case of Nowa Huta, I ask how the socialist period is remembered in contemporary Poland, and what memories about the past can tell us about people's experiences of the postsocialist transformation and about current events and issues affecting the region. This work extends the existing literature on memory in postsocialist East-Central Europe, a strand which has recently begun to emerge within the vast anthropological literature on the postsocialist transformation (eg. Berdahl 2010, Kaneff 2004, Pine et al 2004, Nadkarni and Shevchenko 2004, Rausing 2004, Ten Dyke 2000 and 2001, Todorova 2010). I explore the dialectical relationship between memory, place

and generation in postsocialist East-Central Europe, topics which to date have been relatively unexplored as a foursome in the existing anthropological accounts.

Postsocialism

My theoretical approach is informed by the literature on the postsocialist transformation in Europe, which views the events of 1989 as a turning point that rearranged the global geo-political landscape that had been in place since World War II, and brought profound political, economic and social changes to former Soviet Bloc states (eg. Verdery [1991] 2002). Anthropologists conducting research in former European socialist states have examined a variety of issues relating to people's experiences of political, economic, social and cultural changes, and have done so from a variety of perspectives. Many studies, for instance, have addressed market reform (eg. Burawoy and Verdery 1999, Mandel and Humphrey 2002), including agricultural reform and decollectivization (eg. Stewart 1998, Pine 1998, Verdery 1999a), de-industrialization (eg. Ashwin 1999a, Dunn 2004, Kideckel 2008), new forms of consumption and consumerism (eg. Ghodsee 2006, Rausing 2002, Patino 2008), or the morals imbued in different types of economic activities (eg. Kaneff 2002, Pine 2002a). Some anthropologists have taken up issues relating to political changes, such as the emergence of civil society (eg. Hann and Dunn 1996, Mandel 2002), or changing forms of citizenship (eg. Ashwin 1999, Bazylevych 2009, Dunn 2004). Others have explored changing identities, including gender (eg. Ashwin 2000, Bunzl 2000, Kligman 2000a and 2000b) social class (eg. Buchowski 2008, Bogdanowa 2008, Kideckel 2008), or nation and ethnicity (eg. Feldman 2000, Lemon 2000, Richardson 2008). A growing body of literature is also

exploring people's lives in postsocialist European states through novel lenses, including popular culture (eg. Apor and Sarkisova 2008), emotions (eg. Svasek 2006), the environment (eg. De Soto 2000, Harper 2006) or food (eg. Caldwell 2009, Harper and West 2003, Ries 2009). Finally, some anthropologists have taken up the question of power differentials and knowledge production between East-Central European and Western scholars, as well as the ethics and responsibilities imbricated in them (eg. De Soto and Dudwick 2000, Buchowski 2004a, Hann 2005, Kurti and Skalnik 2009).

Over the past two decades, a number of insights have emerged from this diverse and growing body of literature. Anthropological research has revealed that the postsocialist transformation variously affected people's lives, their means of livelihood and social relationships. However, these changes did not constitute a clean break with the past; rather, the present is characterized by both changes and continuities from the previous system, and by uneven effects between European countries as well as within them (Berdahl et al 2000, Burawoy and Verdery 1999, Hann 2002). This led anthropologists to question laudatory narratives about the inevitable global victory of Western markets and democracy, which emerged in the early years following socialism's collapse. This view, known as the "transition" or "transitology" paradigm, prescribed the adoption of Western political and economic principles as the only possible route for Eastern European states in a manner similar to modernization theories (Burawoy and Verdery 1999). In anthropology, the transition concept has been criticized particularly for assuming "evolutionary progress that will arrive at a predetermined destination" (Buyandelgeriyn 2008: 237) even in the face of contradictory outcomes. Similar critiques have also emerged in other disciplines, including political science, geography and

sociology (eg. Carothers 2002, Guo 1998, Gans-Morse 2004, Szelenyi and Kostello 1996).

In response to these critiques, the concept of transition gave ground to that of “transformation” in many streams of the social sciences, including anthropology. This term is seen as more reflective of the diversity of paths and experiences taken by different East-Central European countries, and as acknowledging both changes and continuities from the socialist period. “Transformation” does not presume the Western neoliberal economic model as the only possible outcome, and views the diversity of economic and political changes across the former Soviet Bloc not as “deficiencies” in “catching up” to the Western model, but rather as complex outcomes of multiple factors (Burawoy and Verdery 1999). As such, it seeks to examine East-Central European countries on their own terms, rather than as inadequate imitations of the Western model.

By the early 2000s, the debate in anthropology has shifted from wondering what to call the changes that are taking place, to whether the change is now complete, and if yes, what happens next. In other words, have the postsocialist states completed their “transformation,” and if so, does it still makes sense to keep calling them “postsocialist” (Hann 2002; Mandel and Humphrey 2002). This question emerges from two different directions. First, it is increasingly recognized that former socialist states are following paths so diverse that a comparison between them may not be fruitful. Second, certain postsocialist states are now seen as having completed the transformation process, which may render the category of postsocialist moot. So far, anthropologists agree that the concept of postsocialism still serves a purpose. Hann argues that the term will remain relevant for as long as the ideologies and practices of socialism continue to serve as a

reference point for understanding present conditions (2002; see also Humphrey 2002, Braedstadter 2008). Since in this work I am concerned with how the socialist period is remembered, and how these remembrances relate to present conditions, I feel justified in retaining the term “postsocialism” in my discussion of contemporary Poland.

Other writers recommend not discarding, but rather building on the concept of postsocialism to describe contemporary phenomena. Steven Sampson, for example, was one of the first anthropologists to speak of “post-post-socialism,” which he defined as the “period where the shock of the... [novelty of transformation] has worn off and where the larger structures of the new global order have become embedded in people’s consciousness” (2002: 298). For the most part, his concept has not been widely embraced, although several writers have used it, albeit in different ways, to highlight the “new order” that emerged out of the experience of the postsocialist transformation (eg. Buyandelgeriyn 2008, Koczanowicz 2008).

More recently, analyses of postsocialism began to expand outside of Europe, making connections with research on socialism elsewhere in the world as well as with postcolonial studies (eg. Chari and Verdery 2009, Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008, Verdery 2002). These studies suggest using postcolonial approaches within postsocialist studies, or considering the two together under a larger umbrella of “post-Cold War” studies. Possible research directions include, for instance, situating the Eastern European experience within global political and economic processes in order to better understand the various “practices of domination” (Verdery 2002:17) at work globally, examining the impact of European socialism’s collapse on former socialist states elsewhere in the world, or interrogating the construction of the “West” (Chari and Verdery 2009, Tulbure 2009).

Although my research remains grounded in the Polish context and situating it within a larger “post-Cold War” context is beyond the scope of this work, I draw on several works which address issues of memory in postcolonial contexts (Cole 1998, Jorgensen 1990, Walsh 2001).

While my research is broadly informed by the theoretical currents outlined above, several threads of the anthropological literature on the postsocialist transformation are particularly relevant to this work. Following the direction charted by this literature, I examine the political, economic and social changes that have taken place in East-Central Europe (in my case, specifically in Poland and Nowa Huta), over the past 21 years, seeing them as interconnected. My use of memory as a lens for exploring people’s experiences of changing conditions is inspired by recent literature which examines issues of memory and representation of the socialist past, such as the role of museums, archives and textbooks in constituting and/or contesting memories (Dimou 2010, Hranova 2010, Vodopivec 2010, Vukov 2008, Ten Dyke 2000, Khazanov 2000, Main 2010), or changes to the landscape and contestations over historical sites (eg. Halas 2004; Main 2005, Nadkarni 2003, Todorova 2010). Other works have also taken up topics such as representations of the past in fiction and popular culture (Sarkisova and Apor 2008), or nostalgia for socialism (eg. Klumbyte 2008, Spaskovska 2008, Todorova and Gille 2010). Taken together, this growing body of research is concerned with “how the past lives in the present” (Lemon 2008) at different sites and scales (eg. individual memories, local representations, nation-wide discourses) twenty years after the collapse of socialism in East-Central Europe, as well as what people’s memories of the socialist era can tell us about current political, economic and social conditions/issues. It reveals that just as

people have differently experienced the postsocialist transformation, they also hold diverse, and often contradictory, memories of the past. Above all, it shows that the past, present and future are intertwined: questions about the past inform present actions for the future, and present issues influence how we perceive the past. As such, both individual and collective memories are always grounded in larger political, economic and social conditions and processes.

While anthropological literature dealing with memory and place is vast, to date relatively few anthropological studies have examined the postsocialist transformation with attention to place and locality (c.f. De Soto 1996 and 2000, Richardson 2008, Ten Dyke 2001, Weszkalnys 2010). Such observations have emerged largely from outside of anthropology (eg. Crowley and Reid 2002, Czaplicka et al 2009, Czepczyński 2008 and 2010, Light 2004, Light and Young 2010a and 2010b, Stenning 2000, 2004, 2005a and 2005b, 2009). Much of this literature, however, tends to focus on the reshaping of places and the meanings attached to them, following socialism's collapse, rather than on how people experience life and place in concrete localities, or negotiate place through memory (c.f. Crowley and Reid 2002, Stenning 2000, 2004, 2005a and 2005b, 2009). My approach to Nowa Huta as a lens for examining people's experiences of the postsocialist transformation is inspired by existing works which have used a city, its landscape and history, to examine how people's memory, identity and sense of place is shaped and articulated with relation to events that have taken place in concrete localities (eg. Richardson 2008, Ten Dyke 2001, Weszkalnys 2010).

In a similar vein, few anthropological studies so far have addressed the topic of generation in post-socialist East-Central Europe (c.f. Galbraith 1996, Yurchak 2006,

Pilkington 2002, Markowitz 2000, Shevchenko 2008), although some literature has also emerged from outside the discipline (eg. Riordan et al 1995, Roberts 2003 and 2009). Existing literature on generation illustrates that major political, economic or social upheavals frequently constitute fault lines between different historical generations (Abrams 1982, Mannheim 1972), and as the anthropological works cited above illustrate, socialism's collapse constituted such an upheaval in East-Central Europe. The majority of existing works are concerned primarily with the lives of young people in former socialist states and their experiences of the political, economic and social changes that ensued after socialism's collapse; none of them have focused explicitly on questions of memory and the relationship that different generations have to the socialist past, a topic which I take up in this work.

A part of this work is also concerned with changes to identity and citizenship that have accompanied the collapse of socialism and postsocialist market reform, including privatization, declining state support and the embrace of neoliberal market ideologies (eg. Dunn 2004, Kideckel 2008, Verdery 1999). Following David Kideckel, I define citizenship as "the way individuals conceive of themselves in relation to their state and in other transnational relationships, respond to changes in state life, and express themselves politically and culturally as members of society" (2009: 117). Citizenship, therefore, is more than "just a bundle of formal rights but the entire mode of incorporation of a particular individual or group into society" (Shafir 1998: 32, see also Holston and Appadurai 1996). One of the questions being raised in this work is how industrial workers – the legendary backbone of socialism – as well as industrial communities, have experienced market reforms characterized by abandonment of heavy industry as both an

economic and ideological priority, as well as the adoption of a “neoliberal rationality” (Ong 2006:4), based on the “principles of discipline, efficiency and competitiveness” (ibid).

Memory

My research also benefits from an abundance of studies and theoretical contributions on memory from across the social sciences. Classic memory theorists Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora envisioned memory as firmly separate from history; my work, however, is informed by more recent theoretical approaches which stress the overlaps and continuities between the two (eg. Cubitt 2007, Iggers 2005, Kansteiner 2002, Olick and Robbins 1998). Historian Jay Winter writes that “[i]n virtually all acts of remembrance, history and memory are braided together in the public domain, jointly informing our shifting and contested understanding of the past” (2006: 6). Some writers capture this interdependence by using the term “social memory” (eg. Climo and Catell 2002, Fentress and Wickham 1992, Olick and Robbins 1998) to illustrate that “memory is never detached from discourses and representations that are created within the realms of historiography, media and politics” (Vodopivec 2010). Others deploy different strategies; Richardson (2008), for instance, captures the overlap between memory and history with the term “living history,” whereas Assman (2011) speaks of “mnemohistory.”

My work similarly draws on approaches that anchor memory within its social and cultural bases. A basic premise in this body of literature is that individual and collective memory are linked, for “nearly all personal memories are learned, inherited, or, at the very least, informed by a common stock of social memories” (Brundage 2000:4),

meaning that “individual remembering takes place in a social context” (Misztal 2003: 5, see also Irwin-Zarecka 1994, Middleton and Edwards 1990). While Halbwachs distinguished between what he termed autobiographical memory (ie: personal experiences) and collective memory (ie: the active past that informs our identities) he also argued that it is impossible for individuals to remember outside of their group context (1992). Individual remembering, explains Misztal, “is prompted by social cues, employed for social purposes, ruled and ordered by socially structured norms and patterns, and therefore contains much that is social” (ibid). Furthermore, Middleton and Edwards (1990) remind us that, when people “remember together” (for example while looking at family photographs or reminiscing at weddings or funerals),

what is recalled and commemorated extends beyond the sum of the participants’ individual perspectives: it becomes the basis of future reminiscence. In the contest between varying accounts of shared experiences, people reinterpret and discover features of the past that become the context and content for what they will jointly recall and commemorate on future occasions (1990: 7).

In telling stories about the past, people thus draw on existing cultural frameworks and interpretations, often disregarding or discarding elements that do not fit the existing norms (eg. Welzter 2010, Hewer and Kut 2010). At the same time, there is no such thing as one uniform memory that is shared by all members of a group or society. In her research on memories of repression in South America, Elizabeth Jelin observes:

At any time and place, it is unthinkable to find One memory, a single vision and interpretation of the past shared by a whole society (whatever its scope and size). There may be historical times when agreement is higher, when a single script of the past is more pervasive or dominant. That script will usually be the story of the winners in historical conflicts and battles (2003: 54).

Although people's interpretation of the past may radically differ, even those contradictory interpretations are shaped by a common stock of memories (or, to put it in Foucauldian terms, a common discourse), that defines the parameters of what can be talked about, and how. Writing about the discourses surrounding the British Royal Family, Michael Billig argues that while "some social phenomena are consensually agreed to be memorable" (1990: 70), they do not have to be "entirely composed of harmonious themes" (67), but rather "could include commonly shared, but contrary themes" (ibid).

Within any given society, there can also exist "multiple collectivities" (Halbwachs 1992) of memory. Wulf Kansteiner, for example, argues that "one is always part of several mnemonic communities and that collective remembering can be explored on very different scales" (2002: 189). In the case of Nowa Huta, we can speak of at least three scales at which remembering and representation can be explored. These include: hegemonic, nation-wide accounts; local Nowa Huta representations; and individual memories of Nowa Huta residents. Throughout this work, I show that memories and representations produced at these different scales alternately inform and challenge each other.

Recent literature on memory also emphasizes the relationship between memory and identity. Identity, like memory, is always a process rather than a finished product, and is similarly also "constituted within, not outside representation" (Hall 1996). Memory is a tool through which identity is constructed and negotiated, since it provides people with "understandings and symbolic frameworks that enable them to make sense of the world" (Misztal 2003: 13). As such, memories are deployed to forge group

solidarities and a sense of collective belonging (eg. Climo and Cattel 2002, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1985, Olick and Robbins 1998). Fentress and Wickham argue that

memory is widely called upon to legitimate identity because the core meaning of any individual or group identity is seen as sustained by remembering... Social memory, according to this perspective, is an expression of collective experience which identifies a group, giving it a sense of its past and defining its aspirations for the future (1992: 25).

The past, accessed through “mnemonic practices and sites” (Climo and Cattel 2002: 35) such as celebrations, heritage, heroes, language, monuments and museums, serves as a “basis for social cohesion among groups, including nations, or creates the illusion of consensus, such as legitimizing a government” (ibid). Memory and identity are inter-related, since “not only is identity rooted in memory but also what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity” (Gillis 1994: 3). At times, former identities may be forgotten so that new ones may be formed, especially in societies undergoing major upheavals or transformations. For instance, Natzmer (2002) notes that “[i]n a society where the past is highly contested, the ability to create a social history or national narrative that can accommodate the memories of opposing groups may well determine the success of reconciliation efforts” (161).

At the same time, memories do not only serve a cohesive function; on the contrary, they are often contested and become objects of identity claims and political projects (Hodgkin and Radstone 2003, Olick and Robbins 1998, Popular Memory Group 1982). Memories are deeply fraught with power relations. The Popular Memory Group, for instance, makes a distinction between “dominant” memory in society which is “produced through hegemonic historical representations that are connected to dominant

institutions” (1982: 207), and “popular memory,” or memory of the “ordinary people” (1982). They note that “dominant memory” is always open to contestation since the “public field’ is “crossed by competing constructions of the past, often at war with each other” (ibid). The struggle over memories, however, is not always a bottom-up process; Olick and Robbins, for instance, point out that memory contestation can take place “from above and below, from both center and periphery” (Olick and Robbins 1998).

This work explores how memory is produced, reproduced and sometimes contested, at different scales, and how memories of “ordinary” Nowa Huta residents of different occupations and backgrounds, reflect, draw on, or challenge, dominant or hegemonic representations of the past. I use the concept of hegemony in a Gramscian sense, as pertaining to social and political ideas of the dominant class that are widely accepted and perpetuated through consensus and consent, though they may also be met with resistance (Gramsci 1971). Hegemony is seen as a process that has to be continually “renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not all its own” (Williams 1977: 112-113). As William Roseberry notes, even within a “dominant culture,” there are always “lines of cleavage and conflict,” and while some meanings will find resonance with the experiences of ordinary people, other meanings “may directly conflict with lived experience” (1989: 47). He proposes that we use the concept of a hegemonic *process* (emphasis mine) to refer not to a “shared ideology” but rather to “a common material and meaningful framework for living through, talking about, and acting upon social orders” (1994: 360). From Roseberry I thus derive the idea that while certain memories may be hegemonic at

a particular time, and as such provide the framework for, say, political and economic actions, this process is always subject to contestations and change.

Another insight that emerges from the above discussion is that “memory is a process and not a thing”; it is “something – or rather many things – we *do*, not something – or many things – we *have*” (Olick 2008: 159, emphasis in original). Memory is always open to change, whether conscious or unconscious, processes that Teski and Climo have termed “metamorphosis” and “restructuring” (1995). Depending on the changing needs and circumstances, “both narratives of events and the meanings given to them” (Hodgkin and Radstone 2003: 23) are subject to change.

The processual nature of memory serves as a reminder that memory is not just about the past, but rather about “past-present relation” (Popular Memory Group 1982: 211); that is, we draw on the past to help us make sense of the present and guide future actions (Halbwachs 1992, Cattell and Climo 2002, Misztal 2003, Lowenthal 1985). Memories are thus deployed to “make... the present meaningful” and to “support... the present with a past that logically leads to a future that the individual or group now finds acceptable” (Teski and Climo 1995: 3). This process can be seen in present-day Poland, where the socialist past is invoked differently by political parties, the media, the Roman Catholic Church, and different interest groups and individuals to advocate, justify, or contest current policies and conditions (eg. Koczanowicz 2008, Nijakowski 2008).

There are many ways of studying memory, for it resides in countless sites and practices, including stories, rituals, books, statues, present actions, speeches, images, pictures, records, historical studies, surveys, reminiscences, recalls, representations, commemorations, and celebrations (Olick 2008). In this work I deal with people’s

recollections as well as “sites of memory” (Nora 1989) including monuments and museums, commemorations, and urban landscapes. Sites of memory are places, things or events which people use to express a “collective shared knowledge... of the past, on which a group’s sense of unity and individuality is based” (Assman 15, in Winter 2008: 61). The term originates from the term “lieux de memoire”, used by Nora to refer to sites such as museums, archives, anniversaries, celebrations, eulogies, treaties, monuments, sanctuaries and books (1989). Drawing largely on French history to formulate his theory, Nora argued that at times when there is a break with the past and as such “spontaneous memory” is lost, we create “sites of memory.” These sites combine the material, the symbolic and the functional, and are created to convey particular ideological, political or national ideas. Gillis (1996) contextualizes Nora’s ideas by explaining that the French revolution was depicted in French national memory as a complete rupture with the past; as such, the move to commemorate the revolution’s anniversary on July 14, “arose directly out of an ideologically driven desire to break with the past, to construct as great a distance as possible between the new age and the old” (8). Nora’s work has been subject to numerous critiques, for example for omitting areas of historical conflict and division, and thus denying the multiplicity of histories that exist within a national framework (eg. Anderson 2004). Nonetheless, I borrow his term, as it constitutes an evocative metaphor for thinking about the different contexts in which memories about the past are produced and perhaps contested, although I use it in a more restricted way than Nora did.

The collapse of socialism in 1989 similarly came to be seen as a major watershed in Polish history, giving rise to a new political and economic system that defines itself largely in opposition to the preceeding one. This rupture plays out in numerous domains

including the symbolic domain. In this work I examine several sites of memory that illustrate especially well the attempt to create a particular version of history. In Chapters 1 and 3, I consider the role of Nowa Huta's monuments, street names, museums, and other sites such as churches, in producing and disseminating a particular version of local and national history of socialism. On a larger level, I suggest that Nowa Huta itself can be seen as one large site of memory, a particular symbol and representation of Poland's socialist history and its aftermath in the national imagination.

Commemorations are another important medium of maintaining and transmitting memory within a society (Connerton 1989, Gillis 1994). While Paul Connerton's work focuses on ritual and body practices through which we represent the past, in this work I am more interested in commemorative celebrations for their content rather than their form. In chapter 3, I examine Nowa Huta's 60th anniversary celebrations to see what ideas about the past emerged in the course of these activities. However, I remain mindful of the fact that commemorations, like other sites of memory, are always subject to struggles and contestations (Gillis 1996, Winter 2008).

Finally, in this work I also consider memory as it relates to place. Literature in the areas of both memory and place and space emphasizes that memories and identities are often attached to, and shaped by, places, including landscape features, monuments and urban architecture (eg. Benjamin 1979, Casey 2000, Stewart and Strathern 2003). Places are "fundamental to the establishment of personal and group identities" (Tilley 1994: 18, see also Feld and Basso 1996). Anna Krylova, for instance, notes that "the architecture and morphology of cities can themselves be memory sites for national identities, especially when the cities serve as capitals or figure in the national memory" (2004: 147). This, I

argue, is true of Nowa Huta, since the identities and memories of Nowa Huta's residents are often formed and articulated with relation to places (Piekarska-Duraj 2005), and the town itself informs local and national memory pertaining to the socialist period and its collapse. In this work, I find Pierre Nora's concept of "lieux de memoire" or "sites of memory" particularly helpful, since it highlights the centrality of place to the remembering process¹³ (see also Casey 2000). I use this concept throughout this work to think about various settings which in some way speak to the past, or where memories are produced, including the town's museums, commemorative ceremonies, as well as the steelworks, the figurative heart of town.

At the same time, it is worth remembering that because places are socially produced, they are imbued with different, often changing and conflicting, meanings and memories (eg. Bender 1998, Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 2003). The notion of place as multivocal (Rodman 1992) and as a palimpsest of temporalities - which, however, always leave traces of past events and experiences (eg. Benjamin 1979) - is particularly relevant to my research, since Nowa Huta's cityscape reflects the different needs, priorities and ideologies that informed its development over the past six decades (Golonka 2006, Stanek 2005 and 2007).

While so far my discussion has focused on memory, it is equally important to acknowledge the role of forgetting as part and parcel of the memory-making process (eg. Climo and Cattel 2002, Casey 2000, Connerton 2008). Memory, as Climo and Cattel note, is "constructed and reconstructed by the dialectics of remembering and forgetting" (1). There are different types of forgetting; Climo and Cattel, for instance, distinguish

¹³ At the same time, as I outlined earlier, "sites of memory" are not just places but can also include books, treaties, or celebrations (Nora 1989).

between forgetting as an “active process” and “un-remembering”, which they define as “finding nothing to stimulate or confirm memories” (25). Forgetting has been tied to the larger process of nation-making in communities divided by past political or social upheavals (eg. Cole 1998, Labanyi 2007, Natzmer 2002, Resina 2000). History, notes Peter Burke, is not only written by the victors but is also forgotten by them (1989). Writing about memory of Franco’s Spain twenty years after the collapse of his dictatorship, Salvador Cardus i Ros argues that “the Transition... depended on the erasure of memory and the reinvention of a new political tradition” (2000: 19). At the same time, forgetting is not the sole privilege of dominant/hegemonic memories but is also entailed in oppositional memories, which have their own “silences and voids” (Jelin 2003: 55).

In this work, I argue that, just as with other political transitions, the postsocialist transformation in Poland has entailed the forgetting of certain aspects of the socialist past, especially certain positive aspects of socialism. These tendencies do not go uncontested, although those who aim to exonerate socialism by highlighting its achievements can also be guilty of forgetting its more problematic aspects (Majmurek and Szumlewicz 2010).

Another theme addressed in this work is the relationship between memory and generation at times of major social, political and economic change. One of the questions I take up is how different generations remember/perceive the socialist period, and what ideas about the past are “inherited” by the youngest generation who does not have any firsthand memories of it. This approach assumes that certain ideas about the past are transmitted to younger generations through the “media of memory” (Watson 1994:8; cf. Halbwachs 1992 [1950]), such as architecture, monuments, ritual, storytelling and film,

and that people's identities can be shaped by events they did not directly experience themselves, but memories of which have been passed down to them (eg. Watson 1994, Hirsch 2008). At the same time, as memories get passed down through generations they do not stay intact, but change in content and meaning (Welzer 2010). Drawing on research on memories of World War II among young Germans, Welzer shows that, as stories move through generations, they become "remembered in a way that 'makes sense' for the listeners and re-narrators" (Welzer 2010: 15). He writes:

Acquisitions and applications of pasts always follow the needs and demands of the present, and in this way individuals as well as memory communities always choose those aspects from the endless inventory of existing historical narratives and images that make the most sense for them in the real time of narrating and listening... Moving through the generations, stories can become so altered that in the end they have undergone a complete change of meaning (Welzer 2010: 7)

In this work, I use the concept of generation not only to refer to biological age or kinship descent (eg. parent, child, grandparent), but also to historical events that have shaped a person (eg. Kertzer 1983, Mannheim 1972, Abrams 1980). According to that definition, a generation is a group of people whose consciousness was shaped by the same historical events and processes, and who share a similar "system of meanings and possibilities" (Abrams 1980: 256). This notion of generation can overlap with other ones, such as generation as biological category or generation as cohort (Kertzer 1982). At the same time, generations are constructed as much as reflected through their different sets of characteristics and experiences. This is grasped by Jurgen Reulecke's concept of "generationality," a term that refers both to "characteristics resulting from shared experiences," as well as to those that are "ascribed to such units from the outside... in the interest of establishing demarcations and reducing complexity" (2008: 119).

In Chapters 4 and 5 I explore memories among different generations of Nowa Huta residents. Chapter 4 deals with memories of people who have lived the majority of their adult lives during the socialist period, or whose formative years have been lived at that time (see also Mannheim 1972, Shore 2009). In chapter 5 I explore the inherited memories/ideas about the past on the part of younger Nowa Huta residents, who themselves have little or no personal experiences of the socialist period. Sociologist Kenneth Roberts argues that the experiences of this group can tell us much about the postsocialist transformation, for “[y]oung people have proved to be the age group affected most forcefully and most directly by the macro-changes” that have taken place following socialism’s collapse. Their experiences “portray vividly the new labour market and housing conditions, family situations, lifestyles, and relationships between politics and the people that have arisen following the collapse of communism” (2003: 484).

Chapter Outline

Each chapter of this work examines a different domain in which memories pertaining to the socialist period are made, reproduced and possibly contested, as well as the social and cultural effects and implications of these practices. In chapter 1, I explore memory as it relates to place. I briefly summarize Nowa Huta’s history and sketch out the town’s current economic, political and social situation. I examine how this history is reflected, negotiated and/or obliterated in particular elements of the town’s cityscape such as architecture, street names or monuments. I also outline several debates dealing with how the socialist past is to be remembered as they pertain to, and play out in, space. In

my discussion, I seek to illustrate that Nowa Huta is a town with a complex, and often contradictory, legacy, and these contradictions are reflected in its cityscape.

Chapter 2 examines Nowa Huta's steelworks as a "site of memory" and an idiom of change. The political and economic reforms that ensued after 1989 have resulted in the changing nature of, and ideas about, work and workers (Dunn 2004, Kideckel 2008, Muller 2004, Buchowski 2004b). Buchowski (2004b) notes that changing work conditions and ideas about work are an important lens through which we can examine the postsocialist transformation. This holds true especially for industrial work, an area that has been particularly affected by the market reforms that ensued after 1989 (Kideckel 2008). In this chapter, I trace the steelworks' history with relation to the changing political, economic and social conditions over the past sixty years, highlighting in particular the changing relationship between work and community. Workers' accounts speak to changing work conditions and critique certain aspects of postsocialist market reforms such as unemployment, although they also highlight certain problematic aspects of the socialist workplace. Lastly, I show that ideas about the socialist past become invoked in discourses regarding norms, behaviours and values surrounding work and workers, and that work habits and values that are associated with socialism are devalued in hegemonic discourses.

Chapter 3 deals with the production, reproduction and contestation of memories in Nowa Huta's public representations. Through an examination of three sites of memory – the town's 60th anniversary celebrations and two museums – it explores how Nowa Huta's past is represented, and what role the socialist legacy plays in constituting the town's present identity. My analysis reveals that Nowa Huta is a place where multiple,

and frequently contrasting, memories confront each other. The socialist legacy continues to be an important part of Nowa Huta's identity, although this legacy can be invoked in very different ways. On the one hand, a strident local discourse demands the appreciation of the district's socialist heritage, including its architecture, urban plan, industrial heritage, and legacy of work and community. At the same time, there are also attempts to sidestep the association of Nowa Huta with socialism and re-invent it as a site of struggle against the socialist government.

Chapters 4 and 5 address the relationship between memory and generation in Nowa Huta. In chapter 4 I explore how the older generation of Nowa Huta residents talk about the socialist period with reference to important local events and their own lives. I show that their memories are more complex and nuanced than hegemonic representations, and that they are both congruent with, but at times also challenge, local and national representations of the past. In chapter 5 I ask what the younger generation, who has no firsthand memories of the socialist period, knows and thinks about it. I ask what they learn in school, from families, as well as through their knowledge of local history. My analysis reveals that, two decades after socialism's collapse, the socialist past is seen as very far away by young people, although some memories of the past do get passed down through vehicles such as school, family and local representations. Young people's impressions of the socialist period are largely congruous with the dominant/hegemonic representations of the past and lack the complexity and nuance that are seen in the accounts of their elders'. At the same time, some family histories and what I term "community memories" (Orr 1990) offer some alternative accounts of Nowa Huta's legacy, thus allowing young people to engage with local history in different ways.

Chapter 6 draws together the insights that emerge from the first five chapters to consider what the production, reproduction, and contestations of memories in different contexts and at different scales can tell us about the role of memory at times of political, economic and social change, how memory articulates with place and generation, and more broadly, about the “social life” of socialism in Nowa Huta.

CHAPTER 1
MEMORY SITS IN PLACES¹⁴:
MEMORY AND CHANGE IN NOWA HUTA'S CITYSCAPE

"The city itself is the collective memory of its people" – Aldo Rossi (1984: 130)

If you and I are new to Kraków and ask for directions to Nowa Huta, we will first get a strange look (perhaps accompanied by an incredulous 'why?'), then be told to take the streetcar to Central Square (*Plac Centralny*) and get off there. The square is actually more of a transportation circle where five streets converge. If we stand in the very middle, in the small green area surrounded by streetcar tracks, we can see many defining features of Nowa Huta which speak to many aspects of the town's history. The square is surrounded by buildings in the socialist realist style, although the tourist could be forgiven for confusing it with Renaissance, for their defining features are arches and columns. These buildings used to house some of the nicest stores in Nowa Huta, including a fashion boutique *Moda Polska* and the bookstore chain *Empik*. Both of these are no longer there, and the former *Moda Polska* store now houses a discount clothing shop, although the old sign still remains. The remaining store space is taken up by banks, a cell phone store, a grocery store, a flower shop, another bookstore, and *Cepelia*, a store selling traditional Polish handicraft souvenirs, although everyone complains that its quality has severely deteriorated in recent years. The top floors of the buildings are residential. In front of the storefronts stand a few kiosks selling newspapers and cigarettes, as well as a couple of pretzel stands, whose wares are hungrily snatched up by passersby rushing to and from work.

¹⁴ The title of this chapter is inspired by Keith Basso's 1996 book *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*.

From here, we can venture off in several directions. To the north of the square lies the Avenue of the Roses (*Aleja Róż*), where a statue of Lenin used to stand. The statue would be visible from here if it were still standing. The Avenue of the Roses actually begins as a sort of a square, the place where May 1st¹⁵ parades would take place under the watchful eye of the leader of the Russian revolution. The square has been renovated after Lenin's eviction, and is now a favourite location among skateboarders. The square is lined with benches, which on warmer days are occupied by seniors, giddy teenagers, and parents or grandparents watching over small children who use the square for their first biking or rollerblading lessons. A nearby ice-cream stand under one of the archways tempts passersby with what is reportedly the best ice cream in Nowa Huta.

The buildings surrounding the square house a dubious-quality pub, a milk bar, the previously-mentioned ice-cream stand, a bakery/pastry shop, yet another flower shop, and one of the few restaurants in town, the legendary *Stylowa* (Stylish). If we peek into the restaurant we will see it is furnished in a way that can only be assumed to have been fashionable some thirty-or-so years ago, with marble pillars and heavy red velvet drapes. However, the clients, most of whom look as though they are old-time regulars, do not seem to mind the décor.

If we return to Central Square and look south, in the exactly opposite direction, we will see Nowa Huta's prize green meadows, stretching out over an area of approximately one square kilometre. This is now a protected area as it is a wetland that is home to many bird and flower species. Locals use the newly-built path across the fields for strolling or walking their dogs. On hot summer days we can always find several sun

¹⁵ May 1st, International Workers' Day, was a holiday during the socialist period (and still remains so today, since it is on this day that Labour Day is celebrated in Poland). During the socialist period, the day was celebrated with intensive propaganda characterized by parades, speeches and competitions of all sorts.

enthusiasts sprawled out on blankets. Far in the distance, beyond the meadows we can see two fat smoke-stacks and two skinny ones – that is the power plant on the border area between Nowa Huta and Kraków, in a neighbourhood called Łęg. The juxtaposition of green space with chimney-stacks is quite striking, and in fact is used in many local representations of Nowa Huta. When I first arrived in Nowa Huta I used to think the chimney-stacks spoiled an otherwise pristine view. Over time, I came to see them as an intrinsic part of the cityscape and ended up taking countless pictures of them.

If we stand in Central Square once again and look down the road leading north-west, far in the distance we will see what looks like a castle perched on top of a gentle hill. From here we can just barely see the silhouettes of buildings with crenellated roofs, reminiscent of the Doges' Palace in Venice. That is not a palace, however – it is the administrative offices and the entrance to the steel factory. We will go inside the gates in the next chapter. For now, our focus is on the town itself.

* * *

Nowa Huta (literally New Steelworks) is a district of Kraków constituting approximately a third of its surface area and population. At present, its population stands at approximately 220,000 people occupying an area of about 111 km² (Chwalba 2004). Originally built in 1949 as a separate town, in 1951 it became incorporated as one of Kraków's administrative districts. However, it has always maintained a very distinct identity from the rest of the city, and as such it is still frequently referred to as a “town” in many accounts, including this one.

The history of Nowa Huta can be seen in many ways as “the history of Poland in a nutshell” (Stenning 2008). Originally built by the postwar socialist government as a “model socialist town”, Nowa Huta was at the forefront of the processes of industrialization, urbanization, and the creation of a new working class – the basic tenets of postwar socialist philosophy. Over time, however, it became an important site of dissent to the socialist government. After the collapse of socialism, the case of Nowa Huta became illustrative of many processes accompanying the postsocialist transformation, including economic restructuring, deindustrialization and globalization (Stenning 2009).

In this chapter, I outline the history of Nowa Huta from the socialist period to the present, situating it within the larger political, economic and social conditions in Polish and European history. I show that Nowa Huta is a place that speaks to the history of socialism, its collapse, and the subsequent transformation that ensued. I also examine how memory of the socialist past is inscribed, negotiated and/or obliterated in specific elements of Nowa Huta’s cityscape such as streets, squares, and monuments.

Nowa Huta: a model socialist town

The history of the town of Nowa Huta goes back to the immediate period following World War II, when Poland became governed by a socialist party backed by the Soviet Union. The decision to build a new steelworks in Poland was first undertaken on May 17 1947, as part of the socialist government’s Six Year Plan (1950-1956), which emphasized industrialization and urbanization as the vehicles to the country’s growth, “modernization” and “progress” (Chwalba 2004). Two years later, the government

decided that this new industrial project would be built on the outskirts of Kraków. Along with a new steelworks a new town was to be built, which would provide its workforce. The plan thus had an ideological dimension – that of creating a new socialist working class. Nowa Huta was a “gigantic social and ideological laboratory” (ibid 209) for the creation of a new socialist society, and building Nowa Huta became synonymous with building socialism itself (Lebow 1999).

The construction of the first residential buildings in town began in 1949 (the year now taken to signify the town’s birth) and the construction of the steelworks a year later. The labour power was recruited from all over Poland, and was composed of mandatory youth labour brigades called Service to Poland (*Służba Polsce*), as well as predominantly young work migrants from all over Poland who sought opportunities in the growing town in the light of postwar poverty affecting Poland’s countryside. Newcomers also included people such as former AK (Home Army) soldiers who could more easily lose themselves in the hustle and bustle of a new town to avoid persecution¹⁶; a sizeable Roma minority, forcibly settled by the government in urban areas; and a small Greek minority (Miezián 2004). Although work on the town’s construction was physically demanding and characterized by a very high turn-over, many of the people who came to Nowa Huta in the late 1940s and 1950s ended up staying and starting families.

The early years of Nowa Huta were characterized by a spirit of energy and optimism. In the early 1950s, poems and songs praised the growing town; for example, Polish poet (and later Nobel prize winner) Wiesława Szymborska referred to Nowa Huta

¹⁶ AK (Armia Krajowa, or the Home Army) was an Polish resistance movement during World War II, led by the Polish government in exile. Due to its ties to the government in exile, AK was perceived as an obstacle by Soviet forces, and after the war ended many of its members were persecuted by the socialist government.

in one of her poems as the “town of good fortune” (*miasto dobrego losu*). School textbooks hailed Nowa Huta as a symbol of “fighting for socialism” (*walka o socjalizm*) and “fighting for the 6-year plan” (*walka o plan sześćcioletni*) (Samsonowska 2002). Movies, songs, and poems depicted images of happy teenagers from the Service to Poland brigade enthusiastically laying bricks, new bright buildings springing up, and smiling children playing in new neighbourhoods. In all, Nowa Huta was depicted as a town of youth and opportunity, a place where young people from all over the country came to escape the “backwardness” and “misery” of peasant life to work, get an education, start families and build their lives.

As will be shown in the following chapters, the memories of the town’s first builders indeed resonate with many of these representations. However, such pristine representations of life in the growing town quickly engendered a backlash. Critiques of Nowa Huta as a socialist paradise began to emerge after Stalin’s death in 1953, at the time of the so-called “thaw” of 1956, a period characterized by some political reforms, greater liberalization, and more independence from the Soviet Union. Nowa Huta, the pet project of the stalinist-era government, became an obvious target for criticisms of the “previous order” (Lebow 1999). In 1955, writer and poet Adam Ważyk wrote a scathing poem entitled *A poem for adults (Poemat dla dorosłych)*, revealing the darker aspects of life in Nowa Huta. His poem talked about hard working conditions, substandard living conditions, and depicted Nowa Huta’s population as primitive, uncultured and morally flawed (Ważyk 1955). This poem caused quite a stir, since by critiquing the purported socialist paradise of Nowa Huta, it also served as a critique of the socialist government. Ważyk’s poem was echoed by an equally famous report by journalist Ryszard

Kapuściński entitled “This is also the truth about Nowa Huta” (*To też jest prawda o Nowej Hucie*). While Kapuściński rejected Ważyk’s characterization of Nowa Huta residents as a primitive faceless mass (what Ważyk in his poem likened to *kasza*, or grain) and acknowledged their hard work and contributions to building the town, he also noted an array of problems plaguing Nowa Huta, including: severe housing shortages, rampant prostitution, lack of recreation and entertainment opportunities, administrative inefficiency and corruption, and an overall neglect on the part of the government that claimed to represent the interests of workers (Kapuściński 1955). The above summary illustrates that, since the early fifties, Nowa Huta has been framed by two contradictory discourses: one praising the new town, the other pointing out its darker realities.

Myths, stereotypes and controversies

Throughout its history, Nowa Huta has been a town of contradictions and stereotypes, alternately (and sometimes simultaneously) depicted in utopian and dystopian terms. For example, the early images of the town as a symbol of growth and progress were counteracted by several dark creation stories. One such dark aspect of the town’s birth was the fact that the town of Nowa Huta was built on some of the best agricultural land in Poland, and its construction entailed often brutal dispossession of farms and peasants (Chwalba 2004, Mieziań 2004). Another contentious point in Nowa Huta’s history concerns the reason behind the decision to locate the town literally on Kraków’s doorstep (Golonka 2006). Some historians cite economic and geographical considerations, such as the town’s location on the river and its proximity to major railway networks, which enabled the transportation of iron ore supplies from Russia and Ukraine,

or the availability of technical expertise from Kraków's institute of higher education, the Coalmining and Steelworking Academy (*Akademia Górniczo-Hutnicza*). However, many people also believed – and to this day, continue to believe - that the town's location was a political decision, intended to punish the traditionally conservative and “bourgeois” city of Kraków for the outcome of a 1946 referendum during which the city's residents overwhelmingly rejected the socialist Polish Workers' Party (*Polska Partia Robotnicza*) (Chwałba 2004, Golonka 2006, Mieziań 2004).

Despite Nowa Huta's positive image in socialist-era official narratives, in popular opinion Nowa Huta has been, and continues to be, perceived as a marginal part of Kraków, and its residents stigmatized as “peasants¹⁷”: primitive, uncultured and perhaps even morally decayed (Golonka 2006). During Nowa Huta's early days, the builders, most of whom hailed from the countryside, were scorned on account of their attire (mud-covered rubber boots and work jackets called *kufajki*), combined with their reputation for heavy drinking and aggression. Respectable citizens of Kraków were repulsed by stories of uncultured peasants keeping coal or firewood in their bathtubs, and livestock (pigs, rabbits) in their apartments, as well as stories of violence (eg. fighting over women) and moral decay (drinking, prostitution) that were allegedly rampant in Nowa Huta (Golonka 2006). Notions of Nowa Huta's population as somehow less “cultured” than that of Kraków persisted throughout the socialist period, when industrial work, though officially glorified in the country's official ideology, was nonetheless popularly perceived as inferior to intellectual work (*praca umysłowa*, or literally “mind work”). Although following Richardson (2008) I acknowledge that high/low cultural distinctions are problematic, I agree with her that stratifications on the basis of these distinctions are real.

¹⁷ In Poland, the term “peasant” has derogatory connotations, implying a lack of social refinement.

In Kraków, as in Richardson's Odessa, local discourses map high/low cultural distinctions onto the cityscape, with Nowa Huta seen as the inferior "other" of Kraków, a city traditionally associated with (high) Culture, tradition and aristocracy.

Many of these stereotypes persist to this day. Nowa Huta continues to be associated with crime (despite statistics that suggest it is no more nor less dangerous than any other part of Kraków) and social pathologies (Golonka 2006). These stereotypes are perpetuated largely by people living outside of Nowa Huta, many of whom do not spend any time in the area. During my stay in Kraków, several people living outside of Nowa Huta expressed their amusement at my interest in the district ("what do you want to go *there* for?") and warned me to "be careful". Many Nowa Huta residents have told me about being stigmatized on account of living in Nowa Huta. For example, Marta, a 24 year-old recent university graduate told me that she had never known that Nowa Huta was a "bad" part of Kraków until she attended university (located in central Kraków) and learned this from fellow students who were from out of town and have never even set foot in the district.

The steelworks in Nowa Huta's life

No introduction to Nowa Huta would be complete without a mention of the steelworks, since the town itself would not have been built were it not for the need to house the workers who first built, and then worked in, the new giant metallurgic complex. The steelworks (in 1954 named Lenin Steelworks, or Huta im. Lenina) was officially declared open on July 21, 1954 (Choma 1999). It was Poland's largest steel producer, at its peak in 1978 producing 6.5 million tons of steel a year (Choma 1999).

The steelworks consists of hundreds of buildings situated on an area of approximately 10 square kilometres (Miezian 2004), where all stages of the steel manufacturing process were carried out, along with other enterprises needed for steelmaking as well as hospitality and medical services for workers (Choma 1999).

Industrial towns were one of the “key spaces of socialism” (Stenning 2005a: 6), where different forms of social relations were to be enacted through people’s interaction with their work and living spaces. As such, new industrial towns such as Nowa Huta were built around new workplaces: steel factories, plants, or collective farms (Stenning 2005a: 2). At its peak in 1978, the steelworks employed almost 40,000 people or over 1/6 of Nowa Huta’s population. In practice, this meant that most families in town were in some way connected to the steel factory, whether by being employed there directly, working for one of its associated enterprises (eg. hospitality, medical, childcare, or cultural services), or taking advantage of the many programs and services it provided. Like many large workplaces in socialist states, Lenin Steelworks provided subsidized meals at work, childcare for the workers’ children, and medical care, company-funded holidays and other social and cultural programming for the entire family. The steel factory also owned and ran a vocational school, a cultural centre, a sports club and stadium, movie theatres, a local newspaper, and assisted in the construction of a large share of the town’s housing. On account of Nowa Huta being a model socialist town, the residents enjoyed special privileges during the socialist period; for example, stores in Nowa Huta were traditionally better stocked than stores in other parts of the city (Stenning 2000, Chwalba 2004, Miezian 2004). In short, all life in Nowa Huta revolved

around Lenin Steelworks. I provide a more in-depth discussion of the steelworks and its changing role in Nowa Huta's life in the next chapter.

Nowa Huta: a site of resistance

It is one of the great ironies of socialist spaces that many of them eventually became "key sites in the contestation of socialism," writes geographer Alison Stenning (2004: 131). That, too, was the fate of Nowa Huta, which is now depicted as simultaneously a "model socialist town" and a bastion of resistance against socialism.

Nowa Huta's legacy of resistance is now traced back to the famous "Battle for the Cross" (*Walka o krzyż*) in 1960. As a model socialist town, Nowa Huta was intended to be a "godless town," and consequently was initially designed without a church. Residents attended mass in the Cistercian monastery in the village of Mogiła which became incorporated into Nowa Huta, as well as in other nearby villages (Mieziań 2004). However, the town's growing population put pressure on these churches and stirred demands for a new church, which grew louder after the "thaw" of 1956. In 1957, government authorities granted permission for the building of a church in Nowa Huta, and local residents erected a wooden cross at the future construction site. A year later, however, authorities changed their minds, re-assigning the plot for the construction of a new school instead. On April 27 1960, workers were sent to remove the cross, which was defended by the local population, mostly women. The situation began to intensify, and by the afternoon, a crowd of four to five thousand people defended the cross against special riot squad forces (ZOMO) (Franczyk 2004, Gąsiorowski 2002). The protest cost Nowa Huta approximately 500 arrests, and an unrecorded number of injuries and possibly even

deaths (Franczyk 2004). However, the cross remained and in 1965 another plot of land was approved for the church's construction. The new church, built in the shape of an ark and hence commonly known as "the Lord's Ark" (*Arka Pana*) is seen as a symbol of resistance against the socialist system, particularly since it was built despite numerous bureaucratic hurdles thrown its way by various government offices. Its lengthy construction was made possible only by volunteer labour, as well as financial donations from Polish expatriates and organizations abroad. The church was finally consecrated in 1977 by Cardinal Karol Wojtyła, the future Pope John Paul II.

After the Battle for the Cross, the remainder of the 1960s and 1970s was a relatively peaceful time in Nowa Huta's history. While waves of strikes periodically broke out throughout the country (for example in 1968, 1970 and 1976), Nowa Huta's population was relatively content and disconnected from strikers in other parts of the country. For example, in March 1968, when students across the country (including Kraków) went on strike, Nowa Huta's steelworkers not only did not join them, but in fact were armed with steel cables and bussed to the centre of town to help "pacify" the strikers.

The first half of the 1970s was a period of relative prosperity in Poland, made possible by the government's policy of import-led growth financed by Western credits (Hardy 2009). By mid-decade, however, the global recession resulted in rising interest rates and lowered the price of Polish exports, making it difficult for the country to meet its debt repayments. For the citizens, this was experienced in terms of rising cost of living. When on July 1st 1980 the government announced major price increases, a wave of strikes rolled across the country. Economist Jane Hardy notes that "[a]lthough the

strike action was triggered by food price increases, it was symptomatic of a much deeper malaise” (2009: 22). Workers demanded the right to form independent trade unions, a relaxation of censorship, greater religious rights, and the freeing of political prisoners (Hardy 2009). It is from this movement that Solidarność (Solidarity) was born.

The Solidarity movement first emerged in the shipyards of Gdańsk, on the northern coast of Poland. Solidarność was formed as the country’s first trade union not controlled by the government. The trade union quickly began to establish branches around the country, including Nowa Huta’s steelworks, whose Solidarity branch had a membership of 37,000 members (out of a total workforce of almost 40,000) (Chwalba 2004). By 1981 Solidarity membership across the country stood at 10 million, just under half of the country’s total adult population.

On December 13 1981 martial law was declared in Poland, and thousands of Solidarity leaders across the country were arrested (Zajac 2002, Baziur 2002). In response to the announcement of martial law, workers at Lenin Steelworks declared a strike, in which approximately ten thousand people (or roughly 25% of the workforce) took part (Baziur 2002). On the night of December 15, the steel factory was surrounded by tanks, and two thousand soldiers “pacified” the striking workers (Zajac 2002). The next day two thousand workers lost their jobs, and over the month of December, 38 people (mostly steelworks employees) were arrested in Nowa Huta (ibid).

This event marked the beginning of strikes and demonstrations which regularly broke out on Nowa Huta streets throughout the 1980s (Baziur 2002). Strikes often began outside the steel factory’s main gate when the first shift ended work at 2 p.m., and continued as the chanting workers marched into the centre of town. Strikes also

frequently broke out after masses, usually on the street in front of Nowa Huta's Lord's Ark church, which was seen as a symbol of resistance against the socialist government.

Martial law was lifted on July 22, 1983 (Baziur 2002). This put a temporary end to strikes, which however began anew in 1986 and 1987 in response to worsening economic conditions, which were experienced most acutely through price increases. The spring and summer of 1988 witnessed more strikes at the steel factory, and the postulates formulated by the steelworks' Solidarity branch at the time were shortly afterwards used as a template during the Roundtable Talks between the government and Solidarity-led opposition in April 1989 (Baziur 2002). In June, the opposition won the country's first semi-democratic elections in a landslide victory (Crampton 1997). The election date of June 4 1989 is thus widely accepted in Poland as the date of socialism's collapse.

Nowa Huta after 1989

The collapse of socialism in 1989 brought major political, economic and social changes, including political reform to a western-style democracy and neoliberal economic restructuring. These included privatization of state-owned enterprises, withdrawal of social benefits, and a shift in economic policy away from heavy industry. These changes, in turn, were accompanied by changes to other aspects of social life, including ideas about citizenship, community, and work (eg. Stenning 2004 and 2005a).

Across the former Soviet Bloc, these changes were particularly acutely experienced in former socialist spaces, such as industrial towns (Stenning 2004 and 2005a). With the government's strategic priority moving away from heavy industry in favour of service, technology and information services, industrial workers became one of

the groups most adversely affected by the political and economic reforms that ensued (eg. Dunn 2004, Kideckel 2008, Stenning 2004 and 2005a). This was also the case in Nowa Huta. In 1991, the former Lenin Steel, renamed after Polish-American engineer Tadeusz Sendzimir, began the privatization process. This involved, among other things, a restructuring of the plant's organization, which eliminated all non-core processes of steel production. As a result, of the roughly 27,000 people employed at the steelworks in 1990, the initial restructuring process of 1994 retained 17,630 employees, with 6,077 entering spin-off companies and the remainder accepting early retirement or compensation packages (Choma 1999). The steelworks also cut the cord from most programs and services it formerly used to own, such as the cultural centre, sports club and newspaper.

In 2002 the steelworks entered into a consortium with three other steel factories located in the Silesia region of Poland. In 2004 the entire consortium was sold to Mittal Steel (now Arcelor Mittal), the world's largest steel producer. At present, the Nowa Huta branch employs less than 4000 people (with an additional estimated 2000 employed by the steel factory's spin-off companies). While some modernization efforts have been undertaken (for example a new cold rolling mill was opened in 2009), the steel factory has also drastically trimmed production.

For many people the fate of the steel factory is illustrative of the major trends in Polish postwar history. In its early days, the steelworks came to symbolize the socialist ideal of industrialization as the engine of the country's modernization and progress, and its workforce came to embody the ideal of the "new socialist man." A generation later, the disgruntled employees at Lenin Steel became a significant presence in the political opposition when they joined en masse the Solidarity movement (approximately 97% of

steelworkers were members of Solidarity) and regularly took to the streets throughout the 1980s. The steelworks thus came to represent the failure of the socialist system.

Throughout the 1990s, it came to symbolize the consequences of neoliberal market reform and the shift away from heavy industry as an economic priority.

The restructuring/decline of the steelworks and its withdrawal from community programming had a profound effect on the town of Nowa Huta. Unemployment, a phenomenon virtually unknown in socialist Poland, touched many Nowa Huta families. Some of the job losses at the steelworks have been offset by job opportunities in other parts of Kraków which has a statistically low unemployment rate as compared with other regions of Poland,¹⁸ in small-scale entrepreneurship (such as repairs) or in the so-called “grey sector,” for example at the gigantic open-air flea market Tomex, which supports (sometimes informally or illegally) about 7,000 vendors (Stenning 2005a). These jobs, however, do not offer the security or benefits that industrial labour once did.

Much like it was in the 1950s, Nowa Huta is seen as a marginal, somewhat suspect part of Kraków. Despite repeated statistics indicating that it is no more nor less dangerous than any other part of the city, it is commonly associated with crime, especially soccer-related violence. This stigma is reflected in real estate prices (the lowest in all of Kraków), as well as in prices of goods and services. On the whole, it is a fact that whereas the flow of people and capital used to be towards Nowa Huta, this current is now

¹⁸ In May 2011 (the most recent data available at time of writing), Kraków’s unemployment rate stood at 4.8%, as compared with the national average of 12.2% (Grodzki Urząd Pracy 2011). While statistics are not regularly kept of unemployment rates in different districts of Kraków, a specially-commissioned 2003 study (the most recent one available) shows that whereas the population of Nowa Huta in that year comprised 29.4% of the total population of the city of Kraków, 34% of registered unemployed individuals had Nowa Huta addresses, and only 15.75% of job offers in the city were located in Nowa Huta (Grodzki Urząd Pracy 2003).

reversed: many Nowa Huta residents regularly leave home to work, shop and play in other parts of the city.

Changes to the economic conditions in town have had repercussions on all areas of life. For example, Stenning reports that for many Nowa Huta residents, unemployment, combined with the decline of social programming, has led to economic marginalization, and in many cases even poverty (2004 and 2005a). A related outcome is the erosion of community ties since unemployed persons are removed from their previous networks and lack opportunities for socialization and leisure (ibid). Stenning also documents a growing gap between those who can participate in the new sphere of consumption and those who are economically excluded from it. I expand on this discussion in the next chapter.

Revitalization and reinvention

While the 1990s have been rather a “down time” for Nowa Huta, the 2000s have brought more activity in the economic, cultural, and environmental domains. In 1990 the city’s administrative boundaries were redrawn, dividing the city of Kraków into eighteen smaller administrative districts. As a result, what was formerly Nowa Huta now spans five administrative districts: Czyżyny, Mistrzejowice, Bieńczyce, Wzgórza Krzesławickie and Nowa Huta. This blurs the boundary between Kraków and Nowa Huta, with areas such as Czyżyny located on the border between the two. At the same time, Nowa Huta still exists as an idea, an imagined place, a place with a definite core and blurry peripheries, but nonetheless a place that continues to be invested with multiple, and often contested, meanings.

At present, Nowa Huta's economic future is unclear. Over the past two decades, the city of Kraków's development policy has decidedly favoured tourism, service industry and information technology over heavy industry. In 1998, special economic areas were created in several parts of Kraków, including one in Branice (a village just outside of Nowa Huta). This zone is home to a construction company as well as printing company R.R. Donnelly. At the time, it was also suggested that unused sections of the steel factory's extensive (10 km square) grounds be used to expand this zone. The idea died when the steel factory was sold to Mittal Steel, but has recently returned to the table in the fall of 2010 (Arcelor Mittal 2010, Gazeta Krakowska 2010). At present, it remains to be seen whether such a zone will actually be created, if and what company/companies will be established there, and how this will affect Nowa Huta and its residents.

Other contentious new developments currently in the works in Nowa Huta include a garbage incinerator plant and a crematory. While there is a demonstrated need for both in the city of Kraków, popular opinion is sharply divided, with many residents vocally opposing the location of such contentious (and potentially polluting) initiatives in Nowa Huta.

In 2008, Kraków city council released what they called a revitalization program for Nowa Huta's oldest core. The program's goals were: to strengthen the local economy in order to create new jobs; to preserve and revitalize historic buildings and other sites of historic, cultural, architectural and urban value; to improve public space, making it more appealing and attractive for both locals and tourists; and to improve the local environmental situation (Urząd Miasta Krakowa 2008). While the program's goals are laudable, to date few tangible outcomes can be seen.

While the efforts of the municipal government seem half-hearted, residents and local organizations are increasingly tackling various community issues, with varying success (Kurkiewicz 2008). Over the past decade or so, local community organizations, foundations and associations have forged partnerships with one another, at times also incorporating local schools, businesses, and government offices or ministries. These include for example Forum for Nowa Huta (*Forum dla Nowej Huty*), Association for Nowa Huta's Development (*Stowarzyszenie na rzecz Rozwoju Nowej Huty*), and My Nowa Huta (*Moja Nowa Huta*). In 2004, twelve local organizations created a Partnership for Nowa Huta's Development (*Partnerstwo na rzecz Rozwoju Nowej Huty*) which received a European Union grant for local revitalization. The Partnership subsequently implemented a program entitled Nowa Huta – New Opportunity (*Nowa Huta – Nowa Szansa*) targeted at socially disadvantaged or excluded individuals, including youth, the unemployed, and the disabled. The project aimed at fostering what they termed a “social economy,” that is, a type of economy that is not solely profit-oriented but rather aims to create opportunities for people who are excluded from the “traditional” market. The cornerstone of the project was the creation of eleven so-called “integration manufactures” (*manufaktury integracyjne*). These included a music studio, an artistic weaving workshop, a landscape design studio, a print and design studio, and an outdoor science park. The project had a ripple effect on the community, inspiring further revitalization plans and projects. In 2005, the Kraków Historical Museum opened up a branch in Nowa Huta which features the district's unique history. Another museum, the Museum of Communism (Muzeum PRL-u) is also currently in the works in the district. (I discuss

both museums in the following chapter.) In 2009, the city opened up a large modern sports and recreation centre in Nowa Huta called Com-Com Zone.

A relatively new focus in revitalization initiatives concerns environmental revitalization. Formerly seen as one of the biggest polluters in Poland, Nowa Huta is now going back to the “garden city” ideals that inspired its original design (I discuss the town’s urban design in the next section.) New bike paths are being created, linking up with existing country-wide biking trails. A new association has emerged to protect Nowa Huta’s prized wetland meadows, home to many rare bird and flower species. The meadows were subsequently outfitted with benches and information boards for birdwatchers and nature-lovers.

Another new trend in Nowa Huta’s economic and cultural revival is an attempt to capitalize (sometimes figuratively, sometimes quite literally) on the district’s socialist heritage. In 2001, a foundation called Socland created a traveling exhibit to recreate the experience of living in a socialist state. The exhibit was designed as a sort of a socialist Disneyland, and was displayed in several cities around the country, including Nowa Huta. (The exhibit was a preamble to Socland’s creation of the Museum of Communism, which will be discussed in the following chapter.) The same year, one advertising agency proposed a Nowa Huta promotion campaign based on returning the town’s oldest core to its 1950s appearance, complete with period cars and stores stocked with products from the time (Stanek 2007). In 2004, a local entrepreneur started a company called Crazy Guides which offers “communist tours” around Nowa Huta, described in the previous chapter.

Local opinion on these initiatives is mixed. While some residents believe that “it’s good that Nowa Huta is becoming popular,” others resent what they perceive as the ridiculing of their past. This sentiment is best captured in the often-cited quote by one resident who stated that the people of Nowa Huta are not “monkeys in a zoo” (Stanek 2007). Fortunately, while in the early 2000s there was indeed some cause for concern that Nowa Huta might be turning into one big communist theme park, in recent years this craze seems to have died down. For example, while Crazy Guides are still in operation, their presence in Nowa Huta is limited to an occasional sighting of foreign tourists learning about Nowa Huta’s history over a shot of vodka in the *Styłowa* restaurant.

The past in Nowa Huta’s cityscape

While Nowa Huta’s past in many ways speaks to larger political, economic and social trends in Poland’s postwar history, this past can also be “read” from its cityscape. Indeed, the physical appearance of Nowa Huta reflects the different needs, priorities and ideologies that informed the town’s development over the past six decades.

In this section, I address memory and change in Nowa Huta’s landscape. To that end, I examine several sites that speak to the socialist past and the transformation that followed, as well as various memory-making initiatives that play out in space, such as naming or renaming streets and erecting or dismantling monuments. I aim to show that while the socialist legacy is firmly embedded in the town’s landscape, this legacy is also contested, minimalized, and replaced with symbols of resistance, although it can also be defended.

The spatial dimension of the postsocialist transformation has been taken up in recent research on East-Central Europe (eg. Czaplicka et al 2009, Crowley and Reid

2002, Czepczyński 2008, Kliems and Dmitrieva 2010, Stanilov 2007). The state, it is pointed out, often “governs” through the ordering of spaces, as well as people and objects within this space (eg. Hall P. 1996, Rabinow 1989, Scott 1998). Place is an important area “for the projects and desires of powerful social interests” (Mitchell 2000: 100), and as such places are inscribed with political and ideological meanings (eg. Crowley and Reid 2002, Verdery 1999b). Katherine Verdery views landscape features as “spatiotemporal landmarks” that constitute “aspects of people’s meaningful worlds”; thus, “modifying the landmarks is part of reordering of those worlds” (1999b: 39). She observes that political regimes frequently “mark space” by “placing particular statues in particular places and by renaming landmarks such as streets, public squares, and buildings. These provide contour to landscapes, socializing them and saturating them with specific political values” (ibid).

This trend of “marking space” is particularly visible in former socialist states, since the physical transformation of space was an important element of the socialist project aimed at creating a new form of society (Light and Young 2010a and 2010b, Crowley and Reid 2002, Czepczyński 2008, Nawratek 2005). As Czepczyński writes, socialist ideology was characterized by a “strong structuralist belief that social and living conditions create the individual [and] his or her personality and value system” (2008: 67). As such, “[t]he main goal of the Soviet, and then all socialist, architecture and urban design was the pursuit of the fullest possible human development, as the highest value of socialist society” (2008: 63). The socialist architect and urban planner thus became an “engineer of the human soul” (2008: 67). This was particularly the case for new urban centres (such as Nowa Huta), for “[c]ommunism celebrated the city and its landscapes as

the ultimate expression of political life and national spirit... Many major landscape features (thus) became political statements and proclamations” (Czepczyński 2010: 19).

Since socialism’s collapse there has been an interest in examining how changing political paradigms and ideologies are reflected in architecture and spatial organization in former socialist states (Czepczyński 2008). As Levinson notes, “[c]hanges in political regime... often bring with them changes in the organization of public space” (1998:10). Across East-Central Europe, monuments have been toppled and new ones erected, street names honouring socialist-era heroes replaced with new heroes, and landmark socialist buildings assigned new functions and/or reinscribed with new meanings – processes which Czepczyński summarizes as “removal, renaming, rededication (and) reuse” (2008). Light and Young, however, note that the erasure of socialist landscape is usually incomplete, with socialist-era elements persisting into the post-socialist period, where they can be used to “contest...new narratives of political identity” (2010b: 1468; see also Czepczyński 2008). All these trends can be seen in Nowa Huta.

Architecture and urban design

Major ideological trends and social conditions can be “read” from the architecture and urban design of successive Nowa Huta neighbourhoods. The town’s urban layout was designed by architect Tadeusz Ptasiński, who drew design inspiration from many modernist and utopian ideas. One such concept was the neighbourhood unit, which divided the town into neighbourhoods, that is, clusters of buildings designed to house approximately 4000-5000 people in total. Each neighbourhood was to contain all basic infrastructure and services necessary for the everyday functioning of its residents,

including a school, a daycare, and shops (Miezian 2004, Juchnowicz 2005). To this day, the neighbourhood serves as a topographical reference point for Nowa Huta residents. When people are asked where they live they give the name of their neighbourhood instead of a street intersection, and Nowa Huta postal addresses contain no street names, only the name of the neighbourhood, building and apartment number, making it initially confusing to navigate for anyone not familiar with the district.

The political ideologies and economic realities which informed Nowa Huta's construction over time can also be read from the architecture of its different neighbourhoods. Nowa Huta's first neighbourhoods consisted of two-storey buildings. The buildings grow taller in the neighbourhoods surrounding Central Square, the town's main square. The square's signature buildings, as well as the administrative offices of the steel factory, were built in the socialist realist style which was prevalent during the Stalinist period. In Polish architecture, this style was characterized by monumentalism, and the incorporation of Renaissance and Baroque elements such as arches and pillars. Up until 1956 (the "thaw") buildings were also built with underground bomb shelters (Miezian 2004). Socialist realism was abandoned after 1956 in favour of modernist designs using (much cheaper) pre-cast concrete. Nowa Huta's expansion in this style continued through the 1970s and 1980s. Then, the early 1990s witnessed the emergence of single-family homes which now pepper the outskirts of Nowa Huta's more peripheral neighbourhoods (eg. Mistrzejowice, Wzgórza Krzesławickie). The more and more fluid border between Nowa Huta and Kraków is also home to several new large shopping centres and a waterpark, built in the past ten to fifteen years.

Another principle underpinning the town's construction was the "garden city" idea (Miezian 2004). Nowa Huta's first architects envisioned a spacious city with wide streets, green belts between streets and residential buildings, and numerous parks and playgrounds.¹⁹ The town's initial plan included, for instance, a sort of a man-made lake (*Zalew Nowohucki*) surrounded by a walking path and benches. The steel industry, however, took its toll on the town. For example, the man-made lake soon became a depository for the steelworks' waste-water and then a dumping ground for all sorts of garbage. During the socialist period, Nowa Huta came to be seen as polluted and polluting.

In the past few years, there have been numerous efforts to remake Nowa Huta into the "garden city" from its original urban plan. For example, the pond has been recently cleaned up, and is now a place where families can stroll, children can feed swans and sports enthusiasts can play beachball on a man-made beach. The creation of new bike paths and bird watching information boards and the protection of Nowa Huta's wetland meadows are all steps in the same direction. And indeed, in the spring and summer in particular, Nowa Huta looks very green. The trees planted in the 1950s and 1960s have grown up to be tall and majestic, and many residential buildings have small garden plots where residents grow flowers. Paradoxically, these initiatives can be seen as an attempt to combat negative associations of Nowa Huta as a polluted city which it acquired throughout the socialist period, by drawing inspiration from the town's initial socialist urban plan. As such, environmental revitalization initiatives look simultaneously to the past and to the future, since they also resonate with current European Union policy and funding priorities.

¹⁹ For the initial principles underpinning the garden city philosophy see Howard 1966.

While Nowa Huta's socialist-era architecture and urban plan have remained virtually unchanged, the function of many spaces has changed. Many residents, for example, remark on the disappearance of spaces of leisure and consumption, and their relocation to the outskirts of town. Two of Nowa Huta's historic movie theatres have closed, leaving the district with only one small independent movie theatre attached to the OKN cultural centre. One of the former movie theatres is now home to several discount stores, including a used textbook store, and the other, after standing empty for a long time, is now being refurbished to house the new Museum of Communism. The better stores have disappeared, replaced by discount clothing shops. Several of the women I knew regretfully noted the loss of famous Polish clothing boutique *Moda Polska* (Polish Style) which was replaced by a discount used clothing shop. For one woman, the fact that the original sign still remains over the doorway of the discount store was a poignant symbol of the changes that have taken place in Nowa Huta on the whole: the same sign that formerly denoted style and sophistication has changed its referent to passé and decay.

Many people also mourn the loss of Empik, a Polish bookstore/coffee shop chain from Central Square. Although the chain has several locations across Kraków, there are none in Nowa Huta. During the socialist period, Empik was more than just a bookstore; it also had a reading room where, as several of my interlocutors pointed out to me, one could even read foreign newspapers such as *The New York Times* or the French *Le Figaro*. "Yes, in that apparently totalitarian system, in Nowa Huta we could go and read *The New York Times*," one man told me when I expressed my surprise at this revelation. For these individuals, the disappearance of Empik is symbolic of the cultural decline of Nowa Huta.

Another spatial indicator of Nowa Huta's economic decline is the tangible lack of restaurants, coffee shops and pubs. The lack of places to eat, drink and socialize is a problem frequently cited by residents, especially (though not only) by young people (see also Bujak and Ryłko 2008). Indeed, in a district of 22,000 residents, one only occasionally stumbles across a dubious quality eatery, most often a milk bar.²⁰ There are only two fast-food chains in Nowa Huta: Pizzeria Banolli and KFC. "There isn't even a stupid McDonald's!" a sixteen year old girl said to me in exasperation. The dismal food offer is something I acutely experienced in the course of my fieldwork: since I resided outside of Nowa Huta but spent virtually all my days there, I often went hungry throughout the day for lack of eating opportunities. I subsisted on thin soups and perogies from milk bars and pretzels from pretzel stands which are located near major street intersections.

The pub/bar/coffee shop situation is similarly bleak. When going out with friends or acquaintances, my Nowa Huta interlocutors generally preferred to head to the centre of Kraków rather than choose from a handful of local bars, most of them decidedly on the shady side. If simply popping out for a quick drink after work they might opt for a local place out of convenience, but when going out in the evenings and on weekends, Kraków, the tourist hub of Poland, offers an unbeatable assortment of opportunities. The complaint "there is nowhere to go in Nowa Huta," was voiced to me by everyone from young and middle-aged acquaintances to my seventy-three year old great-aunt who periodically heads to the centre of Kraków with her friends to "sit in a nice coffee shop, for a good

²⁰ As I outlined in the introduction, milk bars are no-frills eateries that emerged during the socialist period. By now, most milk bars have been liquidated, but the ones that remain continue to be subsidized by the state and as such continue to provide cheap (usually vegetarian) food. While their clientele is varied, they are popularly perceived as places for the homeless, seniors and pensioners.

coffee and a pastry.” Indeed, I also acutely felt the shortage of coffee shops in Nowa Huta. When I arranged for interviews, most of my interviewees invited me to their homes or workplaces, but for those who wanted to meet somewhere “out,” there was virtually only one feasible option for a coffee and a chat.

As the better stores have moved out of Nowa Huta’s central core, new shopping and entertainment complexes (eg. shopping malls, chain grocery stores such as Carrefour, cineplex theatre Multikino, and a water park) have sprung up on the western edge of Nowa Huta, in the border area between Nowa Huta and the centre of Kraków. It is noteworthy, however, that these spaces of consumption are not available and accessible to everyone; many people, for instance, complain about the high price of movie tickets in the new glitzy movie theatre Multikino. Furthermore, they are located on the border region of Nowa Huta, forcing the flow of people out of the town’s centre (Stenning 2000 and 2005b).

Names and monuments

Another set of changes to Nowa Huta’s cityscape concerns changes to street names, the dismantling of old monuments and the erection of new ones. Assigning names to places (eg. streets, squares) symbolically legitimizes certain memories, and based on them, assigns identity to a place, particularly since “those who do the naming are often particularly aware of the memories they wish to impose” (Connerton 2009: 11; see also Hałas 2004). Similarly, changing these names is an act that demarcates the past from the present, obliterates and delegitimizes symbols which are seen as no longer valid or worthy of memory, and replaces them with new symbols which are to become part of the

new collective memory, tradition and identity (Hałas 2004). The collapse of socialism witnessed many such changes across former socialist states (eg. De Soto 1996, Gill 2005, Light 2004).

Part of the socialist project involved assigning new names to describe what was intended to be a new reality. This is particularly evident in Nowa Huta, whose name itself (New Steelworks) signifies the town's role as Poland's first socialist town, home to the first large steelworks in the country, named after Marxist revolutionary Vladimir Lenin. Many of the names of Nowa Huta streets and neighbourhoods further reflected this ideology. Neighbourhoods were given name such as "Steel" or "Youth," and street names honoured individuals such as socialist heroes Lenin and Marx, Polish communist activists such as Julian Leński and Władysław Kniewski, as well as events such as the October Revolution, the 6-year Plan or Polish-Russian friendship.

After 1989, most of the names that in any way hinted at the town's socialist legacy were changed. The new street names honour either Poland's tradition of opposition to the socialist government, or political figures from the pre-socialist period, usually related to Poland's independence movement (Hałas 2004 notes a similar trend for Poland on the whole). In this manner, for instance, Avenue of the 6-year Plan became John Paul II Avenue, October Revolution Avenue is named after Gustaw Anders (Poland's World War II general), and Lenin Avenue which leads from Central Square to the steelworks became Solidarity Avenue. Avenue of the Russian Army is now named after Edward Rydz-Śmigły, a pre-World War II politician and a former Marshall of Poland, and Avenue of Polish-Russian Friendship lost its Russian referent and became simply Friendship Avenue. A street named after a little-known Russian poet Majakowski

is now named after “Defenders of the Cross” (Obrońców Krzyża) in commemoration of the Battle for the Cross which took place there (for more on Nowa Huta street names see also Stenning 2000).

The period following the collapse of socialism has also been characterized by the proliferation of new monuments. Monuments, as Zelizer has noted, both house memory and anchor it in a material form (1995). Monuments can also be contested, and become spaces where alternative memories are formed (eg. Sturken 1997, Young 1993).

At the same time, it has also been pointed out that monuments “freeze” the past, demarcating it from the present. Pierre Nora, for example, viewed monuments as “sites of memory” that emerge only when “living memory” is lost (1989). Gillis, in fact, argues that monuments can “actually discourage engagement with the past and induce forgetting rather than remembering” (Gillis 1996: 16; see also Connerton 2009). I contend that paying attention to the various monuments in Nowa Huta - both those present and those no longer there - can tell us much not only about the town’s past, but also about which aspects of the past are deemed worthy of commemoration in the town’s official memory, and which are sentenced to being forgotten.

In the last two decades of the socialist period, the defining monument of Nowa Huta had been the statue of Lenin, erected in 1973. This is where delegations from fellow Soviet Bloc states came to lay wreaths, where celebrations such as May 1st parades took place, and later on where people gathered to express their discontent with the socialist government. Since his arrival in Nowa Huta, Lenin the statue was not warmly welcomed by the local populations and suffered many eviction attempts from his Nowa Huta home. He had paint thrown on him and was set on fire; on one occasion a group of people threw

a rope around his neck and, using a tractor, attempted to drag him off his pedestal; he even survived a bombing attempt, as the bomb only succeeded in blowing off his heel (Miezia 2004). Lenin was finally taken down in December 1989 and eventually sold to a private Swedish collector for a price smaller than the value of the materials from which the statue was made (ibid).

Though the statue is no longer physically present, the “place where Lenin used to stand” (in Polish, *plac po Leninie*) is nonetheless a sort of an empty monument, a mandatory spot on all Nowa Huta tours. In fact, because of the square’s central location in Nowa Huta, this is either where many tour groups begin, or one of the first stops along the tour. In this way, Lenin’s absence becomes the defining feature of Nowa Huta’s identity.

One Nowa Huta historian and museum curator expressed regret that the statue has not survived, for it could have been kept in Nowa Huta in a changed form to signify the changed social order – for example, it could have been toppled or spray-painted to symbolize the eventual downfall of communism (Miezia 2004). However, a recent survey among Nowa Huta residents indicate that the majority of the population would not welcome Lenin’s return, in any form (Janas, personal communication). In 2001, a local radio station organized an event in Nowa Huta which involved erecting a styrofoam replica of Lenin’s statue in the exact same spot where the original used to stand. The statue was quickly toppled by passers-by, and a district councillor called the police to report an attempt to instill a totalitarian system, which is a punishable offence in Poland (Stanek 2007).

As for the remaining Nowa Huta monuments, many of them directly speak to Nowa Huta's legacy of resistance against the socialist system. In front of the *Arka Pana* (the Lord's Ark) church stands a monument to commemorate Bogdan Włosik, a young steelworker shot to death by an undercover police officer following a demonstration in 1982. At the site of the Battle for the Cross stands a monument to commemorate the event, also shaped like a cross. In front of the church in the Szklane Domy neighbourhood (a church that in the 1980s housed a significant congregation of steelworkers) stand two monuments: a monument to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Solidarity, and a monument to the underground press. Another monument to Solidarity, made and erected by steelworkers and originally housed inside the steelworks, now stands in Nowa Huta's Central Square.²¹ Nowa Huta also has three monuments to Pope John Paul II, a figure venerated partly because of his anti-socialist stance and his support for religious opposition in Nowa Huta, as well as two monuments to Father Jerzy Popiełuszko, a Polish priest and chaplain of Warsaw's branch of Solidarity, murdered in the 1980s by Poland's secret police for his involvement with the political opposition.

A few of Nowa Huta's monuments commemorate wartime heroes and martyrs. There is a monument to Franciszek Dąbrowski, a World War II navy officer who played a major role in defending the city of Gdańsk against the German invasion of Poland; a monument to Władysław Sikorski, an early 20th century Polish military and political leader and a prominent figure in Poland's independence movement; and a monument located beside one of the Austrian forts to commemorate the 440 political prisoners executed there by the Germans during World War II. Finally, there are three monuments

²¹ In the next chapter I addressed the relocation of the monument as symbolic of the steelworks' changed role in Nowa Huta's life, from the pivotal axis of all life in town, to a space that is "strictly business".

to commemorate people of arts: actor, playwright and director Wojciech Boguławski, poet Jan Kochanowski and writer Stefan Żeromski. On the whole, however, both the number of monuments and their location suggests that the most important theme commemorated in Nowa Huta's monuments is the town's legacy of resistance against the socialist system. At the same time, these monuments can also serve to situate the legacy of resistance in the past, thus demarcating the socialist past from the present.

Churches

One of the more visible signs of the postsocialist transformation in Poland is the mushrooming of churches (Czepczyński 2008). This phenomenon is particularly visible and significant in Nowa Huta, given the district's legacy as first, a so-called "Godless town" and then a site of religious struggle. When the town of Nowa Huta was first built, as a "model socialist town" it was supposed to be "Godless." As such the town's planners did not include churches into their design. Local inhabitants attended mass in previously-existing churches in villages on the outskirts of town, or in the Cistercian monastery in the village of Mogiła which became incorporated into Nowa Huta.

The Arka Pana (Lord's Ark) church is the first church erected in Nowa Huta during the socialist period (it was consecrated in 1977), and stands as a symbol of struggle and victory against the socialist system. During the 1980s, riots and demonstrations frequently took place outside the church, usually following masses. The church's construction paved the way for the construction of more churches. Since the 1980s, ten new churches have been built in Nowa Huta such that there is now a church within a 5-10 minute walking distance from every Nowa Huta neighbourhood. Several of

these are imbued with special symbolic significance and thus are frequently visited on walking and bus tours. The parish in the Szklane Domy neighbourhood hosts a special congregation of steelworkers and during the 1980s provided support to striking steelworkers (Miezia 2004). The tiny church in the Teatralne neighbourhood marks the spot of the “Battle for the Cross.” The church in the Mistrzejowice neighbourhood was another important site of religious opposition during the 1980s. It was here that Nowa Huta’s notorious priest Father Jancarz held the famous patriotic masses called “Thursday masses for the fatherland,” organized help for the families of those arrested as well as launched a multitude of independent underground cultural activities such as poetry and photo exhibits, lectures, and an independent publishing press. Taken together, the new dominance of churches on Nowa Huta’s landscape speaks to several interrelated phenomena: the town’s legacy of resistance against the socialist government, the association of resistance with religion in both local and national imaginary, and the role of religion in Poland’s national identity. I develop this idea in chapter 3.

Contesting memory in space

In the section above I outlined a number of changes to Nowa Huta’s cityscape that have taken place following socialism’s collapse. Many of these changes, however, have not been uncontested. In this section I briefly describe three debates over space that illustrate the negotiations and contentions that take place at different scales in the process of creating representations of the past. Two of these examples have to do with naming streets and squares, and one with a proposed monument. Taken together, they are illustrative of a broader trend in Poland’s collective memory/history. As I outlined in the

previous chapter, the prevailing trend in Poland's hegemonic accounts of the past is to frame the socialist period primarily in terms of repression, resistance and inefficiency, and this trend can also be observed in Nowa Huta. At the same time, some local residents reject what they see as official attempts to eradicate aspects of the town's socialist-era heritage. The three debates also show that memory-making spatial practices are the product of multiple negotiations and contestations at different levels, and are about present issues, politics and ideologies as much as they are about the past.

Central Square or Reagan Square?

In 2004, Kraków's city councilors voted to rename Nowa Huta's Central Square after Ronald Reagan. The official reason behind the change was to honour the recent passing of the staunchly anti-communist American president, while ridding the city of "communist-sounding" names (Kursa 2004). At the time, the proposal was heavily protested by the local population, who even created a Committee for the Defense of the Name of Central Square (*Komitet Obrony Nazwy Placu Centralnego*). Their stance led to a compromise which retained the word "Central" but also added "Reagan" to the square's name. The official name of the square now reads "*plac Centralny im. Ronalda Reagana*", or "Ronald Reagan Central Square".

Six years later, the debates have died down although according to recent research 62% of Nowa Huta's residents still do not approve of the name change (Janas personal communication). The residents with whom I spoke about this perceived the name change as political, although they could not understand why the name "Central Square" was deemed to be so harmful. When I asked one man in his eighties why the square was

renamed, he poignantly and succinctly replied: “Because we always have to kiss Americans’ asses,” a comment that can be read as pertaining both to Poland’s unequal status vis-à-vis the “West”, which it so desperately wants to be a part of, as well as to specific actions on the part of the Polish government designed to forge and maintain good relations with the United States, such as sending troops to Iraq. A woman in her mid-thirties phrased it more politely: “I have nothing against Reagan, but what does he have to do with Nowa Huta?” Residents deal with the name change by continuing to refer to the square as “Central Square”; none of the Nowa Huta residents I knew, young or old, ever referred to it by its new name.

Ożański’s Square

In the mid-2000s, another debate played out regarding the proposal to name Nowa Huta’s oldest square after local legend Piotr Ożański (see also Kobylarczyk 2009). Ożański was one of Nowa Huta’s first “work leaders” or “heroes of socialist labour” (*przodownik pracy*), and subsequently became the inspiration behind famous Polish movie “Man of Marble” (*Człowiek z Marmuru*). In reality, Ożański the man has a complex legacy among those familiar with Nowa Huta’s history. He can be seen alternatively (or simultaneously) as a symbol of the hard work and sacrifice of Nowa Huta’s first builders, a communist hero, a victim of communism first used and then abandoned by the system, and as a flawed human being who ultimately met his downfall by drowning in alcohol.

In 2006, a young Nowa Huta enthusiast and then-city councilor Maciej Twaróg initiated a move to name Nowa Huta’s oldest square, at the time simply called “Square by

the post office” (*Plac przy poczcie*) after Ożański. On his side were some of the oldest residents in the area who even organized a movie screening of “Man of Marble” with special biographical information about Ożański. Twaróg’s intention was to pay homage to the men and women who built Nowa Huta by honouring the icon of the town’s early days. However, the proposal was opposed by district councilors for Nowa Huta’s district 18, where the square is located. City council decided to override the protests of district councilors and the square was consequently renamed “Ożański square” (*Plac Ożańskiego*). However, the controversy did not end there. In 2009, city councilor Bartłomiej Garda proposed the renaming of the square back to its original name, arguing that the image of Ożański as local hero was artificially fashioned by communist propaganda (Kursa 2009). The majority of the council supported him and in 2009 the decision was revoked. In another attempt at compromise, the street sign on the square now reads “Square by the post office, named after Piotr Ożański” (*Plac przy poczcie im. Piotra Ożańskiego*), with the first half of the name in large letters and “named after Piotr Ożański” in small letters underneath.

In my conversations with Nowa Huta residents, I encountered a spectrum of views on the subject. Some Nowa Huta residents see Ożański as a symbol of Nowa Huta’s first residents who dedicated their lives to building the new town: “It’s good that the young generation (ie: Twaróg) wants to preserve the memory of people who made this town what it is today” said a woman in her sixties. There are those who object to glorifying his persona on account of his somewhat dark history of alcoholism: “I knew Ożański personally, and I’m sorry, but he just doesn’t deserve that honour,” said a former Nowa Huta builder in his eighties. Then there are also those who see naming and re-

naming streets as a frivolous distraction from present issues affecting the district, and recommend that city and district councillors instead direct their energies towards much-needed road repair.

Kukliński's monument

The last monument I want to discuss is one that did not come into being. During my stay in Nowa Huta, a debate played out about a proposal to erect a monument to Colonel Kukliński on Nowa Huta's Central Square. Colonel Kukliński is a contentious figure in Polish history. A former colonel in the Polish army, during the 1970s Kuliński provided the CIA with Soviet military documents dealing with issues such as nuclear weapons and plans for the imposition of martial law in Poland. He fled the country in 1981 for the USA, but was charged and sentenced to death in absentia by the then-socialist government in 1984. Following the collapse of socialism he was exonerated of all charges in 1997. He is now buried in the row of honour in a military cemetery in Warsaw. Nonetheless, public opinion of Kukliński remains mixed, oscillating between that of hero and traitor (for a detailed discussion of Kukliński's legacy see Jonczyk 2011).

The proposal to erect a monument to Kukliński in Nowa Huta received a similarly mixed reaction among my Nowa Huta acquaintances. "Kuliński? A national hero. No question about it. He definitely deserves a monument," told me a man in his seventies. A woman of roughly similar age took the opposite view. "What sort of a hero is that? The man is a traitor. They say he was acting in the best interest of the country... well, if that was true, he shouldn't have accepted money from the CIA for the information he gave

them.” Many of my interlocutors were undecided about Kukliński’s legacy but nonetheless were not in favour of the monument: “I don’t see what Kukliński has to do with Nowa Huta, he’s never lived here” another person told me, and this sentiment was echoed by many of my interlocutors. Some opposed the monument on pragmatic grounds, citing a plethora of more pressing local issues, ranging from road repair to children’s playgrounds.

The most heated debates about the proposed monument played out not between residents but community organizations. The main local proponent of the idea was Jan Franczyk, owner and editor-in-chief of the local newspaper as well as district councillor. A number of community organizations opposed his idea. In an open letter, a coalition of organizations, called “Forum for Nowa Huta” (Forum dla Nowej Huty) voiced their concerns. Their position was that the old core of Nowa Huta is a declared heritage site, and no new development can take place there that is not part of the larger revitalization plan for the area. They further demanded community consultation in this matter. Franczyk retaliated by accusing his opponents of being communist sympathizers. In the end, however, the proposed monument was moved from Nowa Huta to the centre of Kraków, and is now slated to stand in front of the central train station.

Taken together, the three debates outlined above exemplify the different negotiations and contestations that take place around the creation of “sites of memory”. They reveal that the prevailing trend in city planning is to replace the legacy of socialism (which is seen as located firmly in the past) with that of resistance against the socialist system. At the same time, these efforts do not go uncontested by the local population, which is itself diverse and inclined to support or oppose different projects for different

reasons. Unwanted spatial inscriptions can be effectively contested (as in the case of refusing Kukliński's monument in Nowa Huta), or at least ignored (as in the case of people who continue to use the name Central Square).

Nowa Huta: a palimpsest of temporalities

While one of my goals in this chapter is to examine how large systemic changes are manifested in the landscape, and how memories of the socialist period are both ascribed to, and contested in, physical sites, I remain cautious of positing a simple before/after frame which characterize many accounts of postsocialism (Richardson 2008). Drawing on Mbembe's work on postcolonialism, Richardson (2008) argues that "positing a 'before' and 'after' fails to take into account that 'every age is a combination of several temporalities'" (Mbembe 2001: 15 in Richardson 2008: 15). Although so far in this chapter I have focused on the changes which have taken place on Nowa Huta's landscape since the collapse of socialism, I agree with Richardson that is worth remembering that Nowa Huta bears traces of different historical periods that cannot always be easily slotted into either "socialist" or "postsocialist" categories, a point also made by Czepczyński (2008) and Light and Young (2010) with reference to other former socialist places. Drawing on a combination of terms from Richardson (2008) and Winter (2009), I view Nowa Huta as a palimpsest²² of temporalities, a place where different historical periods layer over one another, although traces of earlier times do remain. Below, I offer a few examples to support this claim.

²² Although the term palimpsest may refer to a "manuscript that had its original meaning scraped away" (Winter 2009: 167), I follow Winter in defining it more generally as "something that is used or altered but still bears visible traces of its earlier forms" (ibid).

For starters, despite Nowa Huta's claim to fame as alternately a model socialist town, or as a site of resistance against the socialist government, the history of the region did not begin with socialism but in fact goes back centuries. Indeed, Nowa Huta's landscape bears many reminders of the town's pre-socialist roots. The oldest physical remnant visible in the town's landscape is a mysterious mound (called *Kopiec Wandy*, or Wanda's Tomb) attributed to either Celtic presence in the region (approximately 100 BCE), or to early Slavic tribes (500-700 CE). The edges of Nowa Huta are dotted with six Austrian forts, built in the 1870s-1880s, remnants of the Austria-Hungarian occupation of the region. In the village of Mogiła (now incorporated into Nowa Huta) stand a 12-century Cistercian monastery and a wooden church whose origins date back to the 13th century. Just off the road leading from Central Square to the steel factory's main gates stands a 19-century manor house which formerly belonged to famous Polish painter Jan Matejko. Across the street from the first Nowa Huta neighbourhoods (and a 15-minute walk from Central Square) one can find a cluster of prewar peasant cottages, inhabited to this day.

In Nowa Huta's cityscape, socialist landscape elements (themselves not monolithic, but rather reflecting different political ideologies and economic realities throughout the socialist period), layer over pre- and post-socialist ones. A neighbourhood may be built primarily in the socialist realist style but in the middle of it may be squeezed a church built in the last decade, while on its edge may perch a pre-war peasant cottage. Despite the recent trend to eradicate elements of the cityscape associated with socialism (eg. street names) and replace them with those that speak to a legacy of resistance, socialist-era urban plan and design principles remain unchanged. While the presence of

sites of memory such as monuments may relegate the socialist period to the past, socialist-era urban design principles are not only firmly entrenched into the cityscape but in fact are now invoked in revitalization projects. Taken together, this persistence of different temporalities (which at times layer over one another) in Nowa Huta's cityscape is a good illustration of Richardson's point, and serves as a good visual metaphor to inform our thinking about the "social life of socialism" in Poland.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of Nowa Huta's past and current economic and social conditions, and the spatial representation of these conditions in the town's cityscape. The events and issues outlined above will be referred to throughout this work, since they recur both in the public representations of the town, as well as in the stories of Nowa Huta residents. In this chapter, I tried to illustrate that Nowa Huta is a town with a complex, and often contradictory, legacy – what Stanek (2007) has termed "a town of paradoxes." Over the past sixty years it has been called both a model socialist town and a bastion of opposition against the socialist government. The collapse of socialism and the onset of postsocialist market reforms have brought many changes. However, while the collapse of socialism has been marked by the decline of the steelworks and with it, the decline of the town itself, it would be simplistic to unequivocally associate the socialist period only with prosperity and the postsocialist transformation solely with decay (or vice versa). For example, problems with the "socialist paradise" had been noted as early as the mid 1950s, and the dissatisfaction of steelworkers in the 1980s illustrates that the steelworks had been plagued by problems in the last decade of the socialist period, before

socialism's collapse. Furthermore, while the first decade of the transformation has indeed taken its toll on Nowa Huta, the decline of the steelworks has not spelled the death of the town. Some new developments have taken place, and many local residents and institutions are actively engaged in various projects designed to improve their town.

Many of Nowa Huta's historical contradictions can be seen in its cityscape, which speaks simultaneously to the town's socialist legacy, its pre-socialist roots, as well as to the economic and social changes that have accompanied postsocialist reforms – what I have termed a palimpsest of temporalities. The town's spatial inscriptions such as renaming streets and squares and erecting monuments are illustrative of broader trends in Poland's collective memory/history. On the one hand, practices such as eliminating all socialist-sounding street names and erecting monuments to commemorate people and events associated with the political opposition, suggest that in Nowa Huta, as in Poland on the whole, the official tendency is to relegate the socialist past to the past and to frame it in terms of repression and resistance. On the other hand, the residents' longing for sites which have disappeared following the collapse of socialism (especially places of leisure such as movie theatres, stores and restaurants) offers an alternative interpretation. While the residents may not long for the return of socialism per se, they acknowledge that during the so-called bad and repressive socialist period Nowa Huta was in many ways a thriving town, a town that subsequently declined following socialism's collapse. Finally, struggles over the imposition of certain types of memory on public places, as seen in the debates around re-naming Central Square and Ożański Square, and around Kukliński's monument, illustrate that Nowa Huta is a place where different ideas about the past confront each other. I return to these ideas in the later chapters, where I examine current

memory-making practices in the town's public representations and the ways in which Nowa Huta residents draw on these in constructing their own accounts of the past. In the next chapter, I focus on the steelworks as a central Nowa Huta institution that informs local memory as well as speaks to several aspects of the postsocialist transformation including privatization, deindustrialization, the changing relationship between work and community, as well as the changing norms and values associated with work.

CHAPTER 2: MEMORIES OF WORK AT THE STEELWORKS

The castle-like administrative centre of the steelworks looms majestically on a gentle hill on the eastern boundary of Nowa Huta. The administrative centre is made up of two main buildings, and its characteristic arcade-studded design has earned it the nickname “Vatican” or the “Doge’s Palace”. In between the two buildings is the entrance to the steelworks, a complex made up of dozens of buildings and warehouses spread over a surface area of approximately ten square kilometres, and criss-crossed by numerous rail lines. The front gate is the end stop of many streetcar and bus lines. From here, workers who arrive by public transit transfer onto the steelworks’ internal shuttle buses that circulate between the entrance and various divisions. If we arrive here at 2 p.m. when the first (and largest) shift of the day finishes, we will see moustached men, mostly in their fifties, dressed in jeans, plaid shirts and jean or leather jackets rushing through the gates. The security guard at the gate carefully scrutinizes identification badges or visitor passes of everyone who comes and goes.

Today is different, because people are not here for work. It is evening and we are here to watch the finale of Kraków’s film music festival. For the first time ever, this concert is taking place inside the steel factory, in the former tinning plant. The tinning plant is no longer in use and in recent years the steelworks’ management has allowed it to be used by the city for a select few concerts. These concerts are a rare treat, because the steelworks is normally a very difficult place to visit.

The guard at the gate checks our ticket and waves us towards the waiting bus which will drop us off at the tinning plant and pick us up after the concert. During the

five minute ride, we pass by numerous worn-down buildings (some of them clearly no longer in use), chimney-stacks and across several rail crossings. It is difficult to see anything because of the rich foliage, but the quiet and emptiness are striking. Everyone who has worked here in the past says that this used to be a hustling and bustling place, but now you hardly see a soul. The trees and shrubs have grown up so much that it is reportedly common to spot a deer or a hare.

The bus stops in front of the former tinning plant and we get out. On the inside, the empty plant looks like a giant warehouse. All the industrial equipment is long gone, but along the ceiling and the interior walls we can see a grid of metal frames that bear traces of the plants' former function. Other than that, the plant is empty. For concerts, Kraków's Festival Bureau (the event organizer) brings in virtually everything: a raised floor to even out the floor surface, a stage, seats, lights, speakers, and gigantic projection screens. This 200 metre-long and 36-metre wide space can reportedly fit an audience of up to 4,000 people. We sit down and the concert begins. The acoustics are great. I wonder how many people in the audience are current or former workers, and if any of them worked in this place when it was still a tinning plant.

* * *

This chapter examines memories of the socialist period in Nowa Huta and the postsocialist transformation through the lens of Nowa Huta's steelworks and its workers. The steelworks' life-course is closely tied to that of Nowa Huta, since the two have evolved together, with changes at the steelworks invariably playing out in the town. As such, the steelworks is an important feature of Nowa Huta's physical and conceptual landscape, a site that invokes memories and whose history speaks to changing times. In

this chapter, I approach the steelworks as a site that embodies the changing political, economic and social conditions over the past six decades, and particularly since socialism's collapse. As such, the steelworks is a particularly fitting lens for an examination of phenomena such as privatization, deindustrialization, the changing relationship between work and community, as well as the changing norms and values associated with work.

This chapter examines how the past enters into discourses and debates surrounding the topic of work, broadly defined: this includes issues such as the nature of work, or the rights, responsibilities and entitlements of workers. These debates are particularly poignant in the context of industrial work, and especially with reference to flagship socialist enterprises such as the former Lenin Steelworks in Nowa Huta. My discussion also reveals that people's memories of work depict both positive and negative aspects of the socialist past. As such, these memories can serve as critique of present conditions such as unemployment, although they also speak to certain failures of the socialist system, such as inadequate investment. Finally, work and workers become the topic of public debates regarding socialism and neoliberal capitalism. In hegemonic discourses, work habits and values that are associated with socialism are devalued, with accounts of individual workers both reproducing and problematizing such characterizations.

From Lenin Steelworks to Arcelor Mittal

Industry was one of the key tenets of socialist ideology, which viewed industrialization and urbanization as key elements of modernization and progress

(Stenning 2005a, 2005b). Industrialization was also seen as instrumental in creating a new industrial working class which would become the backbone of socialism²³. Across East-Central Europe, new industrial enterprises were built, sometimes giving rise to entire communities whose life revolved around a particular industry (Stenning 2004). Many working-class communities based around steelmaking, coalmining, or collective farming thus became the “archetypal spaces of socialism” (Stenning 2005a: 3). In Poland, the flagship socialist industrial and urban project was Nowa Huta.

Plans for the construction of a new metallurgic complex in Poland began shortly after the end of World War II, in 1946/1947. In 1949 it was decided that this new complex would be built on the outskirts of Kraków, along with a new town that would provide housing and services for its workers. And so construction began on the steelworks and the town of Nowa Huta (literally New Steelworks). Nowa Huta’s steelworks (in 1954 named *Huta im. Lenina*, or Lenin Steelworks) was officially declared opened on July 21, 1954, the day that the first blast furnace began to operate (Choma 1999). Over the years, it continued to expand, and soon became Poland’s largest steel producer, supplying the auto industry, construction industry, mechanical industry and agriculture (for example, steel for the construction of agricultural equipment). At its peak capacity in 1978, the steel factory produced 6.5 million tonnes of steel a year (Choma 1999). However, Lenin Steelworks was more than just a steel factory – it was a gigantic metallurgical plant where all stages of the steel manufacturing process were carried out, along with other related enterprises needed for steelmaking, such as repairs or services for workers (Choma 1999). The steelworks consists of hundreds of buildings situated on

²³ For a compelling analysis of the process of creating a working class in a “model socialist town” in Hungary see Kurti 2002.

an area of approximately 10 square kilometres (Miezian 2004). It once had its own dairy, on-site medical clinic, hospitality services, and newspaper.

According to socialist ideology, the workplace was to become the central organizing site of all spheres of life (Ashwin 2000, Kideckel 2004). This was true especially of model industrial towns such as Nowa Huta, seen as the “key spaces of socialism” (Stenning 2005a: 6), where new forms of social relations were to be enacted through people’s interaction with their work and living spaces. Galasińska (2010) illustrates this phenomenon in the following words:

Families lived in blocks of flats on estates built next to factories, they dined in canteens, they sent their children to factories’ nurseries and kindergartens, they spent their free time in a local house of culture financed by factories, they tended their allotments given to them by factories on the factory land and once a year went on two-week-long holidays organised in factories’ holiday resorts” (2010: 192; for a similar description see also Vodopivec N. 2010).

Galasińska was not explicitly describing Nowa Huta in this quote, but she might as well have been. At its peak in the late 1970s, Lenin Steelworks employed almost 40,000 people or over 1/6 of Nowa Huta’s population. In practice, this meant that most families in town were in some way connected to the steelworks, whether by being employed there directly, working for one of its associated enterprises (eg. hospitality, medical, childcare, or cultural services), or taking advantage of the many programs and services it provided. Like many large workplaces in socialist states, Lenin Steel provided subsidized meals at work, childcare for the workers’ children, and medical care, company-funded holidays and other social and cultural programming for the entire family. The steel factory also owned a vocational school, a cultural centre, a sports club and stadium, movie theatres, a local newspaper, and assisted in the construction of a large

share of the town's housing. It donated materials for local projects such as construction of schools and playgrounds, and built and operated vacation resorts. On account of Nowa Huta being a model socialist town, the residents enjoyed special privileges during the socialist period; for example, stores in Nowa Huta were traditionally better stocked than stores in other parts of the city, and until 1980 steelworks employees were quickly appeased with raises whenever they expressed discontent (Stenning 2000, Chwalba 2004, Miezia 2004). In short, all life in Nowa Huta revolved around Lenin Steelworks.²⁴

Cracks and fissures in this arrangement began to seriously manifest themselves in the 1980s (Choma 1999). These can be seen as partly reflecting, and partly resulting from, the larger political and economic conditions in the country. After an economic "boom" in the first half of the 1970s, the second half of the decade was characterized by rapidly worsening economic conditions (resulting in part from the global economic crisis) which led to government cutbacks (Choma 1999, Hardy 2009). Furthermore, throughout the 1970s the government's strategic priority began to shift away from Nowa Huta's steelworks to a newly-constructed Katowice Steelworks (*Huta Katowice*) in Poland's Silesia region, resulting in a further withdrawal of investments from Nowa Huta (Stenning 2000). Although in 1978 the steelworks reached its production peak of 6.5 million tonnes of steel, the following year production began to decline. The early 1980s also brought increased environmental awareness and critique of the pollution produced by the steelworks, to the point where in 1982 Kraków's city council decided that the steel factory must cut emissions, even at the expense of production (Stenning 2000). Finally, by the late 1980s Nowa Huta workers were caught up in a wave of discontent with nation-

²⁴ For remarkably similar descriptions of other "model socialist towns" in other former socialist states see for example Horvath 2005, Kotkin 1995, or Kurti 2002.

wide inflation and wage freezes, which had been brewing across the country (Choma 1999).

Taken together, these larger political, economic and social conditions, and their consequences/manifestations in Nowa Huta resulted in widespread dissatisfaction among workers. In 1980/1981, workers at Lenin Steelworks massively joined the emerging Solidarity movement: approximately 97% of steelworkers were members of the Solidarity trade union, making the Solidarity branch at Lenin Steelworks the largest in the country (Stenning 2000). Although strikes initially began in response to price increases, workers also began making other demands. They demanded, among other things, wage increases, removal of censorship on spoken and printed word, the right to create independent trade unions, the freeing of political prisoners and the restitution of workers who were fired for taking part in previous strikes, faster allocation of apartments, and a three year maternity leave for women.²⁵ The government responded by declaring martial law on December 13 1981, banning Solidarity and imprisoning its key leaders. When martial law was declared, about 10,000 Lenin Steelworks employees went on strike. A few days later, the steelworks was militarized, with workers placed under military discipline (Stenning 2008). Strikes and protests in Nowa Huta continued throughout the 1980s. Although the government tried to implement some economic reforms, growing social unrest forced it to reopen negotiations with Solidarity in the late 1980s (Hardy 2009). In June 1989 the country's first semi-free elections were held, during which Solidarity candidates received overwhelming support from voters. The date of June 4 1989 is thus commonly held in Poland to signify socialism's collapse.

²⁵ A complete list of postulates accepted by NSZZ Solidarność (Solidarity) in August 1980 is available at www.solidarnosc.org.pl/pl/21-postulatow-1.html

After socialism's collapse Poland embraced quick political reforms modelled after western democracies, as well as rapid economic reform known as "shock therapy". The central tenets of economic reforms included privatization of state-owned enterprise and their re-orientation towards "profit" and "efficiency" (which frequently entailed layoffs), as well as economic stabilization (fiscal and budget discipline) which in turn called for the withdrawal of state funding for areas of public value such as healthcare or education (Hardy 2009, Mandel and Humphrey 2002, Verdery 1996, Dunn 2004, Majmurek and Szumlewicz 2009).

The most immediate change at the steelworks following socialism's collapse was the name change: in April 1990 Lenin Steelworks was renamed after Tadeusz Sendzimir, a Polish-American engineer responsible for several important innovations in the steel industry. In 1991, the first restructuring program for the steelworks was developed. Its major tenets were restructuring and modernization. The program aimed to remove all secondary functions and processes that were not part of the core steel production process, and relegate them to spin-off companies. Some of these companies are limited companies, some are employee-owned, and others are owned by trade unions (Stenning 2000). This resulted in changing employment numbers. Whereas in 1990 employment at the steelworks stood at approximately 27,000 employees (Choma 1999), after the first restructuring phase in 1994 this number dropped to 17,630, with 6,077 people entering spin-off companies and the remainder accepting compensation/early retirement packages (Choma 1999: 41).

Throughout the 1990s, preparations for privatizations continued. In 1997 Tadeusz Sendzimir Steelworks became incorporated. In 2001 it merged with the Katowice

Steelworks and a year later, a consortium of Polish steelworks (*Polskie Huty Stali*) was created, encompassing Nowa Huta's steelworks as well as three other steel factories in the Silesia region. In 2004, the entire consortium was sold to Mittal Steel, which in 2007 merged with Arcelor to form Arcelor Mittal Poland S.A. The year 2004 became a watershed in the steelwork's history, with many people, especially steelworkers, temporalizing life in the steelworks and in Nowa Huta into the phases of "before Mittal" and "after Mittal".

To this day, many aspects of the privatization process are shrouded in mystery and subject to different interpretations. For example, I was not able to learn the exact terms of the sale, and my interlocutors cited different figures. The overarching perception among them, however, was that "Mittal bought us for pennies." Importantly, while my interlocutors did not necessarily object to privatization *per se* (for similar finding see Bartha 2010 or Dunn 2004), they objected to the way it was implemented as well as to its outcomes. Some people smelled corruption: "The agreement was that Mittal Steel took on all the steelworks' debts, but these debts were artificially inflated to make it seem like the steelworks was in a worse financial state than it actually was," a recently-laid off accountant at the steelworks told me. A retired steelworks electrician agreed: "The director we had in the 1990s was already starting to implement modernization initiatives, things were starting to look better, the steelworks didn't have to be sold to Mittal... it was sold because someone had a political interest in it." Some of my interlocutors resented what they characterized as "selling off national wealth": "This privatization is not privatization, it's liquidation and the theft of national wealth", another employee told me angrily. Several of my interlocutors also objected to the sale of a Polish enterprise to an

Indian company. Since the collapse of socialism Poland's explicit goal was a "return to Europe," and both Poland the country and the Polish people I know, look to the "West" for models on "how things should be." Several Nowa Huta residents told me that they hoped that the steelworks would be sold to either a European or American company that would bring "Western standards" to Poland - although they approvingly noted that Mittal Steel's subsequent merger with the German firm Arcelor three years later brought more "European" standards to the company.

A major outcome of market reforms across East-Central Europe has been unemployment, with newly privatized firms trimming down employment in the name of "efficiency". At Nowa Huta's steelworks, efforts to trim employment began in the early 1990s and took a variety of forms, including early retirement packages, layoffs, as well as the creation of spin-off companies which absorbed a share of the workforce (Stenning 2000). In 2010, employment at the Nowa Huta steelworks stood at 3726 people, or roughly 1/10 of what it was in the late 1970s. The majority of these employees were between 51-60 years of age, and the average age was 45. Approximately three-quarters of the workers occupied manual positions (74%) and the vast majority were male (87%) (Kurier Aktualności NSZZ Pracowników AMP 2011). In order to "optimize production" for 2011, the company projected a further reduction of 500 employees across all four of its Polish plants over the course of the year, although it is not known how many of these will come from Nowa Huta. Similarly concerning is the company's recent proposal to outsource its hiring and firing to an outside Human Resources firm, as well as to hire temporary workers, initiatives that are presently contested by the steelworks' labour unions.

Along with employment, production has declined as well. Numerous interlocutors pointed out to me that whereas the steelworks used to have five operating blast furnaces, it now only has one. To make matters worse, the only remaining blast furnace was under repairs from the summer of 2010 until spring 2011, in effect halting virtually all subsequent stages of the production process. During that time, the only major divisions in operation were the very end stages of the production process, the hot and cold rolling mills, which processed steel that was produced in Katowice. At the time, many workers were temporarily relocated to the Katowice plants. The blast furnace has since reopened, and for the time being, there is no more talk of layoffs or relocations.

Despite the decline in employment and production, some improvements have been undertaken following the company's privatization. A new hot rolling mill was opened in July 2007 and the cold rolling mill was modernized in November 2009. These investments are widely publicized, as are the company's activities in the areas of environmental improvements and health and safety issues. For example, the steelworks has recently appointed a new Environmental Ambassador, regularly organizes health and safety events for workers, and the company's weekly column in the local newspaper *Głos Nowej Huty* (Nowa Huta Voice) frequently highlights new environmental and health and safety initiatives.

Despite these modernization efforts, several employees have complained to me that the steelworks' infrastructure is deteriorating. "Beautiful on the outside, ruin on the inside," one person said to me. Marek Kurewski, a worker in one of the steelworks' storage facilities, offered this description:

Our storage facility has a leaky roof, so when it rains we have to put down a bucket to catch the water... I'm worried that one day the entire roof will just cave in on our heads. And this past January was really cold and the water pipe going to the fire hydrant broke. It was never replaced, so there is no water in the fire hydrant, which is a huge violation of health and safety rules... A lot of the older buildings are not being maintained, they are just left to decay. No one trims the grass or the trees anymore, the steelworks is starting to look like a park, it's starting to grow in with Puszcza Niepołomicka (a nearby wood).

At present, the future of the steelworks is uncertain, and is subject to much speculation. There is a perpetual concern that since four of the company's steel plants, along with its head office, are located in the Katowice region, eventually all production will be moved there and the Nowa Huta site will close altogether. Since the fall of 2010 there has also been talk of Arcelor Mittal giving up an unused half of its ten square kilometre facility to the city of Kraków for the development of a special economic zone intended to attract new enterprises to Nowa Huta. Nothing concrete is yet known but the idea signals the company's possible intention to gradually withdraw from Nowa Huta, although this could also mean the arrival of new workplaces.

The steelworks in a steeltown: changing role of the steelworks in Nowa Huta's life

In November 2010 I attended a public talk at the OKN cultural centre at which Karol Janas, then-doctoral student in geography presented the preliminary results of his research on Nowa Huta. His principal research instrument was the survey, and one of the questions on it concerned people's perceptions of significant events in Nowa Huta's history. Janas reported that 36% of his respondents identified the construction of the steelworks as an important event, whereas the construction of the Lord's Ark (*Arka Pana*) church garnered 64%, and "resistance to the communist system" was seen as important by 67% of the respondents. Once Janas finished talking and opened up the

floor for questions, an elderly man stood up and began to berate his research. The construction of the steelworks was the single most important event in Nowa Huta's history, the man argued, without which the town itself would never have come into being. I later learned that the man was Tomasz Szewczyk, the steelworks' former director of social affairs.

To me, this exchange illustrated an important phenomenon: the changing role of the steelworks in Nowa Huta's life, and the way in which different generations of Nowa Huta residents perceive the steelworks and its role in the community. At one point in time, virtually all life in Nowa Huta revolved around the steelworks. At present, this seems to be no longer the case. For starters, the steelworks now employs only a fraction of Nowa Huta's population. At present, the steelwork's workforce constitutes roughly 2% of Nowa Huta's population, as compared with approximately 15% in its heyday. At one point in time, young Nowa Huta men grew up with the knowledge that they will work at the steelworks just as their fathers (and maybe grandfathers) did. Władysław Kwiecień, director of one of the steelwork's product divisions, whose grandfather, father and mother have all worked for the steelworks described it in those terms:

It was a kind of a tradition in Nowa Huta... a guy who lived in Nowa Huta would go to AGH (*Akademia Górniczo-Hutnicza*, Kraków's technical university), and then to the steelworks... that was his fate. Every one knew from the beginning that sooner or later he would end up at the steelworks.

At present, work at the steelworks is no longer the projected fate of young Nowa Huta residents. When I spoke to young people about their employment aspirations, not one of them identified the steelworks as a place where they could see themselves working

in the future. Several of them had family members who worked for the steel factory and some have gone on holidays through their parents' work. On the whole, however, most young people seemed surprised as to why I was asking them about the steelworks and did not appear to see it as a significant agent in their lives.

The steelworks' drastic reduction of the workforce over the past two decades has also contributed to the erosion of social networks in the community (Stenning 2005; for similar cases see Bartha 2008 and Kideckel 2008). Although some former employees have remained connected to their previous work-related networks (for example many former employees are still members of steelwork's branch of the tourist organization PTTK²⁶), the majority of people become severed from the steelworks once they no longer work there. In her study of Hungarian and former East German industrial workers, Bartha (2008) notes that unemployment has created a new dividing line in society between former colleagues who used to work, live and play together. Those without a paycheque are limited in their opportunities for socialization and leisure, especially as leisure activities are increasingly becoming commercialized (Stenning 2004; see also Bartha 2008 and Kideckel 2008). Even among those who are still employed, the threat of unemployment jeopardizes collegial networks as it introduces competition for jobs (Stenning 2005b).

Like many major socialist enterprises, Lenin Steelworks used to own and fund virtually all athletic and cultural programs and institutions in town, and most of these were either free or offered for a nominal fee. Throughout the 1990s, as the steelworks

²⁶ PTTK (*Polskie Towarzystwo Turystyczno-Krajoznawcze*) is a national Polish tourist organization, consisting of over 3,000 branches across the country. The steelworks has its own branch of PTTK, and at one point in time different divisions within the steelworks had their own sub-branches. It is also worth noting the large scale of this venture: in the record year 1969, a total of 107,000 people took part in different activities organized by the Nowa Huta steelworkers' branch of PTTK).

began to prepare for privatization, it cut the cord from most of its former dependents, including the sports club, cultural centre, health clinic, and vocational schools. The handful that remain to this day include the steelworkers' division of PTTK, an association that organizes hikes, sport-oriented trips (eg. kayaking, skiing), as well as gives tours around the steelworks. The steelworks also funds salaries, space and uniforms for the Steelworks' Wind Orchestra, a legendary Nowa Huta group who since 1953 had been playing at all important events related to the steelworks as well as at events such as steelworkers' funerals. In 2005 the steelworks' plans to eliminate the orchestra generated such a strong public backlash in Nowa Huta (a local filmmaker even made a movie about it) that a year later the orchestra was reinstated.

Although the steelworks cut its ties from most of the programs/institutions it used to own, in recent years it has placed more emphasis on what it terms "corporate social responsibility" (*społeczna odpowiedzialność biznesu*). For example, the company has contributed funding to a new gym and recreation center in Nowa Huta called Comcom zone, funded computer labs in two schools, and is currently contemplating contributing to the museum of communism (Muzeum PRL-u) in Nowa Huta.²⁷ A few years ago it sponsored Kraków's marathon (*Cracovia Maraton*), and in recent years has been opening up the former tinning plant for concerts organized by Kraków's Festival Bureau. It is important to note, however, that many of these initiatives require only one-time sponsorship, rather than a longstanding financial commitment.

As the above description illustrates, the steelworks is now simply a place of business rather than the cornerstone of all life in town. As a capitalist enterprise, it has no long-term responsibility to the community in which it is located; in fact, the neoliberal

²⁷ The museum will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

logic of “flexibility” and “mobility” (Harvey 2005) postulates that it can always close its doors and move elsewhere in search of cheaper labour, resources, and so on. Key decisions affecting its operations are made not in Nowa Huta, but rather in the company’s global head office in Luxembourg.

Since its purchase of the steelworks, Arcelor Mittal has also made a concerted effort to sever any connection between its current operations and the steelworks’ colourful history of struggle for labour rights. For example, if we visit the company’s Polish website²⁸ and click on the “history” tab, we learn that its history begins in 2004, the year that the consortium was bought by Mittal Steel, commencing what the website terms a “new epoch in Poland’s steelworking.” In the following year, a monument to Solidarity was removed from the steelworks’ grounds and moved to Nowa Huta’s Central Square. The monument was made in 1999 by steelworkers who erected it in front of the blooming mill division, the site of the strongest Solidarity branch in the steelworks. The steelworks also used to house a sort of memorial room (*izba pamięci*) of Nowa Huta’s Solidarity, which in recent years was similarly relocated outside of the steelworks. These actions make it clear that the steelworks’ new owner perceives the steelworks as a place of strictly business, and while trade unions are allowed (in fact, one seat on the company’s Board of Directors is reserved for a representative from the trade unions), the legacy of Solidarity is not to be symbolically highlighted in the company’s day-to-day operations.

The above sections outlined the steelworks’ history, with a focus on its changing role in Nowa Huta’s life. It is apparent that, once the central organizing principle of all social life in town, the steelworks is increasingly becoming just a branch of a global

²⁸ Available at www.arcelormittal.com/poland

company which happens to be located on Nowa Huta's territory. The case of the steelworks, I argue, illustrates the broader economic and social changes accompanying the postsocialist transformation, in particular the phenomena of privatization, deindustrialization and the fracture of the socialist-era connection between work, workplace and community. In the following section I consider these changes with reference to memories of work on the part of steelworks' past and present employees.

Memories of work

Work, and industrial work in particular, is a fitting lens for an exploration of the postsocialist transformation in East-Central Europe (eg. Buchowski 2004, Kideckel 2008, Ashwin 1999a and 1999b). This is not surprising, since work was the cornerstone of socialist citizenship; for example, healthcare, vacations, leisure, and other social provisions were awarded to people either through their workplaces, or on the basis of their roles as workers (Stenning 2005). This was true particularly of industrial work and workers, hailed as the "vanguard of socialism." At the same time, however, the veneration of the proletariat in official discourses engendered a backlash, as it "fed historical antagonisms and condescending depictions, largely by the urban intelligentsia, of the new working class as ignorant, backward and suspect, which challenged the official celebration of working class spaces and cultures" (Stenning 2005: 3-4). During the socialist period, representations of the working classes ranged "from the heroic to the ridiculous" (ibid).

Following the collapse of socialism, political and economic priorities shifted away from production in favour of consumption, and from industrial work to the service

industry and new technologies (Berdahl 2010, Dunn 2004, Kideckel 2008). Stephen Crowley argues that market reforms in East-Central Europe were modelled on the American variety, which emphasizes labour flexibility without the social support and benefits that traditionally characterize European-style democracies (2004). The concomitant ideological shift from favouring collective interests to individual ones has further reduced the significance of work and workers, leading to their “othering” (Kideckel 2008; see also Dunn 2004, Berdahl 2010, Stenning 2005). This “othering” can also be seen as an attempt to “exorcise” socialist-era ideology on the part of new elites, with hegemonic discourses defining workers “as either anachronistic artefacts of failed socialism or obstacles in the march to capitalist prosperity, or even as both” (Kideckel 2008: 8), even though it is worth remembering that capitalism itself relies on labour as a commodity (Harvey 2005).

Memories of work constitute an important lens through which we can examine the socialist past and the changes that followed (eg. Bartha 2008). Topics such as unemployment, issues of pay and social benefits/provisions, as well as work conditions more generally, invite reflection on the changes that have taken place since socialism’s collapse. In this section, I illustrate that people’s memories of work during the socialist period reveal an appreciation of the socialist notion of citizenship, based on a promise of guaranteed work and the allocation of social benefits by the paternalistic state (through the state-owned workforce as its arm) on the basis of people’s participation in the production process. These recollections also offer an important critique of aspects of neoliberal market reforms and their outcomes, most notably unemployment. However, people’s accounts of unequal distribution of benefits during the socialist period also point

to certain darker aspects of work in the socialist period, such as unequal distribution of benefits based on people's membership in the Party.

Unemployment is one of the biggest themes recurring in contemporary discourses on work in post-socialist states (Galasińska 2010, Bartha 2008). In stark contrast to the socialist period where the "right to work" was enshrined in the constitution and unemployment officially did not exist, at present the national unemployment rate in Poland hovers at approximately 12-13%, although in Kraków itself that number is significantly lower at between 4-5%. Galasińska (2010), for example, notes that work and unemployment has assumed the central role in all conversations at Christmas dinners, birthday parties and other gatherings. At the time of writing, the topic of unemployment among young people is regularly surfacing in Polish newspapers. Unemployment and job insecurity were also frequently brought up by my interlocutors as social problems accompanying the postsocialist transformation. This was true even for individuals who themselves were employed or retired.

Unemployment is a major issue in work-related narratives in Nowa Huta. The official discourse at the steelworks holds that since layoffs began, no one was ever forcibly laid off, and that employees who left *chose* to accept compensation or early retirement packages. Indeed, one of the conditions imposed on Mittal Steel by the Polish government at the time of sale was that all workers laid off within the first five years (that is, from 2004 to 2009) would receive compensation packages. In the course of my research, however, I heard a variety of stories about the layoff process: stories of people who did not want to leave but were pressured to, of people who wanted to receive a

package and leave but were not offered one, of people who were wronged by the layoff process and of those who purportedly made “good money” on it.

Union leader Wojciech Gąsowski, who has worked at the steelworks since 1962 described the layoff process in the following way:

In most cases, it was the workers themselves who decided to leave... Many people took advantage of this shot of cash they received and started their own businesses. Some people didn't want to do it. The biggest problem for people was having to make a decision. Some people who got money didn't think about the future at all, they blew it all on a new car or put it towards building a house... And now they complain.

At the same time, I have also heard stories that throw into question the existence of such a seamless layoff process. Such is the story of Grażyna Kowalik, a former accountant in her late forties/early fifties. At the time that I met her, she had been unemployed for little over a year, and her unemployment benefits had just run out. She said she was actively looking for a job but to no avail. She spoke of her experience with bitterness.

First they relocated the accounting department to Katowice. So for a year I commuted to Katowice to work... It takes two hours one way by train. Then they hired a new person, a young woman, and I had to train her. Once she was trained, they let me go and kept her. The company prefers young people who have English skills, they don't care about older workers, our experience doesn't count for anything anymore. And where am I going to find a job at my age?

The layoff process was seen as problematic not only by workers who had been laid off. When I brought up the topic with Władysław Kwiecień, current manager of one of the product divisions, he responded passionately.

KP: I find many former workers are quite bitter about the layoffs.

WK: Does that surprise you? People have worked hard and honestly for thirty years and then they get sent on early retirement (*zasilek przedemerytalny*) which is 700 or 800 zł²⁹. For some people, it's really hard to see that a friend who started a few months earlier than them, or started at the same time but worked in a different position, gets to keep their job whereas they get laid off... But, we have capitalism and these are the rules... this is the way the world works. There is no certainty like there was before.

People's narratives point to the phenomenon of unemployment, or the fear thereof, as a widespread social problem. This is contrasted, whether implicitly or explicitly, with guaranteed employment during the the socialist period. There is, however, a flip side to this. While during the socialist period unemployment officially did not exist, two of my interlocutors pointed to the phenomena of mandatory work orders (*nakazy pracy*) and black-listing of people who were seen as politically suspect – factors which problematize overly positive recollections of the guaranteed employment of the socialist era (Kabzińska 2006).

Pan³⁰ Krzemiński, whose story is told in more detail in chapter 4, was first fired from his department for taking part in the December 1981 strike and refusing to sign a *lojalka* (a statement affirming loyalty to the socialist government). He subsequently had trouble finding another job until one manager who was a Party³¹ member agreed to vouch for him. Then, when he wanted to leave the steelworks in 1985 he was initially not allowed to do so, a fact he attributed to his being seen as a troublemaker who needed to be kept under close scrutiny.

²⁹In terms of buying power, 700 zł is roughly equivalent to \$700/month in Canada.

³⁰ In the Polish language, terms of politeness Pan (Mr) or Pani (Ms or Mrs) are used when speaking with strangers, and particularly older people. In the course of my fieldwork, I variously addressed my interlocutors using the terms Pan, Pani, or the more familiar “you” form, depending on their age, occupation and my relationship with them. Throughout this work, I refer to people using the same forms of address that I used when speaking with them.

³¹ “The Party” was a colloquial expression for Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza (PZPR), or Polish United Workers' Party, the socialist party that governed the country from 1948-1989.

Another former steelworker, Paweł Czajka, told me that he first tried to leave the steelworks in 1983 for a better-paying job, but was not allowed to leave for 12 months. In his case the motives behind keeping him at the steelworks were not political but economic: the 1980s was a time when the steelworks was experiencing a shortage of workers.

KP: What do you mean, they wouldn't let you leave?

PC: They wouldn't. There was a mandatory work order and that's it.

KP: So you were forced to work there, whether you wanted to or not?

PC: Yes, for twelve months. Then I could go. I was really angry that it took so long because the other job was waiting for me.

The second work-related topic that frequently recurs in people's narratives is the issue of pay and benefits (eg. healthcare, vacations, etc). Public opinion held (and continues to hold) that during the socialist period industrial workers had high salaries and good benefits. When I spoke to workers about work conditions at the steelworks, the second topic raised after employment and job security was salary. One such person was Jan Baryłka, a 58-year old steelworker who worked at the steelworks since the early 1970s until the early 1990s, when his division was closed and transformed into a spin-off company. At the time that I spoke with him, he was on temporary medical leave but was planning to return to the spin-off company until his planned retirement in 2012. Pan Baryłka positively recalled the job security and salaries during the "old days", which he compared with his recent forced paycut.

JB: From my point of view the old days were better, I didn't have to look for work but work looked for me. And now? After 43 years of work the steelworks is cutting people's salaries because everything is going down. Recession. In my spin-off company, they cut our salaries. I used to earn about 2000 zł (a month), now I earn about 1500. But the price of everything keeps going up. For young

people this is a very good time. And for the old... the old positively look back on the old days. Yes, there were empty shelves but if you wanted to find something to buy you would. It was during martial law (1981-1983) that I got married, I had a baby, and I got an apartment from the steelworks. I have good memories of that. Now if you want to have an apartment you have to have money. And I don't complain about the empty shelves. My wife would look after our daughter, and if I had a day off I'd take shopping bags and go stand in line. When I came home after a day of standing in lines I would have heard so much news and so many stories. I have good memories of that.

KP: So you are saying that before people earned better money?

JB: Yes before I could afford everything. And now I can't afford practically anything. Although the stores are full, but I have no money to buy things. If I want to buy something, I have to save up for it.

At the same time, it is interesting that Pan Baryłka does not blame his reduced salary and buying power on the government, or the economic reforms that have taken place, but rather points to a more diffuse phenomenon of "recession."

JB: I just talked about the paycuts, but that's not the fault of the board, I'm sure they want us to prosper and earn good money. It's just that right now there is such a recession that nobody wants to buy what we produce... There was a period of time when we earned well... but it's come to an end.

The topic of salary and benefits was also raised by Marek Kurowski, a current steelworks employee. A man in his early-mid fifties, Pan Kurowski has worked at the steelworks since having completed vocational school in 1974. He works in one of the three remaining storage facilities where machine parts are stored. There once were 18 storage facilities, employing 180 people, whereas the three remaining ones employ a total of twelve.

MK: This year is my 35th anniversary at the steelworks, so I get a bonus. 500% (of his monthly pay). The workers who have remained still get pretty good bonuses and a decent social package. The problem is, there are less and less of them. The company tries to get rid of older workers who have negotiated decent packages, and hire new workers who are not offered these kinds of benefits... My job

doesn't involve heavy physical work and I don't work shifts, so all I make is the national average (approximately 2000 zł a month, which in terms of buying power, translates to approximately \$2000). People who do the heavy work, for example at the blast-furnace, which is also shift-work, make about 50% more.

KP: Is that how it's always been, even during socialism?

MK: Yes, I've always made approximately the national average.

KP: What about other benefits?

MK: I get ½ litre of milk a day, people who do the harder jobs get 1 litre. But the company is now trying to withdraw that... They also cut down on the things like soap and handcream, so now if I want to wash my hands at work I have to bring my own soap.

While Pan Baryłka and Pan Kurowski seemed appreciative of the salary and benefits steelworkers received in the past, Paweł Czajka, the man who wanted to leave the steelworks but was forced to remain on a mandatory work order, had a very different story to tell. Paweł Czajka worked at the steelworks from 1975 to 1984. He began in the Production Office of the Mechanical Division, which developed production plans and targets, then moved to the Main Automatic Division, which oversaw things such as temperature in the blast furnace. In 1984 he left the steelworks for a job as a repairman with a neighbourhood housing cooperative (*spółdzielnia*), which he still has today. I asked him why he wanted to leave the steelworks so badly.

PC: The pay wasn't good. What the steelworks paid then, I could make several times that much money doing repairs.

KP: But I thought steelworkers got paid pretty good money?

PC: That was only if you were in the Party.

Paweł here raised a sentiment common to several of my interlocutors, namely that benefits were not evenly distributed, and that high salaries, promotions, and "extras" such as theatre tickets were reserved for members of the Party. He went on to tell me about the benefits of Party membership. He said he was offered the opportunity to go to

university if he joined the Party, but he refused. In the end he never ended up going to university, a fact of which he speaks with evident regret and/or embarrassment. He said that because of his refusal to join the Party he also missed out on some other opportunities. For example, certain workers were offered temporary contracts in Algeria building industrial complexes. They got paid well, and received so-called “dollar coupons” (*bony dolarowe*) which could be spent at Pewex, a special store that carried coveted (and unavailable elsewhere in Poland) Western products for hard currency.

Another steelworks employee, Aleksander Beliński, a psychologist who worked for steelworks for thirty years heading their Department of Work Psychology, talked of the preferential treatment of Party members in the following terms:

I was never in the Party, and because I wasn't an activist like some people, it later cost me when I was looking for an apartment. When I was assigned an apartment in this building, I wanted to live on the second or third floor - not too high because I had a dog to walk and there isn't an elevator, and not too low in case of break-ins. But I was told that these were the best locations and were reserved for people who earned it (*którzy się zasłużyli*). So I had a choice between the first or fourth floor. I chose the first floor, and this is where we are still living.

While some of my interlocutors criticised the unequal distribution of benefits along Party membership, others spoke of official structures (such as trade union or Party secretary) as sources to whom they could turn for help. Katarzyna Balicka, a steelworks secretary, told me that when she got married and moved in with her husband and his parents, the tensions between her and her mother-in-law were such that she feared for her marriage. “I went to the Party secretary and told him that if I don't get an apartment I will have to get a divorce.” Within two years, she was allocated an apartment and her marriage survived.

In addition to high salaries, many of my interlocutors appreciatively spoke of the workplace's role in allocating numerous social benefits, a role which underpinned the socialist notion of citizenship. For example, union leader Wojciech Gąsowski described it in the following terms:

Work at the steelworks was always hard... but one could get an apartment and make decent money. You could get an apartment after five or six years of work. In the 1970s, it was a workplace to which you could tie your future. The steelworks even had its own collective farm (*PGR*) with pigs, vegetables and so on! In the 1980s, when it became more difficult for the steelworks to make arrangements with the city regarding housing construction, the steelworks built the *Oświecenie* (Enlightenment) neighbourhood all by itself, for the workers, then single family houses near the Piastów neighbourhood... The cafeteria served 100,000 meals a day.

A retired steelworks employee, Tomasz Szewczyk, former assistant director of Social Provisions (and the man who so vocally emphasized the steelworks' centrality to Nowa Huta's life at Karol Janas' presentation), talked to me at length about the benefits that Lenin Steelworks gave to its workers. Pan Szewczyk was in charge of so-called "social affairs," including meals, holidays, children's camps, garden plots, sports and "culture." When he assumed this position in the mid-1970s the majority of his time was dedicated to developing a holiday base for steelworkers employees and their families, a task which included purchasing grounds and building vacation resorts as well as arranging holidays abroad. This is how he described it to me:

The steelworks had a wonderful holiday base, we had contacts in the mountains, in Mazury (lake region of Poland), regular vacations to Czechoslovakia, the GDR and to Yugoslavia... two and a half thousand people went on vacation to Yugoslavia every year. There was no other workplace in Poland that arranged foreign vacations on such a scale. Plus we built holiday resorts, modernized existing ones, we bought land for garden plots, we built resorts for childrens'

summer camps, we began building a large resort for youth on the sea. Of course then 1990 came, we didn't finish it, and everything got sold.

Organizing cultural and leisure programs was another important role of the workplace, according to Pan Szewczyk.

The OKN cultural centre organized all our workplace events: holidays, anniversaries, because every division had its own anniversary of when it was built, every division had its own carnival ball... the steelworks had a theatre on its grounds. Workers from OKN tried to have a presence in every division. Every division should have a band or a dance group, and then once a year they had cultural olympics where they competed. That brought people together... Now life goes on without this contact... People integrated and plus they could show off their talents and cultivate them. Take a break from everyday life and spend time differently... Now, when I look back on it from the perspective of so many years, this is what I think is the most important factor in bringing people together, the most important role of the steelworks in affecting workers' lives.

Pan Szewczyk summed up the role of the steelworks in those terms:

The steelworks was the largest factory in Poland. So our political leaders had the ambition that if it is the largest workplace everything should be the best. On a largest scale, the best. So we tried and essentially we had it... In the past, the workplace, and especially a workplace like the steelworks, was everything to the workers. Starting with housing, to holidays and summer camps. It had its own health care service. Whatever is needed, we need an ultrasound machine we buy an ultrasound machine, if not this year then the next. Every division had its own clinic, complete with dentistry... So the worker was supported by the workplace from beginning to end. There was even a workplace school... one could attend electrical or mechanical vocational school... In the later years there were problems with purchasing furniture, the workplace helped even with that. The workplace was everything. It tried to help in every area. But after the year 1990 things look a bit different. Privatization, so no more apartments, the workplace does not give you garden plots, medical services have completely separated. So today everything looks very different... Before, every division had its own sports club. The steelworks had great athletes, our soccer team played in the first league for a period of time, it was a team that counted on the national scale... Same with men's and women's basketball and handball... Now Mittal is not interested in sport. He's not interested in culture either. He's only interested in profits and production.

Wonderful as this description sounds, however, it is also worth remembering that flagship socialist industrial enterprises such as Lenin Steelworks had considerably greater resources at their disposal than smaller workplaces, and thus its workers had access to an array of benefits unparalleled elsewhere.

Pan Szewczyk's lengthy narrative illustrates the role of the state-owned socialist workplace in providing and allocating benefits to workers. Economist Janos Kornai argues that the socialist state derived its legitimacy from its paternalistic role of redistribution of resources to its citizens (1992; see also Verdery 1996). The state was obligated to provide the population with "basic needs", including "food, shelter, education, vacations and cultural goods and services" (1992: 54). The socialist enterprise can thus be seen as one "arm" of the state through which this allocation and distribution took place, although it is also worth remembering that one of the primary reasons attributed to socialism's eventual collapse is the fact that the state could never fulfill this obligation to people's satisfaction (Kornai 2002, Berdahl 2010, Verdery 1996).

When I asked people about the benefits they received from the steelworks, all of the past and current steelworks employees I have interviewed (with the exception of two managers who have only been with the steelworks since the 1990s) received their apartment through the steelworks. Several of the older workers reported going on trips with PTTK, and two of my interlocutors were still active members even though one is retired and another now works for a spin-off company. Pan Baryłka, whom we met earlier, was an avid hiker and an active member of the PTTK branch.

I have been going on trips with PPTK since I was a child and my father worked at the steelworks... The first trip I went on was a week-long Lenin's Hike (*Rajd Lenina*) to Poronin... And then when I started working at the steelworks, the

blooming mill had a very strong presence in PTTK. We organized those famous afternoon trips to Ojców, Dolinki Podkrakowskie, Myślenice.³²

It is also noteworthy that some structures of social support have survived privatization and remain to this day. While employees no longer receive a supply of potatoes and other vegetables for the winter, they have subsidized holidays for themselves and their children (although the subsidized price is still fairly high for someone who earns only a national average), regular medical check-ups at the local health clinic (which formerly used to belong to the steel factory but is now a separate, private enterprise) and free gym passes. Both employees and retirees can eat a subsidized hot dinner in the steelworks' restaurant *Kasyno* (Casino), consisting of soup and a second. Every year, female employees receive a small gift to celebrate International Women's Day, a custom left over from the socialist period – except that whereas in the past they used to receive a carnation and a pair of pantyhose, they now receive small chains, pendants or jewellery boxes. For workers over fifty years of age, the steelworks annually funds a two weeks' stay at a sanitarium, a sort of a health resort in the mountains or on the sea. Management and administrative staff can take advantage of free Business English classes.

While my interlocutors spoke fondly of the social benefits that came with socialist citizenship, they also appreciated some changes that have taken place over the past two decades. Foremost among them was “modernization” of equipment, which they associated with the arrival of capitalism. Though capitalism does not intrinsically bring “modernization” or “progress,” in the case of the steelworks the 1990s did indeed bring technological improvements (made in preparation for the steelworks' privatization), and

³² The three are popular daytrip locations for Kraków residents.

since the steelworks' sale to Mittal Steel several major investments have been carried out, including the building of a new hot rolling mill and the modernization of the cold rolling mill. In their interviews with me, the workers were divided. Some complained about the steelworks' decline, the abandonment of entire sections of the steelworks (which, like Marek Kurewski said, is starting to look like a "park"), and the neglect of its infrastructure. Others, while not denying that fact, nonetheless praised the recent modernization of equipment, both as an indicator of "progress" and because it improved work conditions. Jan Baryłka, who had earlier complained about having his salary reduced, nonetheless positively commented on technical improvements which according to him improved work conditions.

KP: Were work conditions better in the past, or are they better now?

JB: They are better now. Now the departments are modernized. Everything is made using new technology. Before there were lots of equipment failures, and the work was hard. I remember when the overhead crane would break down and just stop right over a stack of slabs of steel, I would have to put on my *kufajka* (a puffy workman's jacket) and go fix it. The temperature over those hot slabs was about 50-60 degrees (Celsius), so I had to wear that *kufajka* even in the summer, to keep out the heat long enough to give me time to fix the crane.

Indeed, difficult work conditions at the steelworks was a recurring theme in people's accounts of work in the past. Many of my interlocutors, for instance, mentioned exposure to high heat and chemicals. In divisions where steel is melted, such as the blast furnace or the hot rolling mill, temperatures on the floor can get up to 60 degrees Celsius, and in numerous departments (especially the coke plant) workers are exposed to chemicals such as methane, carbon monoxide, hydrogen sulfide, hydrogen cyanide, and sulfur oxides. Several of my interviewees used the recently-opened hot rolling mill as an example of the positive changes that have taken place in recent years. Pan Krzemiński,

the previously-mentioned electrician, who worked at the steelworks since 1966 to the early nineties (and to this day sometimes acts as tour guide) was a big supporter of technological advancements.

During communism there was over-employment, often unjustified. This is because of the flawed organization of work, but also because there were not as many control mechanisms as there are now when the equipment is more advanced... Before work at the hot rolling mill was such that a worker had to stand beside the roll and turn the crank by hand, smeared with oil from head to toe. And often there had to be two workers there, because when one ran out of strength the other had to replace him right away... Another worker who oversaw the process would have to run back and forth from one cage mill to another to keep up with the flow of the steel... Now when you go into the rolling mill, you see four guys sitting behind the glass in an air-conditioned room, they don't even have to push buttons because the computer reacts by itself, they just make sure everything is running smoothly. Now, even if something goes wrong the machine will stop by itself, no problem.

Many of the workers with whom I spoke mentioned the high rate of accidents in the past, which they favourably compared with strict health and safety rules in the present. Pani Urszula Karkoszka, who worked at the blooming mill in various capacities from 1960 to 1990 told me that over the years she has witnessed numerous accidents, some of them quite drastic, including people falling out of the overhead cranes to their death. She herself had a close call when she once jumped on a stack of freshly-rolled steel slabs to paint a serial code on it (a job nowadays done by a robot). She felt the steel give way under her feet and realized that it was not yet completely cooled, and as such was still molten. Luckily, a colleague who noticed her predicament tossed her a wooden board to allow her to get her grounding and jump off. "If he wasn't there I don't know what would have happened to me... I probably would have sunk right into that molten steel" she told me.

According to both front-line workers and managers with whom I spoke, health and safety conditions have improved exponentially “since Mittal.” Władysław Kwiecień, manager of one of the product divisions, told me:

One has to admit that since Mittal there is a lot more emphasis on workplace safety... in the old days it was ignored (*dawniej zamykało się na to oko*). People were embarrassed to wear helmets (*helm to był obciach*) and wanted to show off to their work friends how tough they were (*jaki to z niego chojrak*). Now there is no choice, they have to wear a helmet.

As the accounts above illustrate, while workers criticize phenomena that arrived along with market reforms such as unemployment and job uncertainty, they also note some positive changes such as some modernization of equipment and improved health and safety measures. These, incidentally, also constitute the accomplishments and innovations highlighted in Arcelor Mittal’s official discourse. On a larger level, they also feed into the notion of technological development as an indicator and vehicle of “progress,” which, ironically, characterized both socialist-era and then postsocialist transformation discourses.

From homo sovieticus to homo privaticus: on work, values and subjectivity

The context of work also casts in sharp relief the issue of norms, styles, values and subjectivity associated with the “old order” of socialism versus the “new reality” of neoliberal capitalism. Hegemonic discourses cast certain behaviour or personality traits as characteristic of “socialist-era mentality” and as both at odds with, and detrimental to, post-socialist political and economic reforms, while other traits are seen as conducive to prosperity in the new capitalist reality (Dunn 2004, Muller 2004). These traits are often framed in the context of work, with certain traits dismissed and devalued while others

praised and encouraged, and the successes or failures of certain people and/or groups justified in terms of their “mentality” and ability or inability to “adapt to the new system.” For example, older workers, and industrial or public sector employees in particular, are often seen as passive, lacking initiative and having an elevated and unjustified sense of entitlement – traits which are often subsumed under the umbrella term of “homo sovieticus”³³ mentality. The socialist past thus becomes invoked in a negative way so as to affirm changing economic priorities, work styles and values.

Anthropologist Elizabeth Dunn, whose work examined the privatization process in Poland’s largest baby food factory, shows that certain personality traits among workers were characterized as either “socialist” or “capitalist.” She argues that socialism is associated with, among other traits: backwardness, stasis, rigidity, (older) age, obedience, collectivism, and drawing on personalized connections. In contrast, capitalism is associated with modernity and “civilization,” dynamism and movement, flexibility, youth, critical self-reflection, individualism, and impersonal relations based on rational calculation (2004: 64). Dunn shows that the process of market reform has entailed the reframing of the concept of work. Drawing on David Harvey’s concept of flexible accumulation, she explains that the new philosophy of work sees workers as autonomous, self-regulating individuals, endowed with the ability to make choices and to bear risk, and flexible in the face of change – what Miller and Rose have termed an “enterprising subject” (Miller and Rose 2008b, Dunn 2004; see also Harvey 2005). She argues that workers who are able to embody the characteristics associated with capitalism are seen as valuable and consequently rewarded. This socialist-capitalist dichotomy is also mapped

³³ The term “homo sovieticus” was first coined by Soviet writer Aleksandr Zinovyev and then picked up by a number of Polish intellectuals (eg. Tischner 1992, Sztompka 2000).

onto generational differences, with younger workers seen as uncorrupted by the socialist mentality, and older ones seen as suspect because of their socialist-era upbringing and work history and thus having to prove their ability to operate in the “new reality”. At the same time, she shows that these associations do not go uncontested, although workers are losing their voice and thus power to shape meanings surrounding work and citizenship (see also Ost and Crowley 2001, Kideckel 2008).

In the course of my research, a number of people alluded to the changed work culture at the steelworks, particularly following the company’s sale to Mittal Steel. The changes they identified are similar to the ones outlined by Dunn (2004), as well as in other accounts of the neoliberal workplace (eg. Muller 2004). They include, for instance, longer hours, increased demands for productivity and less tolerance for workers’ claims. Grzegorz Wierchoła, a former steelworker and now tour guide, described the changed work conditions in the following terms:

The work conditions are a lot tougher now... A lot less workers are needed now, so if someone doesn’t like something, they don’t have to work here... Mittal values good workers, but in the older days there was a lot more room for negotiations...

Władysław Kwiecień, manager of one of the product divisions, has worked at the steelworks for 25 years. This is how he described the changes that have taken place:

When I first started working here the workday was shorter... eight hours and you go home. Now, I work up to twelve hours a day and I still don’t leave my work behind at the end of the day because I check e-mails at home. New standards have been implemented especially after 2004 (the year steelworks was bought by Mittal Steel). People work decidedly more, including weekends and even Sundays... As for me, I can really tell that I’m now working for a corporation, because my mentality was shaped differently...there is too much form, not enough content... For example, if you want to keep your job and make good money there are only

three things you need to do. First, send as many e-mails as possible to higher-ups, regardless of the content. Second, make as many powerpoint presentations as possible, with at least 90 slides each, colour and pictures, and send them around. And third, go for dinner with the right people at the right time. Of course I'm not being serious when I say this...

Pan Kwiecień may have been speaking facetiously when he set out this recipe for advancement in the corporate workplace, but there is undoubtedly at least a grain of truth contained in it. He went on to discuss the changing profile of workers.

WK: I recently sat in on job talks with new hires... I couldn't believe it that graduates from AGH (*Akademia Górniczo-Hutnicza*, Kraków's university of science and technology) could not answer the simplest questions, like what steel is made of, or what is the difference between steel and pig iron... But what their asset is that they are mentally prepared to embrace change and to be flexible.

KP: So does experience still count?

WK: I think it does. It should. New workers now have eight months training during which they rotate around departments, but they are never given any real work to do because they do not stay long enough in any given department. I have worked my way up and I had the opportunity to work at different departments. I think that's very valuable, because then I understand these processes from the bottom, so when a bureaucrat from Luxembourg sends me 100 slides on something he wants done, I can understand how it's going to impact people who actually work with this stuff.

Pan Kwiecień is in an interesting position to reflect on this change. He has worked for the steelworks for twenty-five years and therefore can speak to the changes that have taken place in recent years, such as longer work days. At the same time, he is clearly someone who has fared well in the new reality. He accepts the changed norms but does not do so uncritically. He alludes to the need for flexibility in contemporary workplace, manifested, for example, in willingness to work long hours and to embrace a changing work environment. At the same time, he underscores the continued importance of work experience, which, as his account suggests, is acquired over time and cannot be substituted merely by an attitude of flexibility.

The need for a change in “mentality” or to put it differently, in work ethic, was one of the main arguments underpinning postsocialist economic reforms (Dunn 2004). According to the prevailing hegemonic discourses, a profound change in work ethic was necessary since socialist-era workers were passive, unable or unwilling to “take matters into their own hands” since the state did all the thinking for them anyway, and lacked a conscientious attitude to work since they knew they could not be fired (ibid). In the course of my fieldwork, I heard this argument from several younger workers and to my surprise, from a few older ones as well. Union leader Wojciech Gąsowski, a man who has worked at the steelworks since the 1960s, told me:

In PRL you didn't really have to think... At the steelworks, you were guaranteed that if you don't do something exceedingly stupid, you will be able to work your entire life, then go rest at Grębałów (the local cemetery) and the steelworkers' wind orchestra will even play at your funeral. With the transformation, you had to change people's habits, but without pressure from the new employer this would have never been possible, because no one will ever say to their work friend 'you don't do anything around here.'

The generational dimension of work and workers was also noted by my interlocutors. While I was not able to obtain reliable statistics on the age and occupation profile of recent hires, my interlocutors were of the opinion that all new hires at Arcelor Mittal are young engineers. This would make sense, given that as unskilled manual workers become increasingly rendered obsolete by technological improvements, new hires are expected to operate specialized computer equipment. Furthermore, young people are also more likely to be in possession of one of the most important currencies nowadays on Poland's job market: the English language. Union leader Wojciech

Gązowski observed the generational distribution of workers at Arcelor Mittal in the following terms:

All the workers getting hired now are younger and they are kept separate, in different divisions of the steelworks.... The company does not want them to interact with the older workers so that they don't acquire "bad habits" (ironically) and don't start making social claims (*roszczenia socjalne*).

Whether or not the steelworks' management deliberately keeps the two sets of workers separate is debatable, but they indeed seem to be located in different areas of the steelworks. The steelworks' operation is divided into two main areas: the raw materials division and the processing division, each of which is physically located in a different area of the steelworks. In recent years the processing division has benefited from modernization efforts (as in the case of new hot holling mill and modernized cold rolling mill), where employment has declined but is becoming more specialized. In contrast, the raw materials division has been plagued by problems, such as the seven-month stoppage of the blast furnace. This is the area where many of the older workers remain, prompting comments such as the one I heard from a young manager: "In the raw materials division people's mentality has not changed. They have no education but what they have instead is an attitude of entitlement."

A very poignant example of a confrontation between two very different attitudes towards work and workers is a conversation I had with two workers, Damian Ryglowski and Pani Kasia. Although I do not intend to typecast either of them into Dunn's socialist-capitalist typology (which she herself presents only as an abstraction), the conversation I had with them at the time reminded me of Dunn's insights. I first interviewed Damian, who subsequently became interested in my project, took me to meet his acquaintance,

and sat in on our conversation, making frequent interjections. Unfortunately I was not able to record this conversation as Pani Kasia was already apprehensive about speaking with me in the first place, but with her permission I took copious notes which enabled me to relate the following.

Damian is an engineer in his early forties and has been working at the steelworks since 1995. Dressed in a golf shirt and business-casual pants, he has a cheerful and youthful disposition. He exudes vitality and says he is a hard-core runner. He moved to Kraków from another city to study and remained upon graduating. He has a house in Salwator, an affluent area of Kraków. When he was first hired at the steelworks, he began as shift supervisor of the repairs division, a division that interacts with virtually all other departments. As a result, he has a good understanding of the operations of many of the steelworks' divisions and knows a lot of people. Last year Damian began to work for Arcelor Mittal's new savings program called Academy of Advancement and Continuous Improvement (*Akademia Postępu i Ciągłego Doskonalenia*) and his title is "leader of change" (*lider zmian*). This is a program that seeks to trim waste at every level in all divisions. Damian's job is to go over every division's books, as well as meet with management and hold brainstorming sessions among workers.

Damian's acquaintance Pani Kasia is the head of the Repairs Division. Pani Kasia is a heavy-set woman in her early fifties with short curly hair, and greeted me wearing a heavy work apron over pants and collared shirt. Pani Kasia moved to Nowa Huta with her parents as a child and has been working at the steelworks since 1974. She first attended the steelworks' vocational school, and subsequently worked as an overhead crane operator for five years. Afterwards she was promoted to welder and then welding

foreman. While working, she pursued a degree in mechanical engineering. Upon graduating, she moved to the Repairs Division, where she oversaw the planning of repairs. Right now her job is to oversee quotations and documentations for repairs and to order parts (parts for many machines have to be custom-made). She belongs to *Solidarność '80*, a trade union seen as the most “militant” of all the unions in the steelworks, with a current membership of approximately 400 workers, the majority of them manual workers. She also sits as workers’ representative on various committees.

I asked Pani Kasia what changes at the steelworks she has observed since 1989.

Nothing really changed until 2004. Now we have to work more, the owner expects more, now everything is someone else’s – before everything was ours. Before, three people did my job, now it’s just me.

I asked if employees on the whole feel overworked. Yes, she replied. This triggered a debate between her and Damian, who argued that even though she is now the only person doing her job, and moreover misses some days due to her participation on various committees, she is still able to fulfill all her work-related responsibilities. It does not take three people to do her job, he suggested.

I asked Pani Kasia what sorts of problems employees bring to her, as their representative. All sorts of problems, she replied, but a common issue among workers is that they either do not want to accept compensation packages, or else they would like to be offered a package and leave but are not offered one. Here, Damian interjected to point out to me that no one has ever been forced to leave the steelworks – if a person’s division was closed, they would have the option of accepting a package or transferring to another

division – although he conceded that there might have been pressure on some people to accept packages and leave.

A serious issue facing workers, Pani Kasia told me, is that salaries are not commensurate with skills and experience, nor do they rise proportionately with the rising cost of living.

We are a global company, our earnings should be comparable to those in Western Europe... Maybe the management makes good money, but the further you are from the gates (ie: the administrative centre), the further you are from getting a raise.

Damian agreed with her, noting that he wished that young engineers would not be offered such generous base salaries whereas older workers may end up with a decent package after all their additional benefits are factored in, but their base salaries are low. “There are workers on the production line whose base monthly salary is 1,000 zł³⁴, he said.

I asked about the issues that her union is currently concerned with. Right now, she replied, the big concern is outsourcing and hiring temporary workers. The union is also asking for more funding for workers who get sent on early retirement. In the recent past the union also fought against the closing of steelworks’ gates (there used to be five possible entry points into the steelworks’ ten kilometre square facility, whereas now there is only one). Here, Damian again jumped in.

“What do you think is better, closing four gates to keep one open, or keeping all five open but having to lay off workers instead?” he asked.

“Well, what if someone needs to leave work to go see a doctor”? she argued.

“They shouldn’t be going to the doctor during work hours anyway” he retorted.

³⁴ This is approximately half the national average.

This point triggered another discussion between them regarding workers' mentality. They both agreed that "people's mentality is the same from the old days," although they seemed to interpret that fact in different ways. "People feel that the workplace should take care of them more," Pani Kasia said, citing examples of workers receiving apartments and vacations from the steelworks.

"But the workplace still *is* taking care of people, just differently," Damian insisted. "There are training sessions, the workplace is giving people the opportunity to improve their qualifications, there are opportunities for advancement."

"Yes, but these things existed before as well," she snorted.

The problem, Damian argued, is people's attitude to change and sense of entitlement.

People are afraid of change, even for the better. People's mentality hasn't changed, they still believe that they are entitled to everything. Some workers still take advantage of the system, for example leaving work early and coming late. The first shift finishes at 2 p.m., which means workers leave their stations at 2 p.m., but I often see workers getting off the bus and being out the gates at 2 p.m. sharp. Some workers don't even wait for their replacement, which means that everything (ie: the production cycle) stops.

Towards the end of our conversation I asked Pani Kasia whether she thinks the steelworks should have been privatized. No, she replied, "workplaces that are key to the functioning of the state should remain in state hands." I heard Damian sharply draw in his breath as if he wanted to jump in again but he remained quiet.

In many ways, Damian and Pani Kasia can be seen as embodying different attitudes towards work and workers. Damian embraces more individualistic values, seems more concerned about productivity and profit. Pani Kasia, on the other hand, seems more oriented towards collective needs, as illustrated by her involvement in various workers' committees. At the same time, they have a lot in common as well. They are both

dedicated to their work, care about the well-being of the company and the workers – albeit in ways that reflect the different ideologies and historical, political and economic contexts that informed their attitudes to work. Damian, it is worth recalling, is of the generation that entered the workforce around the time of socialism’s collapse, and his experiences of the socialist period are informed by the political and economic breakdown of the 1980s. The majority, if not the entirety, of his working life would have been governed by the rules of the neoliberal marketplace. Pani Kasia, on the other hand, began working for the steelworks in 1974, in the decade widely perceived as the “golden age” of socialism in Poland. The steelworks is the only employer she has ever had, as well as the sponsor of all her education. Like other workers of her generation, Pani Kasia grew up informed by socialist-era ideology which emphasized the centrality of workers to the production process and the responsibility of the state for the workers’ well-being, which was to be enacted through the state-owned workplace.

The cases outlined above show that work and workers become subjects of discussions over the values, behaviours and habits associated with socialism and capitalism, and the sort of traits that are seen as valuable or detrimental to the so-called “new reality.” Such discussions frequently invoke memories of the nature of work and workers under socialism. In hegemonic discourses, work habits and values associated with the socialist past are typically devalued in favour of an ideology of individualism, independence and flexibility (see also Dunn 2004). Workers, for their part, both reproduce and contest hegemonic ideas about changing work culture or about what constitutes “good workers.” As Dunn has observed in her ethnography, these behaviours are often mapped onto generational distinctions: younger workers are often seen to

embody “valuable” traits such as flexibility and hard work, and older workers are seen as stagnant, entitled and prone to making claims. This illustrates that “generational distinctions can be viewed through the lens of stereotypes associated with the contrast between socialism and postsocialism, and that socialism and postsocialism themselves are re-imagined through generational stereotypes” (Shevchenko 2008: 9). In all, these examples show that memories of the past enter into debates about the nature of work, the rights, responsibilities and entitlements of workers, as well as the behaviours and attitudes seen as necessary for success in the neoliberal workplace.

Conclusion

Memories of work, broadly defined, speak to different aspects of past and present. In this chapter, I examined memories and narratives of work, workers and the workplace, through the lens of Nowa Huta’s steelworks. I show that the steelworks’ history reflects major phases/developments in Poland’s postwar history: first the construction of socialism, with its attendant processes of industrialization, urbanization and the creation of the working class, then socialism’s fissure and collapse, and finally, neoliberal market reforms, especially privatization and re-organization of enterprises according to the principles of “flexible accumulation” (Harvey 1989).³⁵ I also trace the changing relationship between work and community by examining the steelworks’ changed role in Nowa Huta’s life. The workplace was the organizing principle of social life and

³⁵ It should be noted here that many of the phenomena identified in this chapter, including privatization of state enterprise, the concept of “flexible accumulation”, or the idea of the “enterprising subject”, are by no means unique to former socialist states but rather are characteristic of neoliberal “rationality” (Ong 2006) and governmentality in general (Harvey 1989 and 2005, Kideckel 2009, Miller and Rose 2008 [1995]). Poland, and East-Central Europe more generally, is a place where the two transformations – postsocialism and neoliberalism – have mapped onto each other. Because of the focus of this work, however, I focus on these phenomena specifically as they play out in the postsocialist context, and more precisely in the context of Nowa Huta.

community, and this can be seen most clearly in cases of flagship socialist enterprises in model socialist towns, such as Nowa Huta, where the steelworks owned and funded virtually everything in town, from vocational schools to sports clubs. With the privatization of state-owned enterprise this is no longer the case. The activities of Arcelor Mittal are now governed by a “neoliberal rationality” based on the “market principles of discipline, efficiency and competitiveness” (Ong 2006: 4), and influenced by the vagaries of the global market, rather than by the needs of Nowa Huta and its population.

The market reforms that arrived after socialism’s collapse had uneven consequences on the steelworks and its workers. While on the one hand production has declined, entire sections of the steelworks are left to decay and its overall future is uncertain, on the other hand the steelworks’ new owner Mittal Steel has implemented some technological improvements which are positively noted by workers. Workers were also differentially affected by the process of layoffs, compensations and early retirement packages, with some getting a better “deal” out of it than others. Current workers are differentially positioned in the company’s structure of pay and benefits: some older workers are still holding on to their former benefits, while younger, recently-higher workers are awarded higher salaries in lieu of benefits. Job precariousness is a concern for all, although certain groups of workers, such as young, university-educated engineers with English skills, are better equipped to cope with uncertainty and change than others.

Worker’s reflections on work in the past and present speak to many aspects of the postsocialist transformation. It is worth recalling here that across East-Central Europe, industrial workers have been hit particularly hard by the postsocialist market reforms, rendering them “the primary losers of post-1989 changes” (Kideckel 2002: 128). In their

accounts, workers positively recall aspects of work conditions under socialism, including guaranteed, stable and relatively well-paid employment, as well as the workplace's role as the provider of social benefits including housing and holidays. People's recollections of these can serve as critique of postsocialist market reforms characterized by unemployment and the withdrawal of state funding for areas such as housing or healthcare (although some forms of support have remained, and new ones – such as English classes - emerged). At the same time, workers positively evaluate certain aspects of the changes accompanying privatization (for example, technological modernization) as well as note certain dark aspects of work during the socialist period, such as mandatory work orders or uneven distribution of benefits based on political considerations. These reflections serve as a useful reminder that the socialist era was not unproblematic for workers, as well as refute depictions of workers as “nostalgic for socialism”, a charge frequently levelled against those who have lost out in the postsocialist market reforms.

In this chapter I also show that ideas about the socialist past become invoked in discourses regarding norms, behaviours and values surrounding work and workers. Work habits and values associated with socialism are devalued in hegemonic discourses which aim to justify a neoliberal capitalist society based around values of individualism over the collective good (eg. Dunn 2004) and consumption over production (Berdahl 2010). However, these hegemonic discourses both inform, and are challenged in, individual narratives.

This chapter can also contribute some insights about the changing concept of identity as it relates to work. Work and the workplace are principal sites for the formation and contestation of identity (Miller and Rose 2008b). This was true in socialist states

where citizenship was premised on work and production and it also remains true after socialism's collapse. Work remains central to people's lives, in that people are constantly preoccupied with issues related to work, whether it be job uncertainty, unemployment, or issues of pay, and experiences such as unemployment fundamentally affect people's sense of self (Galasinska 2010). For example, Stenning notes that unemployment is a profoundly isolating experience as not only does it remove people from their previous work-related networks, but it also introduces financial barriers to participating in activities that would maintain these networks, especially as these activities become increasingly commercialized, and hence, expensive (2005b; see also Bartha 2010).

The process of privatization also affected workers' connection to their work and workplace. During the socialist period, industrial workers in particular had a strong sense of ownership of their workplaces, since they "believed that by investing parts of themselves in an object through labour, they created some form of enduring property right to the product and an enduring relation to coproducers" (Dunn 2004: 128). This belief was only reinforced in the 1980s when the Solidarity movement emphasized that, in a workers' state, the workers were the "real owners" of their enterprises and thus had the right to make managerial decisions (Dunn 2004, Kalb 2009). However, following the privatization of socialist enterprises, the workers also became "privatized" (Dunn 2004) and reduced to labour. Under the neoliberal framework, workers are viewed as individuals who freely sell their labour as commodity for wages, but should have no pretensions about being "owners" of their workplaces and thus leave operational decisions to the management (Dunn 2004, Hardy 2009, Kalb 2009). This sense of loss

can be felt in Pani Kasia's words: "Now everything is someone else's...before everything was ours."

Finally, this chapter addresses the changed relationship between work, community and leisure. This phenomenon was most vivid in industrial towns like Nowa Huta where a large portion of the population worked for one enterprise. People worked with their neighbours, lived near their coworkers, and socialized with their workmates during their company-organized leisure time. Following layoffs at the steelworks and its withdrawal from funding of community services, there are less and less institutionalized channels through which current or former workers remain connected with their previous networks. Newly hired young engineers are likely to commute to work from outside of Nowa Huta and thus have no attachments to the district.

Having highlighted the relationship between work, community, and identity, I should caution that important as work was, and continues to be, its centrality during the socialist period should not be overstated. Accounts of the socialist period remind us that many people resented the intrusion of the state into their lives and perceived the home and family as an escape from the ideology with which they had to contend at work, such as voluntary labour brigades or "hero of socialist labour" competitions (eg. Wedel 1986, Muller 2004). Not all the workers with whom I spoke dwelled on the benefits of work-organized activities and some of my interlocutors told me that they did not really get involved in them. However, no one spoke disparagingly of them either.

In this chapter I examined memory and change in Nowa Huta through the lens of the Steelworks. In the following chapters, I examine the production and reproduction of

ideas about the past in other Nowa Huta “sites of memory” (Nora 1989), namely commemorative activities and museums.

CHAPTER 3
BETWEEN A “MODEL SOCIALIST TOWN” AND A “BASTION OF
RESISTANCE”: NOWA HUTA’S MUSEUMS AND COMMEMORATIONS

A socialist-era “work leader” hurriedly lays down bricks to beat yet another record. In a peasant hut on the edge of town, the owner serves up a steaming plate of perogies to his guests. In a bar down the street, the frustrated owner runs out of drinks to serve to his clients. A suave American spy wearing dark sunglasses has stationed herself on a bench in a nearby park to watch all this unfold. And the American spy is me.

No this is not a spy movie. It is May 14 2010 and Nowa Huta’s museum is organizing a historical scavenger hunt around Nowa Huta. Described above are stations along the scavenger hunt, each picking up on a different aspect of the town’s history: the town’s construction in the early socialist period, its pre-socialist history, the ubiquitous shortages characterizing the socialist period, and the fear of Western imperialism which pervaded the Cold War, and particularly its early years. As a volunteer with the museum, I am staffing the last station.

In Chapter 1, I examined memory in Nowa Huta’s physical landscape; in this chapter, I look at representations of the past that exist in the town’s “discursive landscape” (Linkon and Russo 2002: 88). Since its creation Nowa Huta has been represented differently by different agents and in response to changing interests, agendas and political-economic ideologies (Golonka 2006, Stanek 2005 and 2007). Throughout the socialist period, Nowa Huta was portrayed as a “model socialist town.” Following socialism’s collapse, the town has experienced somewhat of an “identity crisis”: how is a former “model socialist town” to define itself in a larger national climate that rejects anything having to do with socialism?

This chapter looks at memory in the public representations in, and of, Nowa Huta. I ask what role does the socialist past play in constituting Nowa Huta's identity, and how is this past represented? To that end, I examine three different "sites of memory" in Nowa Huta: the town's 60th anniversary commemorations and two of the town's museums, the museum of Nowa Huta³⁶ and the museum of communism (from here onwards called by its official name, Muzeum PRL-u).³⁷ I ask what ideas about the past were created in, and disseminated by, these sites of memory. Finally, I consider what the current representations of the past in Nowa Huta can tell us about "the social life of socialism" (Berdahl 2010) in contemporary Poland, and how they relate to current issues at the national and supra-national scales.

Theoretically, this chapter is inspired by Pierre Nora's concept of "sites of memory." Nora argued that at times when there is a break with the past and when memory is no longer lived, we tend to fix and freeze it. We do this by creating "sites of memory" (*lieux de memoire*) such as museums, archives, anniversaries, celebrations, eulogies, treaties, monuments, sanctuaries and books (1989). According to Nora, these sites of memory are created to convey particular ideological, political or national ideas (his work focused on the role of sites of memory in creating the idea of the French nation). However, these sites can also become areas where memory/history is contested (Winter 2008).

³⁶ The official name of this museum is The Historical Museum of the City of Kraków, Nowa Huta Division. However, the museum is popularly referred to as the "Nowa Huta museum", or "the museum of Nowa Huta" in everyday conversations, and therefore I also adopt these terms throughout this chapter.

³⁷ In Polish, PRL stands for Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa, or the People's Republic of Poland. As such, the museum's official name in English is Museum of the People's Republic of Poland. Throughout this work, I use the Polish term Muzeum PRL-u when referring to this museum.

In Chapter 1, I described Nowa Huta's urban landscape as a palimpsest of temporalities. In this chapter, I want to argue that a similar process is at work in Nowa Huta's "discursive landscape" (Linkon and Russo 2002: 88). The socialist period is an important part of Nowa Huta's identity, although there are also efforts to sidestep, or diminish, the association of the town with socialism. As such, Nowa Huta is a place where multiple memories circulate and confront each other.

Nowa Huta's 60th anniversary commemorations

Commemorations, Paul Connerton has pointed out, are "how societies remember" (1989). It is through practices such as commemorations that "social memories become established" (Jelin 2003: 5) and a "community arises" (Casey 2000: 235). At the same time, commemorations also bring to light the fractures, ruptures, contradictions and silences in accounts of the past (Sider and Smith 1997, Gillis 1996). By paying attention to such contradictions and silences, argue Sider and Smith, one can see the existence of "plural *histories*" (ibid; emphasis in original). In this section I examine ideas about the past that were produced and reproduced in the course of Nowa Huta's 60th anniversary celebration.

My arrival in the field in summer 2009 coincided with Nowa Huta's 60th anniversary, an occasion which prompted many considerations and celebrations of the town and its legacy. The 60th anniversary celebrations were sponsored by the city of Kraków, and carried out by a number of local institutions, primarily the Nowa Huta museum, the local newspaper *Głos Tygodnik Nowohucki* (Nowa Huta Voice), local theatre (*Teatr Ludowy*, or the People's Theatre) and local schools and cultural centres.

Altogether, these local “memory makers” (Kansteiner 2002) organized a wide array of events, including walking and bus tours around Nowa Huta, indoor and outdoor photo exhibits, concerts, theatre performances, and film screenings of recent and historical films about Nowa Huta. The Nowa Huta museum organized an outdoor photo exhibit in a nearby park entitled “Moja Nowa Huta” (My Nowa Huta) intended to depict significant events in the town’s history, as well as an indoor exhibit featuring an oral history collection of stories of twelve Nowa Huta residents. The museum also organized numerous walking and bus tours around Nowa Huta as well as educational talks for schoolgroups and the general public. The OKN cultural centre held a writing competition for the best non-fictional report dealing with some aspect of life in Nowa Huta. It also organized the Nowa Huta film festival, a sort of a movie marathon featuring many of the 300-plus movies that have been made about Nowa Huta since 1949. The NCK cultural centre³⁸ created an outdoor photo exhibit (which they later published as an album) depicting Nowa Huta’s history from the 1800s to the present, as well as an indoor art exhibit of present and past Nowa Huta artists. It also put on dance performances that drew on Nowa Huta’s history of rich cultural life. The local theatre (*Teatr Ludowy*, or People’s Theatre) organized a series of lecture cycles dealing with different aspects of life in Nowa Huta (including theatre, culture, art, architecture, literature) as well as put on several plays dealing with Nowa Huta-related topics, the most important of which was a play entitled *Patrz mi w oczy* (Look me in the eye) by local filmmaker Jerzy Ridan, dealing with the Battle for the Cross.³⁹ Kraków’s Papal Theological Academy (*Papieska Akademia Teologiczna*) organized a conference dealing with different aspects of Nowa

³⁸ NCK stands for Nowohuckie Centrum Kultury, or Nowa Huta Cultural Centre.

³⁹ As outlined in Chapter 1, Battle for the Cross is the name given to a 1960 event during which Nowa Huta residents stood up to demand that a church be built in town.

Huta's history as captured in themes such as: ideology, literary and visual representations of the town, or "Nowa Huta in communist propaganda". Local schools developed extensive anniversary programming, composed of contests, competitions, plays and exhibits in virtually every subject area from physical education to information technology, and dealing with all aspects of life in Nowa Huta (I return to the topic of school programming in more detail in chapter 5).

In this section, I examine the representations of Nowa Huta's history that emerged from these various talks, tours, exhibits, movie screenings and other performances. For clarity of discussion, I divide these interrelated representations into seven main themes: construction, dark creation story, resistance to socialism, pre-socialist heritage, architecture and urban planning, industrial heritage, and artistic/literary/cultural achievements. I discuss each theme in turn, showing that each one is produced and reproduced through a negotiation process between past and present ideologies, agendas and needs. Despite conveying different (and potentially contradictory) ideas about the past, all of these representations are simultaneously in circulation in Nowa Huta's public memory.

Construction

A major theme in the 60th anniversary celebrations was the town's construction. This issue posed the dilemma of how to celebrate the building of a "model socialist town" by a socialist government in a current political climate that largely rejects anything having to do with socialism. The majority of representations dealt with this by giving credit explicitly to the people – rather than the government – who built the town.

Emphasis was placed on the hard work and contributions of Nowa Huta's first residents, popularly referred to as the "builders," who literally built up the town with their own hands. Public talks and guided tours, organized principally by historians from the Nowa Huta museums as well as other well-known Nowa Huta personalities, stressed the hard work of the builders in making Nowa Huta what it is today. Much attention was devoted to the technical aspects of the town's construction, via displays of early photos, urban and architectural plans. For example, one of the persons featured in the museum's oral history collection was Stanisław Juchnowicz, an architect who has been designing Nowa Huta's buildings and neighbourhoods since 1950.

At the Nowa Huta film festival, many socialist-era movies about Nowa Huta's construction were screened, including the classic *Kierunek Nowa Huta* (Destination Nowa Huta) (1951).⁴⁰ Filmed during the socialist period, these movies depicted life in the growing town of Nowa Huta in glowing terms, although these messages were problematized in the subsequent talks and commentaries that followed the film screenings. It is telling that while the festival featured different films made about Nowa Huta over the past sixty years, those made prior to 1989 were not included in the competition for best film, and the explanation given for this is that they were not produced under conditions of "freedom".

The representations of the town's beginnings debunked some of the negative myths which have surrounded Nowa Huta's construction since its early days. Foremost among these was the idea of the town having been built as a punishment for the city of Kraków for its political resistance to the socialist system in a 1945 referendum (Chwalba 2004).

⁴⁰ The movie, with English subtitles, can be viewed online at:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyszcaYpPB0&playnext=1&list=PL419959DE744C4B91>

In their talks, lectures and commentaries, museum workers and other Nowa Huta personalities emphasized the need for industrial development after World War II, in particular the need for steel production which was needed for postwar rebuilding. This emphasis on debunking decades-old stereotypes likely stemmed from the fact that Nowa Huta residents to this day feel marginalized and stigmatized by the larger city of Kraków (see chapter 1).

The representations of the town's construction can be seen as an attempt on the part of local "memory-makers" (Kansteiner 2002), that is, local institutions and public figures, to negotiate between a desire to celebrate the town's history, and Nowa Huta's now politically inconvenient legacy of being a "model socialist town". On the one hand, local residents and institutions wish to celebrate the achievements of town's residents, to acknowledge Nowa Huta as a successful urban project, and to debunk negative stereotypes which have plagued the town since its construction. On the other hand, these representations are produced in a larger national political climate that is critical of the socialist system and uninterested in celebrating its achievements.

Dark creation story

Not all public representations of Nowa Huta's construction and early days were positive. During the 60th anniversary celebrations, it was often stressed that the building of the new town was done at the cost of dispossessing farmers and therefore disrupting people's lives and livelihoods. The Nowa Huta museum's oral history collection began with one such story of uprooting and loss. The outdoor photo exhibit featured outside the

NCK community centre displayed photos of life in the villages that once stood on the site of the present town.

In addition to stories of uprooting and loss, many representations of Nowa Huta's past also touched on the difficult living conditions in the growing town. This included stories about difficult work conditions (long hours, ubiquitous mud), unsanitary living conditions (eg. overcrowding) in workers' hostels, crime and moral decay (eg. prostitution). Many of these stories have been part of Nowa Huta's dark legend since the town's early days. For example, a number of recent and older movies screened at the film festival addressed aspects of life such as housing shortages (for example, forcing married couples to live separately in gender-segregated workers' hostels) and very hard work conditions, characterized by long work hours and exhausting physical labour. A more recent movie, *Z marmuru i żelaza* (From marble and steel, 1997) set out to debunk socialist-era laudatory representations of Nowa Huta's construction by taking on the legend of Piotr Ożański. Ożański, as mentioned in Chapter 1, was a bricklayer and Nowa Huta's early hero on account of being an exemplary "work leader" (*przodownik pracy*), who reportedly fulfilled 525% of the quota in laying bricks.⁴¹ The movie debunks the legend of Ożański as a socialist hero by exposing him as a morally flawed character and a tragic hero used by the socialist system, whose ultimate downfall is due to his inability to use that system to get ahead. As such, by demythologizing the legend of Ożański the movie sets out to demythologize the socialist-era image of Nowa Huta as a site of growth, prosperity, and opportunity.

⁴¹ The legend of Ożański inspired Polish filmmaker Andrzej Wajda's famous movie "Man of Marble". The persona of the movie's protagonist Mateusz Birkut is based on Ożański's life story.

The representations of negative aspects of Nowa Huta's early days – what I here term the town's dark creation story – are illustrative of several trends in Nowa Huta's history as well as larger Polish history. On the one hand, the backlash against the notion of Nowa Huta as a “socialist paradise” is decidedly not a new phenomenon, having emerged as early as the 1950s (Golonka 2006). On the other hand, the collapse of the socialist government has enabled representations of Nowa Huta's history which explicitly and outwardly critique the socialist system. As such, it is over the past twenty years that the dark creation stories of Nowa Huta have been granted legitimacy in official/public discourses.

Resistance against the socialist government

At present, the most prominent theme in Nowa Huta's official representations is resistance against the socialist government. This theme is discussed most often with relation to two historical events: the Battle for the Cross in 1960 and the Solidarity activities of 1980s. I deal with each of these in turn.

The Battle for the Cross is a much-talked about event in Nowa Huta ever since a local filmmaker Jerzy Ridan made a movie about it in 1997 entitled *Róg Marksa i obrońców Krzyża* (Corner of Marx and Defenders of the Cross). The event was significantly featured during the 60th anniversary celebrations, since it is now seen as the first instance of resistance against the socialist government on the part of Nowa Huta residents. For example, the Nowa Huta museum's oral history collection featured the story of a woman who was one of the “defenders of the cross.” Ridan's famous movie

was screened at the film festival along with other movies dealing with the subject,⁴² and a public talk followed movie screenings. The commemorations of the event continued into the following year (2010) which marked the event's 50th anniversary. The Nowa Huta museum organized an exhibit on the subject of Nowa Huta churches. In collaboration with the local newspaper, it also held a history competition for middle and high school students entitled "On the Foundation of the Cross" (*Na Fundamencie Krzyża*), dealing with the role of religion in Nowa Huta's history of resistance. A local rapper named Tater even made a song about the event.⁴³ Muzeum PRL-u commemorated the event by putting on a concert in the steelworks' former tinning plant to honour the "defenders of the cross". On the day of the anniversary, it also organized a reenactment of the battle, performed by local high school and university history students. Later in the day, a mass was celebrated at the site to commemorate the event, which was followed by the opening of an outdoor exhibit entitled "*Miasto bez Boga*" (A Godless Town), dealing with Nowa Huta's history of religious opposition. Fifteen of the "defenders of the cross" were presented with bronze replicas of the cross.

The representations of the Battle for the Cross emphasize Nowa Huta's legacy of resistance to the socialist government. The often-cited phrase "people defending their faith" is used to signify opposition to the socialist government which had a negative stance towards religion, and, throughout the socialist period, sought to curb religion in more or less direct ways. The Battle for the Cross has become a symbol of resistance against the socialist government in spite of the fact that (as one Nowa Huta historian

⁴² For example, *Na Środku Czerwonego Morza*, or In the Middle of the Red Sea.

⁴³ Tater's song can be viewed at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=K34vB1tnrj4

pointed out to me), people who “fought for the cross” did not necessarily at the time see themselves as opposing the socialist system – they were simply demanding a church.

It is also worth noting that contrary to contemporary representations of 1950s Nowa Huta as a “Godless town,” this was not entirely the case: the growing town of Nowa Huta incorporated the village of Mogiła, and with it, a 12-century Cistercian monastery, which was attended by the local population, as were other churches in the neighbouring villages. Furthermore, the emphasis on Nowa Huta as a site of opposition to the socialist government masks the (now unspoken) fact that with the exception of the Battle for the Cross, until 1980 Nowa Huta’s population was relatively content and tame as compared with other parts of the country, where strikes periodically broke out throughout the 1960s and 1970s (Chwalba 2004).

The second element of resistance widely emphasized in Nowa Huta representations are the oppositional activities of the 1980s. For example, the Nowa Huta museum’s anniversary exhibit displayed artefacts such as a prison shirt of a Solidarity activist imprisoned during the 1980s, Solidarity flags from demonstrations, and underground literature. In the museum’s oral history collection, every single story in some way alluded to socialist-era repressions (for example, stories of arrests, participation in strikes, and allusions to a general atmosphere of fear and uncertainty), and two stories dealt explicitly with the themes of opposition and resistance during the 1980s. The first was the story of Jan Franczyk, the editor of the local newspaper and a prominent oppositional activist during the 1980s. In his recorded story, Franczyk talked about his involvement with Solidarity, about organizing strikes and protests, and his subsequent imprisonment. The second oral history account was that of Father Jan Bielański, a local priest. Father

Bieleński discussed the role of the Church in Nowa Huta's underground/resistance activities. For example, the Church provided space for meetings of the "flying university," an underground university for workers; held the famous Nowa Huta "Thursday masses for the Fatherland", patriotic masses held to pray for those who have been interned; and organized assistance for the families of these individuals.

Many movies screened at the film festival dealt with various aspects of resistance in Nowa Huta, including strikes,⁴⁴ the role of the Church in resistance activities,⁴⁵ or miscellaneous resistance activities such as attempted assaults on the statue of Lenin⁴⁶. Muzeum PRL-u organized a temporary exhibit titled "From Opposition to Freedom" (*Od opozycji do wolności*), featuring photos and other images dealing especially with Solidarity activities in the 1980s, up until the roundtable discussions of 1989. A section of the exhibit was devoted to the oppositional activities in Nowa Huta.

The 60th anniversary celebrations were not the only occasion that highlighted Nowa Huta's legacy of resistance. Throughout the year, many events were held to commemorate different aspects of Nowa Huta's legacy of opposition. For example, every October the Solidarity branch at the steelworks holds a mini-marathon around Nowa Huta called "*Bieg Włosika*" (A Run for Włosik) to commemorate the anniversary of the death of young steelworks apprentice Bogdan Włosik who was shot to death by a secret police agent after attending a demonstration on October 13 1982.

As illustrated in the above examples, Nowa Huta representations of resistance have a strong religious component to them. Emphasis is placed on the role of local

⁴⁴ Eg. *Wiosna Solidarności* (The Spring of Solidarity), *Miasto Gniewu i Nadziei* (Town of Anger and Hope), *Lekcja Historii* (A History Lesson), *Dymy nad Arką* (Smoke over the Lord's Ark),

⁴⁵ Eg. *Kapelan* (Chaplain), *Miasto bez Boga* (A Godless Town), *Na Środku Czerwonego Morza* (In the Middle of the Red Sea)

⁴⁶ Eg. *Pięta Lenina* (Lenin's Heel)

churches and priests in organizing and supporting oppositional activities, and the role of religion as a framework through which the struggle against the socialist system was waged. As such in many representations, fighting for religious freedom becomes conflated with resistance against the socialist system. Although a detailed discussion of the relationship between religion and contemporary Polish nationalism (based in part on the rejection of communism) is beyond the scope of this work, I offer here a few insights that should shed some light on the matter.

Throughout the socialist period, the Catholic Church (henceforth referred to as the Church) and the state had a complex and problematic relationship. In theory, socialist ideology is incompatible with religion, as exemplified in Marx's famous words about religion being the "opium of the people". As such, the role and power of the Church in socialist Poland was restricted. PRL was officially a secular state, much of Church property was nationalized, and, for the majority of the socialist period, religion was not taught in schools. Contemporary historical and popular accounts overwhelmingly view the Church as repressed by the socialist state and as an agent of resistance to it (eg. Musiał and Szarek 2008, Szczepaniak and Lasota 2008, Żaryn 2004), although there is also some evidence that the Church-state relationship was in fact much more collaborative and symbiotic than hegemonic accounts would admit (Agnosiewicz 2010).

At present, the Catholic Church in Poland is a major force in disseminating a particular version of the past, which depicts the socialist period primarily in terms of repressions and resistance. This account emphasizes the role of the state in persecuting the Church, and in turn, the role of the Church as a site and organizer of resistance against the repressive state (see also Agnosiewicz 2010). Religion is an important theme

in contemporary Polish identity, and is intertwined with the values of patriotism and a struggle for independence.

The emphasis on the religious context of repressions and resistance is particularly strident in Nowa Huta. This could be due to several factors. In the 1980s, the Church was one of the very few spaces where oppositional activity could flourish, and indeed was the major site of opposition to the socialist government. The city of Kraków (and with it, Nowa Huta) has traditionally had a close relationship with the Roman Catholic Church in Poland: Kraków is home to about 350 churches, monasteries and other sacred sites, and since 1945 has been the editorial home of *Tygodnik Powszechny*, a Catholic-run weekly publication (Chwalba 2004). Poland's beloved Pope John Paul II, a vocal opponent of the socialist government, spent much of his life (prior to becoming Pope) in Kraków, and actively supported the initiative to build a church in Nowa Huta.

At the same time, the intertwining of religion and resistance in historical accounts can also have present-day underpinnings. Since 1989, the Church has become a major force influencing public life, garnering much of its legitimacy from its legacy of resistance against socialism. Seen in this light, the emphasis on the role of religion in oppositional activity can be viewed as a tool for maintaining its political and ideological legitimacy and influence.

The image of Nowa Huta as site of resistance to the socialist government is at present the prevailing image in the town's official public representations. This speaks to an attempt to counteract the town's former image of a "model socialist town". This emphasis on the narrative of resistance may also be due to the fact that several of the town's prominent public figures who took an active part in the commemorative activities,

were also members of the political opposition in the 1980s. Additionally, on a larger level, this representation also resonates with hegemonic national discourses which tend to portray Polish history as a period of repression and struggle against the socialist system.

Pre-socialist heritage of Nowa Huta

Another set of representations of Nowa Huta's history focused on the town's pre-socialist heritage. For example, the NCK cultural centre organized an outdoor photo exhibit depicting village life prior to the town's construction. Photos from this exhibit were then published in a series of albums, including *Czas Zatrzymany* (Time Stopped) or *Nowa Huta – Najmłodsza Siostra Krakowa* (Nowa Huta – Kraków's Youngest Sister). The Nowa Huta museum's guided tours regularly include sites such as the 12th-century Cistercian monastery and a 13th-century wooden church located in the former village of Mogiła which became incorporated into Nowa Huta. The museum also organizes longer bus tours to, and exhibits on, what they term the "forgotten heritage of Nowa Huta," that is churches, palaces and manor houses located in neighbouring villages of Ruszcza, Branice, Kościelniki or Łuczanowice. The Kraków Archaeological museum also has a branch in Nowa Huta, located in the historical manor house in Branice. The museum organizes rotating exhibits, and a variety of activities for school-groups. It also publishes regular updates about its activities and historical tidbits in the Nowa Huta weekly newspaper. Feature stories about Paleolithic flints or Celtic coins found on Nowa Huta's territory serve to remind the readers that Nowa Huta's history goes back a lot further than 1949.

Taken together, the representations of Nowa Huta's history prior to 1949 are illustrative of a new direction in the town's identity politics. First, they serve to sidestep the association of Nowa Huta with socialism. They also serve to reclaim Now Huta's pre-socialist heritage, which was scorned as "backwards" by socialist-era discourses accompanying the town's construction in the late 1940s and early 1950s. During the socialist period, architectural treasures such as manor houses and palaces situated in Nowa Huta's neighbouring villages fell into "benign neglect." At present, efforts are made to restore, revitalize and return these sites to Nowa Huta's cultural map.

Architecture and urban planning

Recent Nowa Huta representations emphasize the uniqueness of the town's urban layout and early architecture. For example, the Nowa Huta museum's 60th anniversary collection included maps, designs and architectural sketches of the town's construction, as well as the oral history account of one of the town's first architects, Stanisław Juchnowicz. A special exhibit and publication was dedicated to the town's "unrealized projects" that is, planned initiatives which were never implemented, such as a town hall building. Walking tours around Nowa Huta regularly address the architectural and design merits of Nowa Huta's modernist urban plan, including the "neighbourhood unit" and "garden city" principles (discussed in Chapter 1).

During my fieldwork period, there was much talk in Nowa Huta about revitalizing the district, with many of the proposed projects drawing on, and even returning to, the original urban plans from the 1940s and 1950s. For example, Marta Kurek, who developed a revitalization plan for Nowa Huta as part of her Master's dissertation,

advocated the return of fountains which once stood in almost every neighbourhood as well as a greater emphasis on cultivating roses which used to line the town's main street, *Aleja Róż*, or "Avenue of the Roses" (Kurek 2008). In 2005, Nowa Huta's oldest core was added to the list of regional heritage sites, and there is talk of adding it to UNESCO's list of cultural heritage sites.

This recent appreciation of socialist-era architecture and modernist urban planning is a novel phenomenon in Poland. It indirectly challenges the unequivocal association of socialism with everything that is bad by highlighting a number of accomplishments from the socialist period. At the same time, the association of Nowa Huta's urban design and architecture with the socialist period is often diluted in the town's representations. For example, tour guides often point out that although Nowa Huta was built during the socialist period as a project of the socialist government, the architects who designed the town were *pre-war architects* (that is, they were people trained before World War II whose educational/intellectual pedigree predated the socialist system), and the town's first neighbourhoods were built according to pre-war designs (eg. Mieziań 2004). Thus, their accomplishment is often presented as something that happened despite the norms imposed by the Stalinist aesthetic which governed early postwar architecture and urban planning in Poland until the "thaw" of 1956. It is also frequently pointed out that the modernist concepts around which the town's urban plan is based (eg. the neighbourhood unit, or garden city principle) are both Western imports. Lastly, it is also stressed that Nowa Huta's signature buildings (for example the steel factory's administrative centre, or the buildings surrounding Central Square) derive their aesthetic value from the fact that the town's architects, while constrained by Stalinist style, drew their inspiration from

Kraków's Renaissance architecture, resulting in a style that was "socialist in principle, but national in form" (Miezian 2004).

The discourses surrounding Nowa Huta's architecture and urban design illustrate the contradictions around the legacy of the socialist period. On the one hand, elements of socialist-era architecture and urban design are now starting to be appreciated. On the other hand, however, the socialist-era connotations of these can be diluted, as seen, for instance, in the emphasis on Nowa Huta's architects' pre-war pedigree.

Industrial heritage

Another new theme in Nowa Huta's representations is an appreciation of the town's industrial heritage. This idea is especially advocated by the Nowa Huta museum, which in the year 2005 organized an exhibit on the subject of the steelworks, and published a book which highlighted the historical value of many of its sites, such as the old blooming rolling mill (*walcownia zgniatacz*) (Duda et al 2005). The rare occasions when the steelworks opens its doors to tour groups are met with overwhelming interest. In recent years, the steelworks has permitted a number of concerts in its former tinning plant, including Kraków's annual music festival *Sacrum Profanum*, a film music festival, and in 2010, a concert to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Battle for the Cross. Although the steelworks is by far Nowa Huta's most intriguing industrial site, it is not the only object of attention. In recent years, Kraków's avant-garde theatre *Łąźnia Nowa* has relocated to Nowa Huta from another part of the city, and is now housed in the former metalworking workshop of what was once a metallurgic vocational school.

The newfound appreciation for socialist-era industrial tradition can be seen simultaneously as a return to, and as moving beyond, socialist-era representations which emphasized Nowa Huta (and heavy industry more generally) as an engine of postwar growth, “modernization,” and “progress.” During the socialist period, this discourse very quickly engendered a backlash against Nowa Huta, particularly in other parts of Kraków which likes to see itself as a city of (high) Culture, tradition, history, and the arts. Furthermore, in the later years of the socialist period fears of pollution emanating from Lenin Steelworks effectively curbed all enthusiasm about industry as an engine of progress. However, now that the steel industry has dramatically declined, a newfound interest in Nowa Huta’s industrial legacy is emerging.⁴⁷

Artistic, cultural and athletic life of Nowa Huta

The socialist government generously funded cultural, artistic and athletic programming, and as the government’s pet project, Nowa Huta was a recipient of a wide array of these kinds of programs. Some of this rich cultural, artistic and athletic heritage was reflected in the 60th anniversary celebrations. For example, the NCK cultural centre organized an art exhibit featuring the works of Nowa Huta’s past and present artists. The Museum of Nowa Huta’s oral history collection included the story of artist Elżbieta Boryśławska and filmmaker Jerzy Ridan, both of whom highlighted Nowa Huta’s cultural, athletic and artistic achievements. The anniversary program also included a

⁴⁷ This trend could also be indicative of a new direction in the town’s economic development. Research from other postindustrial towns illustrates that as industry declines, the towns’ economies frequently shift from production of tangible goods towards the production of services and experiences, such as the commodification of industrial heritage through museums (eg. Dudley 1994, Linkon and Russo 2002 Power et al 2010).

variety of sports tournaments for men, women and school-age youth, as well as other musical, dance and theatre productions.

Taken together, representations that highlight the richness of cultural and artistic life in Nowa Huta challenge the unequivocal demonization of anything associated with the socialist government. This theme resonates with many people's experiences during the socialist period; as will be shown in the next chapter, many people fondly recall the diversity of recreational and cultural events which were made available to citizens during that time.

Public responses and reactions to representations

In the previous sections I set out the major themes about Nowa Huta's history that emerged in the course of the 60th anniversary celebrations. I showed that multiple representations about Nowa Huta's history are currently in circulation in the town's public memory. Each of these representations is fraught with contradictions and produced through a contestation between past and present interests and agendas. Although I was not privy to the preparatory work that went into organizing the 60th anniversary events, it is worth remembering that any commemorative activity "is by definition social and political, for it involves the coordination of individual and group memories, whose results may appear consensual when they are in fact the product of processes of intense contest, struggle, and in some instances, annihilation" (Gillis 1996: 5). Or, to put it differently: "[c]ommemoration silences the contrary interpretations of the past" (Middleton and Edwards 1990: 8). We can only assume that many more debates and contestations must have been entailed in producing these representations than I was able to unpack in the

above discussion. In this section, I examine some of the public responses and reactions to the 60th anniversary festivities.

Like any public event, the 60th anniversary activities were met with mixed reactions on the part of Nowa Huta residents. Several of the people that I have spoken to bemoaned what they described as a “low profile” of the activities, blaming the city of Kraków for not providing sufficient funding for the event, a phenomenon which they saw as evidence of Nowa Huta’s continuing marginalization. Władysław Kwiecień, manager of one of the steelworks’ divisions and a born-and-bred Nowa Huta resident, challenged the connection between religion and resistance that characterizes many contemporary representations. This is what he had to say:

I’m really annoyed at all this talk about Nowa Huta being a “Godless town.” When I was a child I went to religion classes in the monastery in Mogiła, and to first communion with all the kids from my building, and my parents were never persecuted because of it, even though my father was in the Party. I didn’t know it at that time, I only later realized that we lived in a building reserved for Party members. And yet all the kids from my building went to religion classes with me, and when I would go into my friends’ apartments, they all had a picture of *Matka Boska Częstochowska* (the Polish Madonna) on the wall, and every year in January the priest would make his annual rounds (*chodził po kołędzie*) and visit our building. How is this a Godless town?

Another important critique of the 60th anniversary celebrations voiced by several older residents with whom I spoke, is that the representations did not sufficiently recognize the work and efforts of the town’s first builders. In an attempt to redeem that fact, a new community association called “*Moja Nowa Huta*” (My Nowa Huta) held another event in May the following year to honour many of the people involved in the town’s construction. The event’s organizers stressed that the event was “not political”; however, they intended it as a reaction against the perceived marginalization of people

associated with the previous system. They wanted the work of Nowa Huta's builders to be honoured regardless of what political system was in place at the time.

The event gathered approximately 300 seniors, visually many more than I had seen at any single event that was part of the 60th anniversary celebrations. The guest of honour, Kraków's mayor Jacek Majchrowski handed out medals to people who had made significant contributions to building the steelworks and the town of Nowa Huta, including current and former steelworks directors and directors of construction companies. A few of the individuals honoured gave speeches in which they emphasized that Nowa Huta was a life opportunity for people who moved there after World War II. For example, Jerzy Falfasiński, former construction director of the steelworks, set out to debunk some of the negative representations of Nowa Huta's early life, such as the stories of harsh working conditions: "Some people talk about youth brigades being like forced labour... well, I've spent four years in Germany doing forced labour, so I know exactly what that was like," he told the audience. He concluded his speech by stressing that people who built Nowa Huta did their best regardless of the political system in place: "We simply wanted to live... we wanted to be sure that tomorrow will be the same as today, that we will be able to live freely, that we will have family and work." This example shows that, while the narrative of Nowa Huta as a site of resistance against the socialist government is gaining prominence, there is also a strong discursive current in town which refuses to ignore or silence the positive aspects of the socialist period, such as postwar rebuilding and the legacy of work on the part of the town's founding residents.

On the whole, the diversity of representations in Nowa Huta's public memory as seen during the 60th anniversary celebrations, suggests that memories of the socialist

period are multi-layered and subject to negotiations and contestations. The socialist past is a dynamic terrain, which continues to be invoked by different individuals and/or groups to different ends, and this diversity is cast in particularly sharp relief in Nowa Huta. The representations produced and disseminated by the town's principal "memory makers" (Kansteiner 2002) simultaneously depict Nowa Huta as a successful socialist urban project and as a site of struggle against the socialist government. In the following section I examine in greater detail the activities of two prominent "memory makers," the town's two museums.

Museums as Sites of Memory

In this section I examine the production and reproduction of ideas about the past in two museums which have recently appeared on Nowa Huta's landscape: the museum of Nowa Huta and Muzeum PRL-u. The phenomenon of "museumifying" socialist history (an expression I borrow from Berdahl 2010) has been taken up in some of the recent literature dealing with memories of socialism (eg. Berdahl 2010, Ten Dyke 2000, Vukov 2008). This literature, coupled with the vast anthropological literature on museums, makes several important observations about the role of museums in the processes of memory and identity. Museums, as Susan Crane points out, are popularly understood to be "storehouses" of memory, places that house "collections that form the basis of cultural or national identity" (2000: 4, see also Kaplan 1994). Thus, museums "fix" the memory of nations and cultures by determining what is to be remembered (and how), and what is to be forgotten (Crane 2000; see also Katriel 1999). The accounts presented in museums are imbued with authority since they are "naturalized through the

use of the concept of ‘history’” (Katriel 1999: 107). Through their selective rendering of the past, museums thus contribute to larger ideological projects (Katriel 1999 Cattel and Climo 2002). In Cattel and Climo’s words, they “tend to validate the perspectives of the politically powerful” (2002: 29). At the same time, museum representations are fraught with power relations and are frequently subject to constestations (Handler 1993, Ten Dyke 2000). Museums can thus be viewed as “sites of interaction between personal and collective identities, between memory and history, between information and knowledge production” (Crane 2000: 12).

The two museums I describe in this chapter approach the topic of the socialist past from two different angles. The museum of Nowa Huta is concerned strictly with Nowa Huta’s history, which includes, but is not limited to, the socialist period. Muzeum PRL-u, on the other hand, is concerned with the history of the socialist period in Poland on the whole, with the history of Nowa Huta constituting only a fraction of its focus. My discussion of both museums seeks to show that their representations of the socialist period in many ways resonate with dominant/hegemonic representations, although these representations are not unproblematic and are open to contestations.

Nowa Huta Museum

The museum of Nowa Huta is a branch of The City of Kraków Historical Museum, which has several branches in the city, each of them dealing with a different aspect of Kraków’s heritage. The Nowa Huta branch was opened in 2005. The museum is located on Nowa Huta’s main street (Aleja Róż), albeit in a very small space (the locale was previously a store with camping and scouting equipment, and the museum’s total exhibit area is around 1,000 square feet). Because of this, it cannot display a permanent

collection and instead organizes rotating exhibits, on an average of two exhibits a year. At the time of writing, the museum has held total of fourteen exhibits, dealing with different aspects of Nowa Huta's history.

In addition to organizing exhibits, the museum of Nowa Huta is involved in various educational and outreach initiatives. Its goal is to operate as an ecomuseum, a museum that goes beyond merely collecting artifacts within its walls, and instead works to increase the appreciation of historical, cultural and ecological value of the community. For example, it organizes history lessons for school groups, as well as walking, bus and bike tours around Nowa Huta for both school groups and the general public. It also participates in local events such as commemorative celebrations, and collaborates with other organizations with regards to programming related to Nowa Huta's history, such as knowledge contests for schools. While I was there in June 2009 the museum celebrated its 5th anniversary with special programming, tours around Nowa Huta and a coveted tour to the steelworks. Finally, the museum also publishes books and photo albums dealing with different aspects of Nowa Huta's history.

During my fieldwork period, I was a volunteer with the museum. I attended numerous educational sessions, accompanied museum workers on walking and bus tours around Nowa Huta, and attended their education programs and other events such as exhibit openings or the 5-year anniversary celebrations. I translated the museum's exhibit on churches from Polish to English, poured wine for guests during exhibit openings, and, as mentioned earlier, acted the role of American spy during the museum's scavenger hunt around Nowa Huta. In this section I briefly describe the museum's representations of

Nowa Huta's history, with a focus on the themes and messages about the past that emerge from these representations.

An important theme in museum representations is the pre-socialist heritage of Nowa Huta. To date, of the thirteen exhibits organized by the museum, five have dealt with the so-called "forgotten heritage" of Nowa Huta – that is, the architectural and other treasures located in its nearby villages. These treasures include manor houses, churches and palaces. Artefacts gathered as part of these exhibits include paintings, armour, religious symbols (eg. crosses, paintings), and antique vases or chalices.

The museum's public education activities also emphasize Nowa Huta's pre-socialist past. Educational lessons on Nowa Huta's history for school groups begin with the legend about a mysterious 7-8th century mound (called Wanda's mound) located on Nowa Huta's territory and attributed either to Celtic settlement in the region or to early Slavic tribes. Walking tours around Nowa Huta usually visit a 12th-century Cistercian monastery, the wooden church of St. Bartholomew whose origins are traced to the 13th century, and sometimes also Wanda's mound and the 19th century manor house formerly owned by Polish painter Jan Matejko. The museum also frequently organizes bus tours to visit churches and palaces in nearby villages which are not accessible on foot.

Museum workers describe this focus on the pre-socialist heritage as an attempt to remind the public that "Nowa Huta is not just communism," as one worker put it. Since the opening of Muzeum PRL-u in Nowa Huta, the museum of Nowa Huta has an additional incentive to expand its realm of activity outside of the socialist period. The new museum is considerably larger, located in a prime spot, and popularly perceived as wealthier and as having a greater political backing. As such, the new museum is seen as

somewhat of a threat to the Museum of Nowa Huta. Since the history of Nowa Huta overlaps with the history of socialism in Poland, the museum of Nowa Huta fears being “swallowed up” by Muzeum PRL-u, especially since the question of whether Nowa Huta really needs two museums periodically surfaces in local media and political discourses. Therefore, it is in this museum’s interest to emphasize that while the history of Nowa Huta is in many ways intertwined with the history of socialism in Poland, there is more to Nowa Huta than just socialism.

Although museum workers seek to expand the museum’s scope of thematic concerns beyond the socialist period, the fact remains that the town was indeed a project of the postwar socialist government, many of the museum’s representations inevitably deal with this part of the town’s history. For example, four of the exhibits organized by the museum so far have dealt with the town’s architecture, its interior design during the 1950s, the steelworks, and oppositional activities in the 1980s (this exhibit was titled “on the threshold of freedom”). The museum’s walking tours around Nowa Huta focus on the town’s urban design as well as architecture in the socialist realist style. Another important theme in museum representations is the history of resistance in Nowa Huta. Mandatory points along the museum tour include the “square after Lenin” (*Plac po Leninie*) where the statue of Lenin used to stand, the site of the Battle for the Cross, as well as the *Arka Pana* (Lord’s Ark) church, the first church to be built in Nowa Huta after 1949, which now serves as a symbol of people’s spirit of resistance against the socialist system.

A recent trend in museum’s activities has been to focus on a specific area of life in Nowa Huta, for example religion or music. During my fieldwork stay, religion was an important theme, likely due to the fact that my fieldwork period coincided with the 50th

anniversary of the Battle for the Cross. To mark the occasion, the museum organized an exhibit on the history and architecture of Nowa Huta's churches, as well as a history competition for middle and high-school students dealing with the role of religion in Nowa Huta. The competition focused particularly on the repression of the Church during the socialist period, as well as the Church's role in resistance activities.

The museum's 60th anniversary exhibit entitled "My Nowa Huta" (*Moja Nowa Huta*) will serve as a good summary of the main events and themes in Nowa Huta's past that are featured in the museum's representations. The exhibit contained pictures and small artifacts related to the following events (in chronological order): the construction of the town, the construction of the steelworks, the Battle for the Cross, everyday life in the 1970s and the beginnings of unrest in the late 70s, strikes in 1980, martial law of 1981, subsequent strikes in the later 1980s, and Nowa Huta after 1989. Altogether, the themes addressed included architecture and urban design, indoctrination and repression, resistance (including religious resistance) and everyday life (for example, athletic and cultural activities).

When asked what are the key ideas about Nowa Huta's past that the museum wants to convey, museum employees stress that the museum is "not political" and does not attempt to judge the socialist period in any way. "There are a lot of people in Nowa Huta who have very positive memories of the socialist period... and we don't want to offend them" one employee told me. Nonetheless, the museum collaborates with many people who have a history of participation in the political opposition in the 1980s (foremost among them is the editor of the local newspaper), and many of its

representations and activities deal with Nowa Huta's legacy of resistance against the socialist government.

While these representations create a particular image of the past, this version is not necessarily accepted by the entire Nowa Huta community. In fact, the public's response to the museum and its activities is mixed. One of the workers told me that when he was setting up an outdoor photo exhibit in the nearby park as part of the 60th anniversary celebrations, locals kept coming up to him and telling him that life in Nowa Huta during the socialist period was wonderful. The museum has to be careful not to offend people who have different views of the past, he told me.

Some of my Nowa Huta acquaintances enthusiastically applauded the museum's efforts and collaborated with its activities. This was true especially of people who were themselves employees of other local organizations, or active in community initiatives. Many of these individuals supported the idea of a museum as part of the town's revitalization effort, and interpreted the museum's limited space and funding as indicative of Nowa Huta's continuing marginalization within, and by, the larger city of Kraków. However, several of my interlocutors also expressed concern about what they perceived as the museum's adherence to a version of the past that privileges accounts of repression and resistance – the “Solidarity version,” as my interlocutor Pan Skóra put it. Pani Arutowicz, a woman in her mid 60s, told me that she was approached by the museum to contribute her story to their 60th anniversary oral collection, but refused when she heard that she would have no say as to how the material would be edited.

I heard that the exhibit was going to be called ‘Man of Marble⁴⁸’ and I didn’t want to be part of that... I didn’t want my words to be used to create the impression that I was a victim of socialism because I don’t feel used or oppressed by that system...

A similar sentiment was expressed by Pan Skóra, an 84 year-old man who first arrived to Nowa Huta as part of the youth labour brigade called “Service to Poland” (*junacy SP*). He told me that he has never been to the museum and does not attend museum-organized activities because the people running the museum are “all Solidarity activists (*Solidarnościowce*)... the same people who destroyed everything that the earlier generation had built, and now they’re making a museum about it. All they want to do is criticize Nowa Huta.”

It is true that positive accounts of the socialist period generally do not make their way into the museum’s representations. For example, the museum’s 60th anniversary oral history collection did not include any accounts that depicted Nowa Huta’s socialist past in a positive light. The published transcript of the collection acknowledges this gap:

We are missing stories of people such as *junacy SP* (members of Service to Poland youth brigade) or Party officials... We wanted to hear them out, but people whom we approached refused to collaborate with us once they heard that they will be video-recorded (Sibila 2009; my translation).

Indeed, it is likely that individuals such as Pani Arutowicz or Pan Skóra felt that their voices would be either unwelcome or misrepresented. This situation illustrates the presence of multiple views about the past in Nowa Huta. It also speaks to the prevailing

⁴⁸ Man of Marble (in Polish, *Człowiek z Marmuru*) is the title of a classic Polish movie set in Nowa Huta. It depicts the life of “work leader” Mateusz Bierut, a socialist hero who is ultimately used by the system.

situation in Poland, where voices which do not conform to hegemonic accounts of the socialist period as a time of repression and resistance, are dismissed or discouraged.

From the above description of the museum's activities, we can discern the following trends. First, the history of Nowa Huta is increasingly portrayed as extending back in time far beyond the socialist period, notwithstanding the fact that the construction of the town itself did not begin until 1949. In the museum's representations of the socialist period, there is a concerted focus on the town's legacy of resistance against the socialist government. To be sure, the museum does seem to value certain aspects of Nowa Huta's socialist heritage, most notably its architecture and urban plan, as well as certain aspects of social life such as vibrant athletics and culture. While the museum has many supporters among Nowa Huta residents, certain people also perceive it as inadequately sympathetic to the positive experiences of Nowa Huta residents during the socialist period.

Muzeum PRL-u

Muzeum PRL-u (Museum of the People's Republic of Poland) is a branch of the national Museum of Polish History (Muzeum Historii Polski), which is based in Warsaw and funded by the Ministry of Culture. The museum is an initiative of a foundation headed by famous Polish filmmaker Andrzej Wajda and his wife, Krystyna Zachwatowicz-Wajda, a screenwriter who was involved in the Roundtable talks of 1989 on the side of Solidarity. After the foundation has been trying for years to find a home for the museum in either Kraków or Warsaw, in 2008 the city of Kraków donated to them

Nowa Huta's former movie theatre called *Światowid*.⁴⁹ The movie theatre was built in the early 1950s in the socialist realist style, and continued to operate until 1992. To this day, the building is one of Nowa Huta's architectural gems frequently pointed out on walking tours. Its basement contains a large nuclear shelter designed to fit up to 2,000 people, a well-preserved example of the phenomenon of building nuclear shelters in Nowa Huta in the early 1950s.

The museum's thematic concern, as suggested by its title, is the history of the People's Republic of Poland, a period that officially dates from 1948-1989, although in common parlance it is used to denote the socialist period starting with the end of World War II. During my fieldwork and still at the time of writing, the museum is in the process of establishing its permanent collection. This is a lengthy process, complicated by frictions at different levels. It is therefore safe to assume that a permanent exhibit will be a long time in the making. In the meantime, the museum organizes rotating exhibits as well as various outreach and educational activities. In this section I describe its various activities, focusing on the ways in which they represent Poland's socialist past.

One of the museum's first events after opening its doors in Nowa Huta was "collection day," a day when the public was invited to donate socialist-era artefacts to the museum. "Bring communism to the museum!" went the catchy slogan. The event took place outside, on a concrete square in front of the museum. The square was decorated so as to recreate the atmosphere of the socialist period. A few cars popular on Polish roads in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s were parked in front. The museum acquired an old kiosk, which was stacked with paraphernalia such as old newspapers, calendars, pencils, crayons, and other objects. A DJ played music from the 1970s and 1980s. A volunteer dressed up

⁴⁹ Światowid is the name of a Slavic pagan god.

as a member of the citizen's militia (*milicja*, the socialist-era police) walked around with a rubber baton to keep order as local media snapped pictures.

A few prominent public figures donated, to much fanfare, a number of objects dealing with Poland's history of repression and resistance, such as banners with oppositional slogans, an old street sign, or the typewriter used by a famous opposition activist Zbigniew Herbert to write poetry. Other objects along the same theme included underground publications, Solidarity posters and pins. There were also objects bearing testament to socialist-era propaganda, such as posters, publications, medals, plaques and pins. But the majority of objects donated by people had to do with everyday life: Poland's first washing machine from the 1950s, old radios, typewriters, cameras, hairdryers, and other household appliances, wall calendars from the 1970s and 1980s, old shoes and purses, cups and mugs, and miscellaneous gadgets such as a fold-up traveling clothes brush, a watering-can, or an onion-dicer.

The temporary storage room in which these treasures were piled up became a sort of organic museum, reminiscent of the grassroots (as opposed to official) museums of the German Democratic Republic described by Berdahl (2010) and Ten Dyke (2000). The power of such spaces, according to Ten Dyke, is that the objects gathered invoke memories, which in turn invite visitors to recall different aspects of life in the GDR, in a way that "does not coincide with either dominant (condemnatory) or oppositional (nostalgic) discourses" (2000: 156). Both Berdahl and Ten Dyke contrast these unofficial, bottom-up initiatives with official museums of GDR history, which depict the socialist period as a time of repression and resistance.

The storage room was indeed a unique space within the museum-in-the-making, and one can appreciate Ten Dyke's insight about innocuous everyday objects inviting memories which recall multiple dimensions of life during socialism. However, the final collection will never be presented in this state, admittedly bearing greater resemblance to a garage sale than a museum exhibit. In fact, because of their rather shabby quality, the majority of the treasures gathered in the room will likely never be included in the museum's permanent collection.

The museum's "Bring communism to the museum" event had a touch of lightness and fun to it that left one wondering as to the direction in which the museum's representation of the past would go. Over the next few months, however, this direction crystallized and became more oriented towards a version of socialism as a time of repression and resistance, although some elements of fun and ridicule still remained, particularly in the outreach and educational activities targeting school-age youth.

While the museum is establishing a permanent exhibit, it organizes rotating exhibits. During the time I was there, it organized three such exhibits, entitled: "From Opposition to Freedom" (*Od Opozycji do Wolności*), a history of the political opposition from the late 1970s until 1989; "The Poland-Jaruzelski War" (*Wojna polsko-jaruzelska*), an exhibit dealing with martial law of 1981; and "Wartime partings" (*Wojenne rozstania*), an exhibit that describes the history of World War II through the experiences of seven families. Here, I focus on the first two since they deal directly with the socialist period.

The exhibit "From Opposition to Freedom" focused on political opposition, its repression and eventual victory in 1989. The exhibit consisted of photos and stories of the

events leading up to 1989, highlighting the following themes: the 1976 strikes in the towns of Radom and Ursus; the creation of workers' committees KOR and ROBCiO; the creation of Solidarity; martial law, strikes and clashes with ZOMO (the riot police); the role of priests in Solidarity activities; the role of Pope John Paul II; and finally, the Roundtable Talks of 1989 and the subsequent semi-democratic elections on June 4 1989. The exhibit was laid out so that upon entering the museum, the viewer began with the history of political opposition in the 1970s and from there followed the events chronologically. In the main exhibit hall, the exhibit culminated in a literal circle, arranged to visually illustrate the "roundtable" experience of the Roundtable Talks of 1989. The message of the exhibit was unequivocal: it portrayed the period of late 1970s to 1989 as the road to freedom through struggle against a repressive system.

The "Poland-Jaruzelski War" exhibit was organized to coincide with the 28th anniversary of the declaration of martial law in December 1981. The title itself made a strong moral assertion, for it depicted martial law as a war waged against the Polish population by General Jaruzelski, who at the time was First Secretary of the Polish Workers' Party (the highest political leader in the country). The exhibit consisted largely of multimedia material, including recordings and video footage. Upon entering the museum, the viewer was greeted by a TV recording of General Jaruzelski announcing martial law. The main exhibit area depicted the general in front of TV crews, with a mass of faceless, colourless and genderless silhouettes hunched over in front of him. Downstairs, the museum's bomb shelters were outfitted to recreate the experience of imprisonment. The shelter's rooms were outfitted to look like cells, dimly lit up with

green light, barely revealing silhouettes squatted in the corners. The exhibit sent a strong moral message about martial law, portraying it as a time of terror and fear.

As a result of not having a permanent exhibit, a large part of museum's current activity is taken up by various educational and outreach programs, the majority of these targeting high school and university-age students. For example, the museum designed a historical game entitled *The Decade of 1979-1989*. The game is intended to be played by students aged fifteen and over, and is similar to the Game of Life. The player's goal is to collect points to support himself (the character is male) in the People's Republic of Poland during the years 1979-1989. He gains points by correctly answering questions and fulfilling tasks from ten domains, including culture, economy, religion, as well as political events such as martial law, Roundtable Talks or August Agreements. Most of the questions deal with aspects of resistance, repressions or shortages. For example, one of the tasks from the economic domain is a quest to buy staples such as sugar or coffee. A task from the culture domain requires the player to unscramble the lyrics of an oppositional song. To an extent, these themes are dictated by the subject matter: the decade of 1979-1989 was the last decade of the socialist period, a period indeed characterized by major political upheavals, repression, resistance and economic shortages.

Since its opening in the summer of 2009, the museum has also been making an effort to make its presence visible by organizing several community outreach activities, both in Nowa Huta and more generally in Kraków. For example, the museum organized several activities in Nowa Huta to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Battle for the Cross. One of these was a reenactment of the "battle," acted out by university history

students as well as students from a local high school. Another was a concert held in honour of the so-called “defenders of the cross,” held inside the steel factory in the former tinning plant.

In addition to organizing exhibits and education/community outreach activities, the museum has also been working on several oral history projects, pertaining to certain key events in Poland’s history. These may in the future become part of the museum’s permanent collection. Even the titles of the projects are telling: “In the name of freedom: Nowa Huta ‘60” (*W imię wolności. Nowa Huta '60*) dealing with the Battle for the Cross; “The steel factory against communism” (*Kombinat kontra komuna*) dealing with the experience of martial law and opposition in Nowa Huta’s steelworks; and “Dream of freedom. Kraków '45” (*Marzenie o wolności. Kraków '45*) dealing with everyday life in Kraków in 1945.

The overall message that emerges from the museum’s representations is that the socialist period was a time characterized by repression and resistance. According to the museum’s website, its mission is to “serve as a warning against totalitarianism and oppression,” and, as the museum’s manager put it in an interview with me, the intended take-home message for the audiences is that “communism was bad and should never happen again.”

I see the role of the museum as making people aware what PRL was really like so that it doesn’t happen again, because totalitarian projects are very attractive... Everyone who comes to the museum has to realize that it was a bad system so it doesn’t happen again.

The museum’s manager has a particular vision for the museum and indeed, the museum’s activities generally represent the history of the socialist period in terms of

repression and resistance, with a bit of fun sprinkled in, in the form of socialist-era music, cars, and the like. However, neither the existence of the museum, nor the way it represents the past, go uncontested. While I was not privy to the behind-the-scenes debates I summarize here a few of the issues that have made their way to the press or became public knowledge in other ways.

During my fieldwork, the museum was going through a lengthy process of having its exhibit script approved by its Advisory Board. The media periodically reported on the process, highlighting the frictions and disagreements at different levels, and over various issues of representation, including the museum's key messages, whether it would focus more on highlighting repression or resistance, whether it would be organized chronologically or thematically, and how much emphasis there would be on the local context of Kraków and Nowa Huta (eg. Kursa 2010, Handzlik 2009, 2010 and 2011).

When I spoke to Nowa Huta residents about the new museum in the works I encountered a similar diversity of views on the topic. Some of the people with whom I spoke resented the closure of the movie theatre and perceived the museum as something that was imposed on the community from the outside. One visitor to the museum, a Nowa Huta resident in his fifties, having viewed one of the temporary exhibits, complained:

It saddens me to see what they've done to this place. I used to come to the movies here when I was a teenager...I saw so many great Westerns here... You probably don't even know those movies, you are too young for that... They closed the movie theatre because it wasn't profitable, now they're opening this museum which isn't going to make a profit either and will have to be subsidized by the city... This will not become a place for community integration but a movie theatre would have been. There are so many social problems in Nowa Huta, partly because young people have nowhere to go... and those big cineplexes are expensive and outside of Nowa Huta. Maybe things would be better if young people had somewhere to go close to home.

I asked the man whether he does not think that it is important to have a museum of PRL. “Not at the price of a movie theater, no,” he replied. For him, the immediate needs of the community were clearly more important.

A few of the critiques which I encountered centered around the persona of Andrzej Wajda, the museum’s founder. A fact often noted by both my interlocutors and newspaper forum discussants is that Wajda, who made his best movies during the socialist period and received multiple awards from the socialist government, is now this government’s most strident critic. “Perhaps Wajda should give back all the awards he’s received from that ‘evil’ government... or maybe the museum should have the titles of Wajda’s movies written on the walls”, one woman told me. Wajda’s critics allude to the fact that whereas his own life history reveals many facets of life in a socialist state, the version of history which is now becoming produced in his museum is rather one-sided, focused on the repressive aspects of life in socialist Poland.

Some Nowa Huta residents worry about how the museum will portray the town and their own lives within it. Pani Prażmowska, a woman in her mid-sixties, saw a preliminary temporary exhibit organized by the Socland foundation in 2008 in order to “sell” their project idea prior to establishing a museum, and it dissuaded her from any further interaction with the museum.

I’ve never been to the museum because I was really put off by that exhibit they organized earlier. It was just a collection of old stuff: *Frania* laundry machine, a labourer’s dirty outfit... Is this what socialism was all about: laundry machines? And then that new exhibit (on martial law) that they have on now... Piotr (her acquaintance) has been to see it, and he was telling me about the figures of people depicted as crouching in terror, and the sense of fear that it evoked in him... It really made an impression on him but it put me off from wanting to see it. I don’t feel that those kinds of images actually represent what socialism was like, or at least this wasn’t my experience.

In these words, Pani Prazmowska critiques what she sees as the museum's reduction of the complexity of life during the socialist period to either "laundry machines" or to accounts of repression and resistance. She further notes that the version of the past chosen by the museum does not resonate with the experience of many people, including herself.

Since a large share of the museum's activities is directed at young people, it is worth mentioning some of the reactions I witnessed on the part of young people who visited the museum on schooltrips. Many young people who attended educational lessons at the museum with schoolgroups did not seem terribly interested in the content. For example, on one occasion the museum invited a Nowa Huta Solidarity legend Mieczysław Gil to speak to a schoolgroup. While the employees and the teacher were engrossed in Gil's story of Solidarity strikes at the steel factory and of his own subsequent imprisonment, the students listened politely but restlessly and were clearly relieved when the talk ended and it was time to go home.

A surprisingly large number of my Nowa Huta acquaintances had never been to the museum. I once raised this issue with my aunt Alicja and 19-year old cousin Jola, who live directly across the street (and a literal stone's throw) from the museum and frequently asked me about the museum's activities.

K: Do you think it's a good idea to have the museum there?

A: Sure it's a good idea. It's good that Nowa Huta is starting to be popular, that there are things happening here. And that building stood empty for a while, so it's good that something will be going on there.

K: But you've never been there yourself?

A: No.

K: Why?

A: You know I think about going sometimes, but I'm always on my way to work, or from work with groceries in my hand, or rushing to catch the bus... You know, you get wrapped up in your life and there just isn't the time.

K: (to Jola): What about you? Why don't you go?

J: I would go if they had something interesting there.

K: Like what?

J: Like medieval torture instruments.

The accounts outlined above speak to the spectrum of reactions towards the museum. Some people, such as the teachers who bring their students to the museum for history lessons, feel that the museum fulfills an important function in conveying knowledge about the socialist period. Others may object to the museum's representations of the past, feeling that its portrayal of history is overly one-sided, focused on stories of repression and resistance. Others still may be critical of the museum itself because of issues unrelated to historical representation. Many people are more interested in the everyday than in the past, including both personal and community issues. Many people see the museum as something that is "not for Nowa Huta residents" but rather directed at outsiders. People who remember the socialist period may feel that they know "what it was really like" and do not need to go to the museum to learn about it. Younger people, on the other hand, may not be very interested in the socialist period, feeling that it is far away and in any case not nearly as fascinating as medieval torture instruments. I return to the question of memory and representations in the following chapters, where I examine how different generations of Nowa Huta residents remember and/or perceive the socialist period, and how their accounts draw on, reproduce, or challenge, the representations of the past outlined in this chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the role of two different sites of memory, commemorative activities and museums, in producing representations of Nowa Huta's past. I argue that Nowa Huta is a palimpsest of temporalities, a place characterized by a "multivocality" (Rodman 1992) of accounts pertaining to the past. Alternately (and sometimes simultaneously), emphasis is placed on the town's pre-socialist roots, its socialist-era achievements, or its legacy of resistance against the socialist government.

The presence of several threads of memory in Nowa Huta's public representations needs to be viewed in the context of the larger processes of memory-making in Poland. As I showed in the introduction, in hegemonic accounts, the socialist past is alternately sidestepped in favour of present and future concerns, or else portrayed largely in terms of repression, resistance or inefficiency. The three sites of memory discussed in this chapter illustrate that there is not one uniform collective memory of the socialist past, although certain versions of the past are becoming privileged. The reinvention of Now Huta as a site of resistance against the socialist system speaks to the larger tendency to privilege accounts of repression and resistance in dominant/hegemonic narratives (Main 2008). A newfound interest in the town's pre-socialist legacy speaks to desire on the part of town's "memory makers" (Kansteiner 2002) to diminish its association with socialism.

However, socialism continues to be an important part of Nowa Huta's identity, and in fact recent years have witnessed the emergence of a new appreciation of certain elements of socialist-era legacy. This is evidenced for instance in the desire to commemorate the town's 60th anniversary, the recent creation of two different museums both of which in some way address the country's socialist past, as well as in the

newfound appreciation of the town's urban layout, socialist realist architecture or industrial heritage. As such, Nowa Huta may be emerging as a unique site whose past problematizes the sometimes reductive accounts of socialism as a time of nothing but repression and resistance. The very fact that Nowa Huta's 60th anniversary was deemed worthy of commemorating by local institutions suggests that a space may be opening up for a more nuanced consideration of history. Ten years ago, when Nowa Huta was celebrating its 50th anniversary (arguably more of a milestone), the event was hardly noted in the town's public memory. Evidently, at the time there did not exist the political will, or interest, in celebrating the anniversary of a socialist town.

The ways in which the socialist past is represented in Nowa Huta should also be considered in light of Poland's specific place in Europe. As I noted in the introduction, the goal of post-1989 elites was to "return to Europe," which hinged on bringing the country in line with the European Union's political and economic norms and regulations. The "museumification" of socialism is one way of putting the socialist past in the past, in order to reinvent Poland as a "new European" country. Depicting the past in terms of repression, resistance and inefficiency serves as proof that the country has left behind the "wrong" kind of legacy and is ready to partake in a shared European project.

At the same time, socialism is deemed safe when it is either locked up in a museum or commodified, packaged up in the form of a communist tour and sold to British tourists visiting Kraków for the long weekend. While at present I see no danger of Nowa Huta becoming a communist theme park anytime in the foreseeable future, Kraków's position as a popular European tourist hub is certainly conducive to the commodification and marketing of heritage – and preferably the kind of heritage that

would be “exotic” to Western tourists. This would explain in part a renewed interest in socialist architecture and post-industrial spaces. Indeed, the fact that EU’s policies support – and fund! – “heritage” projects in different forms encourages locals to perceive their surroundings in these terms. For example, during my fieldwork the OKN cultural centre received an EU grant for the “revitalization of postindustrial spaces”, which they used to update and modernize their banquet hall building. On its own, the building does not appear anything spectacular and normally would not warrant a second glance. However, the tangible funding behind its renovation certainly encourages one to appreciate it as an example of a “postindustrial space.”

Finally, I want to suggest that the presence of potentially contradictory ideas about the past in Nowa Huta’s “discursive landscape” (Linkon and Russo 2002: 88) need not be seen as problematic. Taken together, these different representations present a much more complex and nuanced picture of the town’s history and life than each does on its own. While such complexity inevitably occasions frictions and contestations, Nowa Huta is able to accommodate it. Those wishing to highlight Nowa Huta’s story of resistance against the socialist government have to contend with the voices of the “builders,” and vice versa. To put it differently, even though different representations invoke “contrary themes” (Billig 1990: 70), even those contrary themes are “commonly shared” (ibid) and as such come together to form a shared discourse on the town that is Nowa Huta.

The focus of this chapter was on public representations of Nowa Huta’s past. In the following chapters, I examine how these representations resonate with the experiences of Nowa Huta residents of different generations, and how the residents draw

on, reproduce, or challenge, those representations in constructing their own accounts of the past.

CHAPTER 4
SOCIALISM'S "BUILDERS" AND "DESTROYERS":
MEMORIES OF SOCIALISM AMONG NOWA HUTA RESIDENTS

A 1987 Polish movie titled *Papieros od prezydenta* (A cigarette from the president) depicts a clash of values between two generations of Nowa Huta residents. The father, who in his youth worked on the construction of Nowa Huta's steel factory in the early 1950s, recalls a visit to the construction site by then-Polish president Bolesław Bierut. Touring the construction site, the president talked with workers and gave them cigarettes. The father kept his cigarette for years as a memento of that day. In the movie, he recalls the hard work he and his contemporaries put into building Nowa Huta: they worked hard for everything they have, he says, starting with their first own fork and spoon. Now, the younger generation has a better life and access to opportunities undreamed of in those days.

The father's memories are juxtaposed to the voice of his son, a 34-year old teacher frustrated with the socialist system. The son complains that the government does not appreciate people's work and that the only way to receive proper reward for one's efforts is to emigrate to the West. He has been waiting for an apartment for five years now and in the meantime, his life is put on hold, as he cannot marry and start a family.

The movie was made over two decades ago, but the themes it depicts continue to reflect and/or shape popular perceptions of Nowa Huta's residents. As shown in the previous chapters, Nowa Huta has been depicted both as a "model socialist town" and as a bastion of resistance against the socialist government. The generational dynamic represented in the movie continues to shape many people's perceptions of Nowa Huta residents: the oldest residents are popularly seen as nostalgic for the old days, whereas

their children, now middle-aged, are associated with resistance against the socialist government.

In this chapter I ask how the socialist period is remembered by Nowa Huta residents who are old enough to have lived in it: this includes 80-year old residents who literally built up the town with their own hands as well as their middle-aged children who participated in Solidarity strikes in the 1980s. In the course of my fieldwork I talked with these people about their lives in Nowa Huta, their work, families, and the events in the town's history⁵⁰ in which they took part or which they found important. The accounts of my interlocutors speak to their experiences of larger national events and their local manifestations, including postwar rebuilding, the relative prosperity of the 1970s, martial law of 1981, the collapse of socialism in 1989 and the political, economic and social changes that followed. In constructing their accounts, my interlocutors both draw on and subvert hegemonic discourses on the past, selectively drawing on elements of national and local narratives. Their narratives and remembrances also reveal how present conditions affect how people remember the past, and conversely, how people's experiences of a different political and economic system influence their attitudes about the present. In the accounts that follow, many of my interlocutors invoke positive memories of the past in order to critique present economic and social conditions. Although these accounts may appear contradictory in that many of them highlight positive aspects of the socialist period while rejecting socialism as an ideology and system of government, I suggest that these contradictions reflect the nuances and complexities of people's actual lived experiences. Finally, this chapter also shows that

⁵⁰ As I argued in Chapter 1, Nowa Huta's history is inextricably linked to larger political, economic and social events and processes in postwar Poland.

there are generational differences in the perception and attitudes towards the socialist past, although generational distinctions are not rigid, and people's stories problematize a simple association of the oldest generation with support for socialism and the younger one with resistance. This, in turn, illustrates that generations are entangled in various relationships that shape their attitudes and perceptions.

Generations of Memory in Nowa Huta

As I outlined in the literature review, there are multiple ways to define and approach the topic of generation. In his ethnography of the “last Soviet generation,” anthropologist Alexei Yurchak points out that “[g]enerations are not natural, they are produced through common experience and through discourse about it” (2006: 30). My work is informed by the definition of generation as “historical category” (Kertzer 1982; also Mannheim 1972, Abrams 1980), according to which generation is a group of people whose consciousness is shaped by the same historical events and processes, and who thus share a similar “system of meanings and possibilities” (Abrams 1980: 256). Following writers such as Roberts (2009), Shevchenko (2008), or Yurchak (2008), I contend that the socialist period (1945-1989) and the period that began following socialism's collapse in 1989 are characterized by sufficiently different political, economic and social conditions as to warrant viewing them as different historical periods which in turn shaped different historical generations. However, as my discussion in this and the following chapter will show, these historical categories are not static but rather, there are overlaps between them; furthermore, they may coexist with other understandings of the generation concept as outlined by Kertzer, for example generation as biological category (eg. parent, child) or generation as cohort.

It is also worth remembering that generations are constructed as much as reflected through their different sets of characteristics and experiences. This is grasped by Jurgen Reulecke's concept of "generationality," a term that refers both to "characteristics resulting from shared experiences," as well as to those that are "ascribed to such units from the outside... in the interest of establishing demarcations and reducing complexity" (2008: 119). Drawing on this concept, I suggest that the popular representations of Nowa Huta's generations reify generational boundaries and reduce the complexities of experience which emerge in the course of individual accounts.

The focus of this chapter is on people who have lived a substantial portion of their lives during the socialist period and have had significant life experiences during this time. This historical generation consists of multiple cohorts, and can be seen to encompass people ranging in age from their forties into their nineties. In Nowa Huta, popular discourses frequently draw a distinction between the generation of the town's "builders" and their "children." The term "builders" refers to the town's founding residents who moved to Nowa Huta from 1949 throughout the 1950s. During that time, many of them literally built up the town with their own hands, as they worked on the construction of the steelworks and/or the town itself. Other builders contributed to the town's development in other ways, for example by planting trees as part of organized volunteer labour brigades (*czyn społeczny*, literally "civic act"). The majority of these individuals were then in their teenage years and twenties, and are now in their eighties. Many of them have lived almost their entire lives in Nowa Huta, where they also worked and raised children (Chwalba 2004). In popular opinion, this is the group most often associated with "building socialism" and with fond memories of the socialist period.

The generation of “builders” is often juxtaposed with the more diffuse generation of their “children” (literally or proverbially), who are now in their forties to sixties, although no good all-encompassing term exists in Nowa Huta to describe this group. This generation is roughly synchronous with what Yurchak (2006) terms ‘the last Soviet generation,’ that is people born between 1950 and the early 1970s who came of age between the 1970s and the mid 1980s. This group was born and came of age during the socialist period, and it is this age group that is widely associated with opposition to the government in the 1980s and is thus sometimes referred to as the “Solidarity generation” (eg. Gutkowski 2009), although I did not encounter this term used in Nowa Huta.

The distinction between the different experiences of these two generations is frequently made in Nowa Huta’s public representations. For example, Nowa Huta resident and writer Tadeusz Binek tellingly titled one of the chapters of his book on Nowa Huta’s history “Fathers built it, sons destroyed it” (“*Ojcowie zbudowali, synowie zburzyli*”) (Binek 2009). The term “builders” is also commonly used in Nowa Huta’s everyday parlance to refer to the oldest generation of the town’s residents.

In this chapter, I trace the experiences and memories of the older generation of Nowa Huta residents, paying attention to how their accounts alternatively reproduce, or challenge, public Nowa Huta representations and larger national historical narratives. While this chapter focuses on memory through a generational lens, it is worth remembering that, in addition to generation, people’s experiences are also mediated by factors such as age (even a difference of a few years might be important) or life-stage (parent, child), as well as a multitude of other factors (gender, socio-economic status).

Nowa Huta: a new life and a new opportunity

The notion of Nowa Huta as a place where one can start a new life was the leading representation of Nowa Huta throughout much of the socialist period, touted in most official narratives from the 1950s until the 1980s, when critiques of the socialist system became more vocal and widespread. Images of happy shirtless bricklayers erecting walls, happy steelworkers at the blast furnace, and happy children waving flags at May 1st parades, were widespread in literature and movies of the time. These representations depicted Nowa Huta as a socialist paradise where young people from backwards villages were able to acquire an education and training, work, raise their families, and live happily ever after. Such accounts are now more critically approached, and have given way to accounts that highlight the darker aspects of life under the socialist system (for a more detailed description of these see chapter 3).

However, the notion of Nowa Huta as a “opportunity” for people to build new lives is still reflected in the stories of some of its first builders. Such is the story of Pan Pawłowski, an 81-year old retired steelworker who came to Nowa Huta in 1954 from a small village in northern Poland. He remembers his village as being impoverished: “my village was so poor that before the war, there were only four bicycles in the entire village.” Against his parents’ wishes and without their knowledge he left the village and eventually ended up in Nowa Huta.

Upon arriving in Nowa Huta, Pan Pawłowski worked in construction, building the town and the steel factory. For the first few years he lived in a workers’ hostel (*hotel robotniczy*), in a complex then colloquially called “Mexico” on account of its reportedly abysmal living conditions. I asked what the living conditions were like. He replied they

were adequate for young people. They lived in barracks, each barrack divided into twelve rooms and a washroom, with about eight people to a room. Workers received dinner⁵¹ coupons and bought their own breakfasts and suppers. Their time was divided between working and studying. The opportunity to get an education was important for Pan Pawłowski:

At that time I was almost illiterate. I had completed only four years of primary school: two years in Polish and two in Russian, because my village was under Russian occupation from 1929-1941. And still, I could barely read or write.

In Nowa Huta he finished primary and secondary school and started postsecondary training but never completed it.

After a few years of living in a workers' hostel Pan Pawłowski was allocated a one-room (ie: bachelor) apartment: "In those days the government gave you an apartment and you only had to pay for the key." A few years later he and his wife had two children and were allocated a two-room apartment where he lives to this day.

After the steel factory began to operate, Pan Pawłowski worked in the refractories division (*Zakład Materiałów Ogniotrwałych*) and then in the small mill (*walcownia drobna*). He was brigade supervisor, and then foreman (*mistrz utrzymania ruchu*). I asked him how he recalls his work. "It was hard work of course, but I didn't mind, I was young." He said work activities were better organized than they are now and workers received more support:

⁵¹ In Poland dinner is served around 1-2 pm and is considered the main meal of the day, traditionally consisting of two courses: soup and second.

People who worked together helped and supported each other... work teams (*zespoły ludzkie*) were better organized, now everything's fallen apart. Everyone knew how much everyone else was making and who received what awards. Young people have it more difficult now, a young person nowadays has to be dynamic (*przebojowy*) in order to get ahead. Before, everyone had support... workers weren't laid off, you couldn't be fired for just any reason, for example if your brigade supervisor didn't like you... there were active trade unions and Party organizations, people who could help you.

In a manner reminiscent of some of the accounts cited in chapter 2, Pan Pawłowski argues that during the socialist period workers were better supported by official structures, such as state-controlled trade unions. Pan Pawłowski himself was Party secretary of his division at the small mill, and a member of the central Factory Committee for the entire steel factory (Komitet Fabryczny Huty). In addition to working at his job, he also did a lot of community work: for example he was the president of his neighbourhood committee (Komitet Osiedlowy) which looked after neighbourhood green spaces such as planting trees and landscaping.

Pan Pawłowski says he is proud of what he accomplished:

I provided for myself and my family. My children are educated, my grandchildren too. It was here that I was educated, I got a job, I earned a good salary, I was probably a very good mechanic, I got promoted, I never missed a day of work and I was never in trouble with the law... Nowa Huta gave me an opportunity... I don't complain about that system because they helped me, they helped me get out of that village and gave me the opportunity to get an education, housing and work.

The idea of Nowa Huta as an opportunity was also invoked, albeit differently, by Tomasz Szewczyk, a man in his early 80s who first started working at the steelworks in the late 1950s, eventually working his way up to Assistant Director of Social Affairs, a post he held until 1990 when he left the steelworks.

Today when young people want an apartment, to start a family and so on, they leave Poland for Canada, England and so on... in those days, they came to Nowa Huta. Even for people who worked in Kraków, it was nearly impossible to get an apartment there, but in Nowa Huta you could get an apartment in two to six years... And I am one of those people, who, having worked in Kraków, in the Main Square, but with no prospect of getting an apartment, I switched jobs and came to the steelworks. I did it because I had friends who did it before me and from them I knew there was an opportunity to get an apartment. Plus the salaries, you know, in Kraków I earned 1,400 zł after a few years of work, and at the steelworks 2,600 zł at the start, almost twice as much.

Pan Gawęda, an 81 year old retired photographer, similarly spoke of Nowa Huta as a “life’s opportunity” for many people. Pan Gawęda was born in 1930 in Lwów, a city on Poland’s eastern border which is now in the Ukraine. During and after World War II, his family was displaced and he ended up in Nowa Huta. In 1960, he began working as a photographer for Nowa Huta’s local newspaper *Głos Nowej Huty*. Ever since then, he has been capturing images of Nowa Huta’s life with his camera.

Nowa Huta gave many people a chance. After World War II, steel was needed to rebuild the country, and so the steel factory was needed as well. For many people living in Nowa Huta was a dramatic improvement in their standard of living. People learned to read and write, some of them saw a sink for the first time. The steel factory had its own health clinic, and in Nowa Huta’s stores you could buy things that weren’t available in other parts of Krakow...

Of course, not everyone agrees with the notion of Nowa Huta as the epitome of the “good life.” For example, as I showed in the previous chapter, popular discourses (eg. movies, museum representations) are replete with stories about despicable living conditions characterized by cramped living spaces, married couples forced to live apart in sex-segregated workers’ hostels, and crime and moral decay (eg. prostitution) rampant in the hostels. In the course of my fieldwork, one of my interlocutors who criticized the story of Nowa Huta as an oasis of opportunity in postwar Poland was Pan Krzemiński, a

retired steelworker. Pan Krzemiński moved to Nowa Huta in 1952 as a seven year old child, with his parents and younger brother. At first, he lived with his mother and brother in a workers' hostel, while his father lived in another. After a few years, his parents received a communal apartment which the family shared with others for another twenty-two years, until he moved out in 1971. This is how he described it:

It was a nightmare... There were three rooms, and there was a family in each room, with a shared kitchen. Over the years one of the families moved out so we had two rooms, but at the time when I moved out there was still one lady sharing an apartment and a kitchen with my mother.

It should be noted, however, that the person offering this critique is between fifteen and twenty years younger than the three builders whose voices were reflected above, and therefore can be seen to belong to the younger generation of Nowa Huta residents, the generation that became disillusioned with socialism.

The image of Nowa Huta as an “opportunity” for people was most often invoked in the stories of people in their 70s and 80s, that is, the generation of builders, for whom living in Nowa Huta was indeed an opportunity for social mobility. These individuals had lived through the hardships of World War II and as such perceive postwar rebuilding in positive terms. The opportunity to work, to receive an education and housing are benefits frequently mentioned by the first builders, many of whom hailed from impoverished parts of the country. Incidentally, these are also the benefits enumerated by the socialist government at the time, and showcased in movies such as the 1951 classic *Kierunek Nowa Huta!* (Destination Nowa Huta!). Similarly, Samsonowska's (2002) research shows that during the socialist period, Nowa Huta featured prominently in school

textbooks as an example of government success, the well-being of workers, and Poland's economic prosperity.

The builders' positive recollections of opportunities to work, get an education and obtain an apartment, acquire particular significance given present economic conditions characterized by unemployment and declining public funding, which result in an increasingly two-tiered education system, as well as skyrocketing prices of real estate, especially in urban cores such as Kraków. Although the builders themselves are well past working age, they have grandchildren who are struggling on the job market. When they were young, the builders lived in workers' hostels until they were allocated an apartment. Now, many of their grandchildren live at home not because there is a shortage of apartments, but because they cannot afford to move out.⁵²

Culture, athletics and recreation: living the "good life" in Nowa Huta

In my conversations with people, I was surprised by how many of them were involved in extracurricular activities such as sports teams, hiking clubs, dance groups, choirs, photography clubs, and the like. To put it simply, people *did* stuff. Many of my interlocutors fondly recall the diversity of cultural events (movies, theatre plays, art exhibits, dinner and dance parties), special interest clubs (eg. hiking groups, scouts), and athletic opportunities (sports clubs, competitions) in which they had been active. The socialist government placed a high emphasis on organizing its citizens' time, and as such many recreational opportunities were available to people. In Nowa Huta, the steelworks provided an array of cultural and recreational opportunities, both for its employees, their

⁵² Of course this is not true of all young people. Young people from higher socio-economic backgrounds with relatively well-paying jobs are able to receive bank loans and/or summon their families' assistance to buy their own apartments or build their own houses.

families, and for the community at large, a point on which I elaborated in the previous chapter.

My Uncle Jarek and Aunt Magda, both in their late 70s, are former athletes and gym teachers. Uncle Jarek played basketball professionally, first for one of Nowa Huta's teams and then for Poland's national team. After completing university he worked as a gym teacher and coached the school's girls' basketball team as well as an inter-school team, until his retirement in 1985. Aunt Magda similarly worked as a gym teacher but after graduating university began to seriously play tennis – she was a national gold medalist in doubles and silver medalist in singles in her age category.

The socialist government at the time placed a large emphasis on physical education, and their photo album is evidence of this: it is filled with pictures of sports camps and competitions (including many international ones, for example in Egypt or the former Yugoslavia), as well as events from May 1st parades and Nowa Huta Youth Days⁵³ (Dni Młodości). Both Uncle Jarek and Aunt Magda held sports scholarships during their university careers. In her conversations with me, Aunt Magda frequently praised the opportunity she had to attend university on a sports scholarship:

I'm telling you, if it were not for that system, I would have never been able to go to university, considering how little money my family had. I always say, that was the one good thing about that system.

The living conditions in college residences were Spartan and the food was despicable, she says, but at least it was free, and as athletes they received additional rations. Most of the

⁵³ Nowa Huta Youth Days, held every June to commemorate the building of the new socialist town, were marked by parades, speeches, competitions and performances.

sports camps and competitions were not entirely free, but were heavily subsidized so that they were affordable to students.

Uncle Jarek and Aunt Magda positively recall the programming for youth provided by the state, both through schools but also community clubs and organizations. Nowa Huta used to be known for its athletics at all levels. “There were so many opportunities for young people to be involved in sports, now it’s all gone down” they tell me. They made me an extensive list of the clubs that once existed in Nowa Huta, representing disciplines such as soccer, volleyball, handball, boxing, track-and-field, bowling, and motorcycle speedway (a Nowa Huta tradition). There were also recreational clubs (*TKKF-Towarzystwo Krzewienia Kultury Fizycznej*) which provided recreational opportunities for working adults.

Uncle Jarek and Aunt Magda bemoan the decline of sports clubs and physical education in schools, which they see as indicative of the government’s lack of concern for youth programming and “lifestyle” programming in general. Coincidentally, at the time that I was doing my fieldwork, Nowa Huta’s signature sports club *Hutnik* (literally “Steelworker”) was in the process of declaring bankruptcy and dissolving. Hutnik had been owned by the steelworks, and once organized an assortment of sports for men, women and children at all levels. After 1989 the steelworks had cut its strings from Hutnik, which in turn trimmed down all its sports programs except men’s soccer. The decline of Hutnik surfaced in many people’s stories, from seventy year olds to soccer fans in their twenties. Later that year, Hutnik was revived under new management and both its fans and the Nowa Huta public are hopeful that it will make a comeback.

In addition to athletic achievements, many people fondly recalled the rich cultural life during the socialist period. In the course of my research I had a lot of interaction with workers at the OKN cultural centre, an institution formerly owned by the steelworks. I talked to Pani Prazmowska, the centre's recently retired director, about what work was like during the socialist period.

DP: Oh, so exciting. There was always something going on: art exhibits, concerts, poetry readings, film screenings. We (the cultural centre) organized all the events for the steelworks: dances, holiday parties, award ceremonies... Money for programming was no object because the steelworks' directors always wanted to show off how much money the steelworks had... you only had to go and ask.

KP: Really? They actually wanted to give away money for things like poetry recitals and photo exhibits?

DP: Yes, they understood that it was important to have activities and entertainment for workers... There was always money for culture, as long as you had good ideas.

Together we sorted through boxes of pictures from various events: Pani Prazmowska speaking at art exhibit openings, theatre, music or dance performances, greeting steel factory directors, giving and receiving flowers.

People's fond recollections of Nowa Huta's rich cultural life in the past needs to be viewed in the context of funding cuts for cultural initiatives. The year of my fieldwork was a particularly charged time to be exploring this issue, since in the fall of 2009 Poland's former finance minister Leszek Balcerowicz (the principal agent associated with the "shock therapy" economic reform in the early 1990s) electrified the audience at the national Congress of Polish Culture (*Kongres Kultury Polskiej*) by advocating that culture should be privatized, that is, deprived of government funding and subjected to the market laws of supply and demand. Since 1989 cultural institutions have been forced to

trim their budgets and my interlocutors at OKN were struggling to maintain the sort of programming they were used to, in the face of growing cuts. One employee told me:

Before when I wanted to organize an event I went to our (former) director, and I have to admit, she was not stingy and she had a vision. If I told her what I wanted to do and explained why it was important, she always understood and she would find the money for it somewhere. Now when we want to organize an event or start a program, our new director tells us we can do whatever we want as long as we find the money for it ourselves... so we're using up most of our time writing grant applications for EU funding, rather than actually organizing programs.

Amanda Mazur, a musician in her forties employed at the OKN reflected on how career prospects in the cultural domain changed so quickly after market reform.

When I was starting music (high) school in the mid 1980s there was a certainty that a musician could always find work somewhere, in a philharmonic or opera or something (she plays the piano and harp)... But by the time I finished high school, times were already starting to change. Now artists get paid per project, so for example I might get called from Warsaw and told to come play at a concert at their philharmonic for one night. That means they pay me for just that one concert, and all the expenses of travel, hotel and so on are not covered. It's impossible to live like that. I can't even practice anymore because I don't have my own harp and I can't afford one, the price of a good harp is like buying a BMW.

Pan Gawęda, who by nature of his job as a photographer for the local newspaper used to be up to date on all Nowa Huta happenings, summed these up in the following way:

There was always something going on. There were events, organizations, lots more opportunities for young people to get involved – sure these organizations had a political accent to them, but at least they existed... People went on trips and excursions – sure these were named after Lenin (*rajdy Lenina*) but really, they were just normal trips, the same way that nowadays people name trails after John Paul II... Before, everything was planned and looked after, now everything is in mayhem (*bez głowy*, literally “without a head”) and it costs money, money rules the world.

The appreciation of socialist-era cultural, athletic and other recreational programming was a theme in the stories of my interlocutors of all ages, men and women, workers and professionals. These reflections should be read in the context of privatization policies and the resulting decline of social spending on leisure and recreation initiatives, which in turn renders them increasingly pricey, and thus less accessible (Stenning 2004, 2005b). These reflections thus serve as a critique of the neoliberal state which has privatized (and continues to privatize) domains of social and public value. Moreover, I suggest that they should also be read as a call for what Daphne Berdahl has termed an “alternative moral order” (2010: 47), one that values cultural or recreational activities which enhance human spirit or creativity, deems such activities a public good that should be available to all regardless of income, and sees them as important and worthwhile even if they do not generate a profit.

Repression and resistance

Repression and resistance are the main themes found in national representations of the socialist period, and, as I showed in the previous chapter, are also prevalent in Nowa Huta’s public representations, which increasingly serve to reinvent the town as a site of resistance to the socialist government. It is worth briefly recalling here that in the 1980s, Nowa Huta was indeed a hotbed of oppositional activity, with the largest branch of Solidarity in the country located in Lenin Steelworks, and strikes and protests regularly occurring on Nowa Huta streets (Stenning 2000). In the course of my research, some mention of the events of the 1980s recurred in the stories of most Nowa Huta residents, the majority of whom were caught up in these events to some degree, either because they

were involved in the political opposition, had friends or family members who were involved, or at least witnessed protests, brawls or riot police patrols under their windows.

My Uncle Jarek and Aunt Magda live near the Lord's Ark (Arka Pana) church, a site where many demonstrations and clashes between the strikers and ZOMO (riot police) took place throughout the 1980s. Although they were not active members of the political opposition and did not attend strikes and demonstrations, these events nonetheless entered into their lives less directly. This is what Aunt Magda told me about those days:

It's terrible what kinds of things went on around here, you can't imagine. We would see ZOMO (riot police) chasing young men right under our windows... and the tear gas was so dense you couldn't open the windows for months, the whole neighbourhood was shrouded in tear gas... You know, the only good thing about that time is that the tear gas killed off all the Pharaoh ants.⁵⁴

They recall being stopped and asked to show their identification a few times while walking back from playing bridge with friends at another building, and having been followed by individuals in civilian clothing who they were convinced were undercover police agents.

In the 1980s Uncle Jarek and Aunt Magda taught at a high school near the steelworks, located on the road that connects the steelworks to town, and Aunt Magda told me about being concerned for her students' safety.

AM: When it was 2 p.m. and the first shift at the steel factory ended, the workers would all march into town together yelling "Solidarność". It was difficult to keep students in school, they all wanted to leave and go march with the workers... once the director locked down the school so nobody would leave. But usually we would let the students go home early so that they would be out of there before the workers marched by.

K: But why didn't you want students joining the workers?

⁵⁴ Pharaoh ants are particularly large ants which plagued the entire town at that time until tear gas accidentally proved an effective method of extermination.

AM: Well something could happen to them! You never know what could happen! They could get caught, hurt, killed, who knows! You know what happened to Bogdan Włosik,⁵⁵ how he was killed? One student from our school was arrested. As teachers, we were responsible for students' safety while they were at school.

Aunt Magda related to me an event which occurred in the early 1980s after martial law was imposed, when she and my Uncle were stopped and questioned by the police after laying flowers at Bogdan Włosik's monument.

AM: It was Teachers' Day, and your uncle and I were walking home from school. We had so many flowers, we couldn't possibly fit them all at home. When we passed by Włosik's monument I said to your uncle 'let's keep a few bouquets for ourselves and leave the rest here.' So we put down the flowers. Then, a police officer (*milicjant*) approached us and asked what we were doing. We told him, so he asked us for identification and wrote down our information!

Repressions, demonstrations, ZOMO and tear gas are topics that regularly intrude into people's stories, even if they are not assigned central prominence. Like many other residents, Uncle Jarek and Aunt Magda were affected by these events because by nature of living in Nowa Huta (and in a neighbourhood that was a setting for many demonstrations) they witnessed them on a regular basis. They were also affected by the general climate of fear and uncertainty during martial law, as illustrated in Aunt Magda's account of being followed, questioned and asked for identification.

A number of my interlocutors related a more active involvement in the political opposition. While I did not seek out prominent local Solidarity legends, feeling that their stories were already part of the local narrative of resistance, several of my interlocutors were involved in Solidarity activities to some degree. Jan Baryłka was an electrician at

⁵⁵ Bogdan Włosik was a vocational school student and apprentice at the steel factory who was shot to death by a secret police agent when heading home after a demonstration

the steelworks' blooming mill, a division known as the "cradle of Solidarity" in Nowa Huta.

JB: In 1981 I was home when martial law was announced. I had the day off. I get up in the morning, I turn on the television: nothing. Then I was doing something, then Jaruzelski⁵⁶ appeared and announced what's going on. And I was supposed to be going to work that night. By that time, they were talking about martial law on the radio. So I somehow managed to get into the steelworks, and I ended up staying for a few days to be with my colleagues. We guarded the steelworks to make sure there was no devastation from... from anyone. We watched the gates, we had patrols. We slept on styrofoam, on benches, on our kufajki (puffy workmens' jackets)... And then after Solidarność was defeated, our leaders told us not to hide but to stay together, not to use any heavy equipment, to surrender if we have to. So the ZOMO came in and surrounded us from above. And their leader tells us to disperse. And we don't. So he tells us again. And we don't. Finally we all grabbed each others' hands, we knew that they would start hitting us with batons (*pałować*), so we stuffed our kufajki with pillows and rags... I was in the second row, we all squatted down, the ZOMO would approach and try to pull us out, and when they couldn't they would hit us across the back with those batons.

KP: That must have hurt a lot.

JB: No, I told you, we stuffed our kufajki so we could bear it. Then they finally dispersed us. Our leaders escaped, later on we organized a collection to help their families. The more active Solidarity leaders were locked up by the UB (Security Service). They were locked up, taken away...

A similar theme was also taken up by Pan Krzemiński, another former steelworks employee in his early 60s, who had lost his job on account of having taken part in the December 13 strike. When the steel factory went on strike in December 1981, he was a member of the strike committee for his department (Department of Electrical Repairs). The strike committee decided to hook up the steelworks' gates to electrical current, to protect the entrance from being stormed by the army tanks which were lined up outside the steel factory's gates, ready to "pacify" the striking workers.

⁵⁶ General Jaruzelski was at the time the First Secretary of the United Workers' Party, the leading political figure in the country.

PK: Because our department was hooked up to electricity we were the last department to be pacified. But not brutally, like other departments, it was through persuasion, that everyone else had already stopped striking... So, for endangering the lives of those who attacked us, I received this punishment (ie: getting fired). The rest of the men signed "lojalki" (statements affirming their allegiance to the socialist government) and I didn't want to. The manager asks me: 'why don't you just sign?' I said, I'm not going to sign. And at that time I wore the Solidarność pin. He asks me 'why do you still wear that pin when everyone else has taken theirs down? I said, because they are not the ones who pinned it on me, I pinned it on myself... In the end, I was the only person fired from my department. Everyone signed "lojalki," and I was fired. No one even asked what happened to me.

K: I guess there wasn't much solidarity after all.

PK: They were afraid, I can understand that... For a few years after that I had serious problems, I guess you could say I had a moral hangover (*kac moralny*) because no one was interested in what happened to me...

K: You weren't afraid to go strike?

PK: Sure I was. When you are determined, you don't think about possible consequences... I was married too, at that time I had been married for eleven years... But this was stronger, not just the emotion, but the conviction that I was supporting a just cause.

After getting fired from his department, Pan Krzemiński looked for jobs at several other departments where he had contacts. He said that at first all managers expressed an interest in hiring him, but a few days later they would rescind and tell him that they had orders to reassign their own employees first. It became obvious to him that they had received orders not to hire him and he was getting desperate. Finally, he got lucky because one of the managers who was a member of the Party vouched for him and promised that he (ie: Pan Krzemiński) would not be allowed contact with other workers so as not to demoralize them. Ironically, when he wanted to leave the steel factory a few years later in 1985, the manager of his division refused to let him go. He attributes this to the fact that he was seen as a troublemaker and the management decided it was better to have him close in order to keep an eye on him.

Finally I address the case of Pani Prazmowska, former director of OKN cultural centre, who experienced different types of reprisals, and also reflected on them

differently from my other interlocutors. This is how she recalled the Solidarity era in Nowa Huta:

DP: Everyone supported Solidarność when it emerged... even people in management positions who really should not have done so because of their Party membership.

KP: How did you support them? You, personally?

DP: How? Well, I was a member of Solidarność, first of all. I let the organization be as active at OKN as it wanted to be. When they went on demonstrations, I went with them to support them. I had some trouble after that... the director called me in and made me understand that if I sign the sign-in book to say that I was at work, that I didn't go to the demonstration, it would be taken as proof that I was indeed at work.

KP: Did you do it?

DP: No. I said I went along to support my employees, I wasn't going to deny it.

One of Pani Prazmowska's employees at OKN was arrested for carrying oppositional leaflets and imprisoned for two years. When martial law was declared in 1981, she decided to give up her Party membership.

DP: I decided I'm not going to be a member of a party that uses violence against people... so I gave up my Party membership. A few days after, the director (of the steel factory) called me in and asked for my resignation as director of OKN...

KP: That's terrible.

DP: Not really, I knew that I would have to resign when I gave up my Party membership... I was expecting it.

Not much changed after she stepped down, she says. For two years or so the centre was without a director so she continued in all her director duties, despite not having the title (her official title at the time was Programming Manager). Then another person was brought in from the outside to replace her, so she became Assistant Director. She and the new director worked very well together, she says. After 1989, the replacement director gave her back her title and herself took on the Assistant Director role. They continued in this manner until Pani Prazmowska's retirement two years ago.

I asked what work was like in OKN during the 1980s, after she had been demoted.

DP: Once martial law ended, it was business as usual. We still did all the same things.

KP: Was there more political pressure, surveillance?

DP: Not really... For example, I used to order two copies of all major newspapers for the centre: one for the centre, one for myself. I did this even after I wasn't director anymore. I even ordered *Tygodnik Powszechny*!⁵⁷ I knew nobody at the steelworks would check up on what newspapers we are ordering at the centre. In the 1980s we organized a lot of lectures, meetings, once we realized that there were so many blank spots in the Polish history that was taught in schools. We even organized lectures on topics like Piłsudski.⁵⁸ Sometimes at these meetings there were people who looked like maybe they were informants, but I never heard anything about it afterwards.

The accounts above speak to the politically charged atmosphere of the 1980s, characterized by the rise of the Solidarity movement, its repression in the form of martial law, and the subsequent widespread resistance to the socialist government which culminated in this government's collapse in 1989. These events have played out with particular vividness in Nowa Huta, whose "model socialist enterprise" Lenin Steelworks became home to the largest Solidarity branch in the country, and where strikes and demonstrations regularly enlivened the streets. My interlocutors experienced the 1980s in different ways, with some more directly involved in the political opposition and resistance activities than others. The people whose accounts are told above experienced repression in different forms, from physical assault to being fired (and then being forcibly retained at work), to being demoted from a management position. They also exercised

⁵⁷ *Tygodnik Powszechny* was a Catholic weekly which, although not officially forbidden at the time, was not officially accepted either and as such a risky publication for Pani Prazmowska to order for the cultural centre.

⁵⁸ Józef Piłsudski was an important Polish statesman in the interwar period and a hero of Poland's independence. During the socialist period his name was not mentioned in historical accounts because of his strong anti-Russian and anti-Soviet politics. Following the collapse of communism in 1989, he is now seen as a national hero.

resistance in various ways, from participating in strikes to organizing meetings and lectures on “forbidden” topics. At the same time, Pani Prazmowska’s narrative in particular offers somewhat of a challenge to the notion of the 1980s as a time characterized by all-pervasive repression. She speaks of her demotion with surprising lightness, stating that she knew what the rules were and expected the outcome of her actions. She returns to the subject of work, noting that after martial law ended in 1983, it was business as usual. She again rejects the notion of state-imposed control, pointing out that nobody questioned her activities even when they were politically risqué, such as organizing lectures on topics in Polish history that were not officially sanctioned.

In between a cradle of socialism and a bastion of resistance

As I outlined in earlier chapters, Nowa Huta is represented alternately (and sometimes simultaneously) as a “model socialist town” or as a bastion of resistance against the socialist government. The previous sections depict people’s memories of Nowa Huta’s days of glory as well as its darkest period in the 1980s. In between those two extremes, however, lie the stories of everyday life. Such stories challenge the dichotomy between passivity and resistance, between the demonization of the socialist system and its glorification, reminding us that most people were neither passive victims nor active resisters, but rather sought to live their lives within the set of opportunities and constraints available (Dunn 2004, Yurchak 2006).

Propaganda and censorship are aspects of the socialist period frequently highlighted in hegemonic accounts as elements of the repressive state that was PRL. However, when these topics come up in the stories of my interlocutors, they are framed

as everyday constraints with which one simply had to cope. For example, when I asked Pan Gawęda to tell me about his job as a photographer for Nowa Huta's newspaper, he described it in the following terms: "It was tremendously exciting work... Regardless of the political system in place, it is an incredible adventure to see a new town come to life."

I asked what sorts of things he documented for the newspaper.

There was a lot of visual propaganda... I took pictures of steelworkers at work by the blast furnace, steel factory delegates laying wreaths at some monument or another, or a steelworkers' brigade making production pledges or beating a record... The entire Poland would see a picture of a youth brigade at Lenin Steelworks pouring steel on the front cover of the newspaper... Sometimes the workers had no idea that the management had made a pledge on their behalf to increase production targets... I would arrive at the production hall, line up workers for the picture, and they would be asking why they are getting their picture taken. They had no idea that they had just committed to beating a record!

I asked if in his work he felt constrained by ideological pressures or censorship.

"Not really," he responded. Sure there were certain topics that needed to be included, such as work brigades beating records, or photos from party meetings. There were also certain topics or photos that were deemed to risky because of the censorship: for example, his picture of a woman with a set of toilet paper rolls on a string around her neck was deemed to be too political.⁵⁹ "But other than that we tried to make a normal newspaper," he said.

Pan Gawęda's story problematizes the notion of socialism as a repressive system, ideologically-driven and all-controlling. On the one hand, Pan Gawęda does acknowledge a certain amount of ideological pressure and censorship. However, his overall view of his work is that censorship and propaganda aside, he and his colleagues made a "normal

⁵⁹ The sight of a person bearing several rolls of toilet paper strung on a rope was not unusual during periods of shortages. This picture was probably deemed "too political" because it depicted one of the problems plaguing the socialist system: ubiquitous shortages.

newspaper.” The concept of “normality” deserves a brief mention here, for in Poland the expression “normal” is often used to denote not what is, but rather what *should be* (see also Wedel 1986). What Pan Gawęda presumably means is that, notwithstanding certain ideological requirements or constraints, he and his colleagues tried to produce a newspaper that reported on the news, the way a “normal” newspaper should.

Not only newspapers, but other government-organized cultural, athletic and recreational activities were often perceived as ideologically motivated. I asked Pani Prażmowska, former director of OKN cultural centre, whether she was under a lot of ideological pressure to promote a certain political agenda through the centre’s activities.

DP: Not really... I pretty much did whatever I wanted because I knew that nobody at the steel factory would actually check up on us... Of course there were certain requirements that could not be avoided. For example we had to do something for anniversary of the October Revolution or for May 1st ... So for the October Revolution I would order a Russian movie for the movie theatre (the cultural centre has its own small movie theatre). I never especially promoted it and nobody came to check how many people actually showed up to see it... But, there were certain times when the director (of the steel factory) called me in to explain some things... for example, when I invited a priest as a speaker at an event.

KP: And what happened?

DP: Nothing. I had to explain why I invited him and then everything was fine.

Sorting through her picture box, we come across a picture from an event celebrating the 30th anniversary of the creation of PZPR (Polish United Workers’ Party). The picture depicts people dancing and drinking with a few posters hanging on the walls behind them. “See, this is what these things were like,” she tells me. “The posters would be hanging on the walls, and people wouldn’t care what they were or why they were there, they were just there to eat, drink, dance and have a good time.”

Many public institutions reproduce the dominant ideas of the nation-state through their activities. This was the case during the socialist period and is still the case now. A director of another cultural centre highlighted this when she said that whereas in the 1980s she had to prepare programming to celebrate the October Revolution, ten years later the emphasis changed to European Union-related events.

Pani Prażmowska's comment on skirting state pressures challenges the notion that life in socialist states was characterized by an all-pervasive ideology that permeated every aspect of life – a notion frequently found in contemporary historical accounts of life during the socialist period. Just as Elizabeth Dunn (2004) has pointed out that people were neither passive objects, nor actively resisted the socialist state, this comment illustrates that people frequently invested state symbols and activities with their own meanings and purposes, as in the case of using a socialist anniversary as an excuse to go out and have a good time.

Many people also balanced practical considerations with ideological beliefs. For example, for many people the decision to join the Party was a practical one in order to guarantee certain benefits and facilitate daily life. Many people I encountered in the course of my fieldwork told me that they joined the Party because “it helped with a lot of things,” “it made things easier,” or because they needed the affiliation for a certain practical purpose. That was the case of Pani Prażmowska, for whom joining the Party was a requirement for career advancement.

Pani Prażmowska's first job was that of a librarian and event planner at OKN. She quickly moved up the ranks and was approached about the possibility of applying for the

centre's director position. She said she gave this proposition a lot of thought, since it would have required her to join the Party. She did not make this decision lightly, she said.

At that time, it was a given that if you wanted to be in a management position you had to be in the Party, that was just a requirement...and I hesitated for a long time, because I've never been affiliated with any party and I don't like parties... But then the employees convinced me... they said to me 'look you've been here for so long, we want you to be the director. If you give it up, God knows who they're going to send us.' Because then they would send someone from the outside, competent or not, but with Party connections. I thought about it for a long time. But then the 7th PZPR meeting⁶⁰ took place, and it seemed to me that things were changing... So I decided to join.

She joined and received her director's appointment in 1978.

In her account, Pani Prażmowska acknowledges that people had to conform in certain ways in order to succeed or advance professionally. She does not dwell on this but rather accepts that these were the rules that had to be followed. This idea of coping, of navigating the structure of opportunities and constraints posed by the system, does not generally find its way into hegemonic accounts of the past. In the course of my fieldwork, I heard many such stories. For example, Pani Kowalczyk, a former steelworks employee told me that she attended strikes in the 1980s but would walk along with strikes only the first part of their usual route, and leave before reaching the point where ZOMO (riot police) forces usually waited. She did this, she said, because at the time she was also completing a university degree in engineering and was concerned that if she were arrested she would get thrown out of university. Another man, Pan Musiałek told me that when Solidarność was first created in 1980, he was one of the first employees at his division to become a member, even though at that time he was still a member of the

⁶⁰ 7th PZPR meeting (VIII Zjazd PZPR) was a central meeting of the Workers' Party which took place in 1975. Pani Prażmowska implies that after the resolutions undertaken at the meetings she believed that the party was committed to making changes.

Party. During martial law, when all the workers were called in to sign “*lojalki*” (statements affirming their loyalty to the socialist government and socialism as an ideology), he hesitated as to what he should do. In the end, he went before the Party committee, and before they had a chance to ask him anything, thundered as loud as he could: “I’m a member of the Party and I know the meaning of party discipline!” He said his statement must have made an impression on the committee for they never bothered him again.

These stories, and many others like them, present a more nuanced account of the past than many dominant narratives, which tend to portray the history of life in PRL in terms of resistance on the part of oppressed people against an oppressive state. While the totalitarian model has long been problematized in Western social sciences, in Poland it continues to inform many official accounts of the past. The characterization of the socialist state as “totalitarian” recurs in many popular and scholarly discourses. For example, when I asked one university history student why she chose to do her internship at the Nowa Huta museum, she replied that she has always been fascinated by the working of a totalitarian system, and she viewed Nowa Huta as an embodiment of the totalitarian project. However, the people whose accounts are discussed in this section do not portray themselves as victims, or as actively resisting repression. They accept that the existing political-economic system imposed certain requirements and restrictions, and they exercised agency within this framework, balancing their own needs and beliefs with requirements, constraints and practical considerations.

Nowa Huta after 1989

In the course of my research I talked with my interlocutors about what has changed in Nowa Huta since socialism's collapse, a question that invited reflections on the past and comparisons with the present. Some of my interlocutors talked to me about changes specific to Nowa Huta; others used the question as a springboard to reflect more broadly on larger political, economic and social conditions. Their views on the changes that have taken place are informed, whether more or less consciously, by their past experiences of fundamentally different political, economic and social conditions.

Some of my interlocutors talked about Nowa Huta's decline, most commonly using as a frame of reference the decline of the steelworks and the visible decline of shopping and entertainment opportunities. Many people gave me a litany of the stores that used to exist in Nowa Huta, such as the popular bookstore chain Empik, or *Moda Polska*, a favourite Polish boutique chain during the 1980s. People complained about the lack of decent restaurants and coffee shops. They contrasted the vibrant life in Nowa Huta in the past with the current situation, where "all the nice stores are gone and the only thing left is a discount clothing shop on every corner."

On the other hand, most of my interlocutors positively remarked on the fact that in recent years "there is more going on" in Nowa Huta. Many of them remembered the hustle and bustle in town in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, which they saw as a sign of vitality, and they welcomed new revitalization initiatives. Władysław Kwiecień, a man in his early fifties, and manager of one of the steelwork's production divisions, talked about Nowa Huta in these terms.

It would be nice (*fajnie*) if Nowa Huta could go back to the time when it was alive... We need more events, more people who are engaged. Lately there are more things starting to happen here, and that is good.

My question about changes frequently brought up larger political, economic and social issues, such as growing income discrepancies, declining social welfare, and Poland's unequal integration into the European economy. Pan Pawłowski, the previously-introduced Nowa Huta "builder", responded to my question about what has changed in Nowa Huta in the following words:

There are some beautiful new buildings being built around Nowa Huta... But you see how they are squeezed together, developers don't care if people have any green space at all, or if they won't have a store close by to get milk. So you see, there is a difference in the way of thinking between the new, good leaders, and the old, evil (*wredne*) ones... (the words "good" and "evil" are said in an ironic tone)... Borders are now open so people are free to go anywhere they want in the world... the availability of products, there is such a variety, you can buy whatever you want... and freedom of speech.... in the old days, there were restrictions on what you could say, but then again, when you had a problem people would listen and help you. Now you can say whatever you want, but nobody is listening.

Pan Pawłowski begins by praising contemporary real estate development, but nonetheless unfavourably contrasts the developers' quest for profit with the centrally planned neighbourhoods of the socialist era, implying that the allegedly "bad" socialist government which built Nowa Huta was in fact more attuned to the needs of the people than the current one. He goes on to note certain positive aspects of democratic reforms such as increased civil liberties (the right to travel, freedom of speech), although he also points out that theoretical freedom of speech does not guarantee that one's concerns will be listened to.

Pan Gawęda, the retired photographer, used the privatization and sale of the steelworks as a reference point to talk about the growing gap between the rich and the poor.

After the transformation it all went down (*siadło*). It makes me sad that all national wealth got sold off so easily... It was always the case that people in management positions made more than workers, but now, the discrepancy between the salaries is crazy...

In the quote above, Pan Gawęda addresses two aspects of market reforms: privatization of state enterprises, and salaries. Like some of my interlocutors cited in Chapter 2, he perceives the steelworks' sale as the "selling off of national wealth." This is a common theme in many people's accounts of the transformation process, particularly industrial workers (not the case with Pan Gawęda) who have been inculcated with the notion that they are the true owners of their enterprises, yet, once the economic reforms set in, suddenly realized that they do not have much say in the running of their newly privatized enterprises, which are now informed by the principles of profit, supply and demand, and which in many cases have been sold off to foreign corporations (eg. Dunn 2004, Hardy 2009). Some people also use the language of the "selling off of national wealth" to refer to what they perceive as Poland's unequal position in the European playing field, where wealthy Western corporations have simply swept in and "cherry picked" the best of Polish enterprise (Hardy 2009).

Pan Gawęda then transitions from the steelworks' privatization to growing wage disparity, an understandable concern given his position as pensioner. It is worth recalling here that pensioners are a group seen as one of the most disadvantaged by the postsocialist economic reforms, their pensions not able to keep up with the rising cost of living (Hardy 2009). He retired in 1990, at the age of 60, with a meager retirement package. He says that under the "old system" he would be entitled to a steelworker's pension and receive 2000 złoty a month (since he was an employee of the steel factory), but after the newspaper separated from the steel factory all those benefits were taken

away from him and he is left with 1200 złoty a month, a rather meager pension by Polish standards.

A retired steelworker in his sixties, Pan Krzemiński, similarly addressed inequality and wage disparity.

We still have the same problem we had during communism. We still have a class of people who earn very good money, but a regular worker can barely make ends meet. What's more, there are no social benefits, benefits for the family.... None of the governments that have been in power in our new reality (*nowa rzeczywistość* – referring to the period after 1989) improved things for the working person... People's salaries are unjustly low. If you earn 1000 zł, even 1500 zł, it is not really worth it to work... That is something that went wrong.

In this quote, Pan Krzemiński speaks of the “unjustly low” salaries as a negative outcome of market reforms. Interestingly, he perceives this as a continuation of the socialist period, where disparities in salaries and access to benefits also existed, albeit on different terms. In this quote he identifies as a worker, alluding presumably to the unequal position of the “working person” vis-à-vis the new entrepreneurial class.

Concurrently, Pan Krzemiński praised the general changes that have taken place in Nowa Huta in the recent years. “Nowa Huta is going in a good direction”, he told me. He was president of the Association for Nowa Huta's Development (Stowarzyszenie na Rzecz Rozwoju Nowej Huty), which was instrumental in helping create the Nowa Huta Museum. However, he also underscored the need for new investment in Nowa Huta. This, he says, is the responsibility of the government.

People have good ideas, but it's really difficult to implement them because of barriers like high taxes or high rent... I tried opening up my own small repairs business, and I also have friends who have their own small businesses... for all of us, it's really difficult to even break even (*odbić się od dna*, literally “to bounce off the bottom”).

At present, small businesses are struggling, not being able to withstand competition from large, mostly foreign-owned chains. Pani Małgorzata, owner of a small women's clothing and fabric store complained about the decline of Nowa Huta's central core, a phenomenon that she said was only made worse by the development of new shopping complexes on the district's outskirts, which draw all life away from the centre. She talked to me about her business as I sat with her behind the counter, "helping" her sell ribbons, buttons, handkerchiefs and the like. Young people do not come into smaller stores anymore, she said, they go to the large malls. It is also difficult to procure brand-name clothes that are attractive to younger people because clothing suppliers prefer to deal with large chains and do not trouble themselves with small stores like hers. In response, she began to carry more products that shopping malls will not carry because they are not profitable, such as buttons, sequins and ribbons. I remarked that small businesses have it difficult everywhere, in Canada as well as Poland. True, she agreed, but Polish postsocialist reforms were such that small businesses never had a chance:

Capitalism happened too fast, rich foreign firms came in too fast and small businesses never had a chance to make enough money to be able to compete... We (ie: Poland) are a colony.

A few of my other interlocutors who similarly owned their own small businesses (a bike shop, a car repair shop and a home décor store), complained to me about unfavourable laws and regulations that make it very difficult for small businesses to survive, especially after the 2008 economic downturn. One man who owned a home repairs business dissolved it and presently conducts repairs for his former clients "under the table." People blame the different levels of governments for pandering to large

(mostly foreign) corporations but not creating favourable conditions for small entrepreneurs, for high taxes and additional fees, and for unclear and often contradictory laws that make bureaucracy a nightmare, issues that are also frequently raised in the media (eg. Śmigiel 2011).

The sentiment among many of my interlocutors was that with the opening up of the markets to foreign capital, Poland became a “colony” (in Pani Małgorzata’s words) of the richer West. Once the so-called “free market” has proven to disadvantage small entrepreneurs, people like Pan Krzemiński once again look to the state to create the conditions under which they would be able to prosper.

Looking back on “the system”

People’s accounts of the past often included a sort of a sum-up of the socialist “system.” While many of my interlocutors acknowledged positive aspects of the socialist period, they were careful to disavow their support for the socialist system on the whole. Aunt Magda, for instance, told me on several occasions that “the only good thing about that system” was the opportunity to get an education, and Pan Gawęda conceded that “even PZPR (the Worker’s Party) wasn’t all bad... there were a lot of people in party committees who did a lot of good in that damn system.” Pan Kalisiak, a 60 year old avid cyclist and kayaker, like many people talked to me about the decline of athletic opportunities:

In those bad communist times – and I’m not saying they were good times – but there was money for this sort of thing... Now there is no money for coaches, for equipment. Our kayaking club was thriving... I’m not a fan of the May 1st parades, but when they took place, our club would be represented by 60 members with rows...

Pan Szewczyk, former director of social affairs at the steelworks and a former member of the Party, critiqued the socialist system on the whole while noting that the economic conditions that ensued after its collapse are not advantageous for the country either. His comment echoes some of the earlier concerns about Poland's national well-being in the condition of globalization, where "national wealth" has been sold off to foreign corporations and national production has declined in favour of foreign imports.

That entire system was sick. The steelworks produced 7 million tonnes of steel a year but it was a miracle to receive a coupon to buy a small Fiat (*maluch*). When someone got one everyone would point them out with their fingers. Now cars don't fit on the streets. But it's not our steel, it's foreign steel. Before the system was different, the steel did not go towards the products that were needed, but it did go towards investments. New workplaces or shipyards were being built. The saddest thing for me is that our primary industries are sold to foreign companies. The fact that there are new supermarkets, that there is a tanning salon on every street and other things, that's very good. But the basic thing that brings profit is industry. It doesn't have to be steelworking, it can be making construction materials, electronics, but something that is made, not processed. But everything we have now is from China, if you go to the store you can't find any Polish-made products. Regardless of what politicians say about future perspectives, this does not forecast anything good... You can't criticize everything about that system. It was what it was. That is what Poland was like, and that is the Poland we worked in. What else could we have done. If all of this didn't get built then, it wouldn't be here now. The system was what it was... we appreciate that the changes that took place were inevitable and had to happen, sooner or later.

The only one among my interlocutors who claimed to have an overall positive impression of the socialist period was Pani Prazmowska, who nonetheless finally conceded that she does not long for its return.

If I were to sit down and do a sum-up of PRL I think it would be mostly positive... I don't see myself as oppressed or used by the system. So much great literature, film, poetry, art, was produced during that time. So many wonderful, talented people were educated. As a matter fact, most Solidarność activists were educated during that time as well... That was a good thing about that system, it

actually did elevate those who were bright and driven. People who were good had a chance to get ahead. Of course, that only worked up to a certain level, the higher up the party ranks the more political things got... I don't long for the return of the old system, but I wish that the country had been governed more wisely since then.

The above quotes illustrate how people try to come to terms with the complexity of their experiences and resist the polarization of discourses that exists in hegemonic accounts on the past. People whose voices are cited above distance themselves from support of the socialist government but nonetheless appreciate certain areas of social value, such as education, social spending on culture and recreation, or the protection of national industries, areas which they invoke as critiques of present conditions.

Conclusion

In this chapter I addressed people's memories of the socialist period, using the idiom of *Nowa Huta* as a frame of reference and in some cases, a springboard for triggering memories and reflections. The accounts of *Nowa Huta* residents speak to both larger national events and their local manifestations, including postwar rebuilding, the relative prosperity of the 1970s, martial law and shortages of the 1980s, as well as the everyday life in between. My interlocutors occupied different social locations, both during the socialist period and in the present, and they also chose to emphasize different aspects of their experiences in their conversations with me.

The accounts told throughout this chapter alternately reproduce and challenge prevailing discourses on the past (for similar examples see Armstrong 2000, Passerini 1982, Richardson 2008). *Nowa Huta* residents have a variety of local representations at their disposal, which are sometimes synchronous with, and at other times challenge, the

hegemonic national discourse on socialism. In their accounts, Nowa Huta residents selectively draw on many of the same arguments, themes and images that we encountered in Nowa Huta's public representations in the previous chapter, for example the notion of Nowa Huta as the epitome of the "good life," or the stories of repression and resistance. At the same time, however, people can also explicitly reject the discourses available to them and offer alternative interpretations.

As the accounts in this chapter illustrate, people's assessments of the socialist past emerge in response to contemporary political, economic and social circumstances, and conversely, people's critiques of the present are informed by their experiences of different conditions in the past. Memory, as I have set out in the introduction, is about the present as much as it is about the past (Halbwachs 1982, Climo and Cattel 2002, Misztal 2003, Lowenthal 1985), and is often deployed to "validate the view of the past that has become important...in the present" and to "support... the present with a past that logically leads to a future that the individual or group now finds acceptable" (Teski and Climo 1995: 3). At present, the dominant memory "script" (Jelin 2003) of which contemporary Polish national identity is made, views the socialist period in terms of repression and resistance, a framework that explains and legitimizes the political and economic reforms that followed, and paves the way for a future that is politically and economically tied to the European Union. As the narratives cited throughout this chapter indicate, many people identify with this version of the past. I suggest that doing so both allows them to situate themselves in the current national project, and also gives meaning to their past actions, since many of them were involved in, or at least supported, the political opposition in the 1980s.

At the same time, the past is frequently invoked in order to critique present conditions, whether consciously or not. People whose voices are heard throughout this chapter positively recall regular and stable employment, publicly funded and accessible education, and government provisions for culture, athletics and recreation. These reflections need to be viewed in the context of current political and economic conditions, including unemployment, privatisation and sale of national enterprises to foreign firms, and decline of social provisions (including pensions, or funding for social services). While people's objective is not to revive the old system, they nonetheless object to having lost certain areas of social welfare, which have been thrown out as part and parcel of the "socialism" package by postsocialist reformers.

Many similar critiques have emerged on the part of people in other former socialist states (eg. Berdahl 2001, Boym 2001, Dragomir 2009, Enns 2007, Pine 2002a, Vodopivec N. 2010). Positive recollections of aspects of the socialist past are often characterized as "nostalgia" in both scholarly and popular accounts, generally in order to explain positive feelings about the past on the part of people who have "lost out" in the reforms (eg. Klumbyte 2008, Spaskovska 2008, Todorova and Gille 2010). I, however, tend to side with Berdahl's observation that they represent not so much nostalgia, as the "longing for an alternative moral order" (Berdahl 2001: 47). A similar point is made by Frances Pine, who observes:

When people evoked the 'good' socialist past, they were not denying the corruption, the shortages, the queues and the endless intrusions and infringements by the state; rather they were choosing to emphasize other aspects: economic security, full employment, universal healthcare and education" (2002a: 111)

Writing in a Romanian context, Dragomir (2009) makes a similar argument, claiming that people do not miss socialism as a political ideology, but rather are attached to principles of social welfare, whose erosion they are now witnessing.

The accounts depicted in this chapter can also contribute some insights about people's relationship to state projects and ideologies – whether they be projects of the socialist or the neoliberal state. In contemporary Polish historical accounts, PRL is generally depicted as a repressive, inefficient state which sought to impose on the people an ideology that was not acceptable to the majority of the population (and hence was eventually overthrown). While I in no way deny the repressive characteristics of the socialist state or the presence of ideology, the accounts cited in this chapter suggest that people engage with state projects selectively and critically, adopting what is acceptable or useful to them and ignoring or discarding what is not. In their accounts of the socialist period, people invoke themes such as postwar rebuilding, industrialization, protection of the national economy, education, secure employment, and public funding of culture and recreation. All these themes have constituted the tenets of the socialist government's ideology and policies. Although contemporary accounts depict PRL as a state and system that never gained people's acceptance, with the benefit of hindsight we can see that the principles enumerated above may have in fact become more hegemonic than is acknowledged in contemporary official discourses – and perhaps more hegemonic than the people themselves were aware of at the time. At the same time, people's accounts of dealing with censorship or propaganda are a good illustration of the fact that people did their best to get around, or ignore, requirements or ideas which did not suit them.

At the same time, people do identify with elements of neoliberal ideology which informs contemporary discourses on the present and the past. For example, my interlocutors seemed to accept the idea that socialism's collapse was inevitable, as illustrated by the words of Pan Szewczyk: "we appreciate that the changes that took place were inevitable and had to happen, sooner or later." At the same time, people are conscious of the neoliberal project's shortcomings (especially when they play out in their own lives), and they selectively draw on the past to critique phenomena such as unemployment, job insecurity, rampant privatization, or the decline of state spending on areas of social and public value.

In their accounts, many of my interlocutors invoked the themes of repression and resistance – themes which constitute the central tenets of contemporary discourses on socialism. I suggest this discourse resonates with a large section of the population because it does reflect people's actual experiences. Martial law, arrests or persecution of strikers, censorship, or even the allocation of higher-ranking positions on political grounds, can all be viewed as more or less direct forms of repression. In the 1980s, the majority of Poland's population supported the Solidarity movement, whether more or less directly; in the case of people whose voices are cited above, the only person who distanced himself from support for Solidarity was Pan Pawłowski. Even he, however, while explicitly refusing to criticize the socialist system, nonetheless acknowledges democratic reforms (freedom of speech and travel, removal of censorship) as positive improvements.

The notion of the socialist period as a time characterized by repression and resistance thus provides a shared version of history with which most people can identify,

albeit to different degrees (see also Middleton and Edwards 1990). However, the accounts of my interlocutors also suggest that at least some people perceive the prevailing discourse of repression and resistance as excessive or overly reductive. This can be seen, for instance, in Pani Prażmowska's explicit refusal to see herself as "repressed" by the system (even though her experience of demotion could in fact be interpreted in these terms), or Pan Gawęda's insistence that, censorship and propaganda aside, he and his colleagues made a "normal newspaper."

This chapter focused on the older generations of Nowa Huta residents. As illustrated by the movie "A cigarette from the president," there is a public perception of the older generation – the generation of the "builders" – as largely supportive of socialism and nostalgic for the socialist period, with the "builders' children" associated with resistance to socialism, especially during the 1980s. There is, indeed, something to be said for that characterization, although the builders cannot be equated solely with support and their children solely with resistance. In the accounts above, it is true that the majority of people who spoke of Nowa Huta as a "life opportunity" were people in their eighties who have at least some recollections of World War II and who found in Nowa Huta a new home and a place to work. At the same time, people of that age also voiced critiques of the socialist system, as in the case of Pan Gawęda who called it a "damn system," or Pan Szewczyk who claimed that "that entire system was sick."

Stories of repression and resistance, particularly in the 1980s, were most often voiced by the generation of "builders' children," who would have been in their twenties and thirties when martial law was declared in 1981 and as such constitute what is now called the "Solidarity generation." At the same time, this group does not present

uniformly negative assessments of the socialist period. People of that generation also enumerated positive aspects of the socialist period, such as education and social spending on culture and recreation, and drew on their experiences of the past to voice critiques of present conditions.

Taken together, the accounts cited throughout this chapter speak to people's differing experiences, informed by different events at different points in time. My interlocutors occupied different social locations, both during the socialist period and in the present, and this diversity is reflected in their accounts. Just as is the case with multiple public representations of Nowa Huta's past described in the previous chapter, this multivocality contributes to a more complex and nuanced understanding of "what life was like" during PRL.

In this chapter I addressed memories of the past among the generation of Nowa Huta residents who have first-hand memories and experiences of the socialist period. In the following chapter I ask what the younger generation of Nowa Huta residents, those born either in the last years of the socialist period or after its collapse, know and think about this period in history.

CHAPTER 5
THE SOCIALIST PAST THROUGH THE EYES OF NOWA HUTA'S YOUNGER
GENERATION

It is the morning of April 27. A group of workers arrive with shovels to dig out the wooden cross which has been put up by the local population to mark the site of the future church. A few passerbys, all women, stop and take notice. They flock to the cross, hitting the workers with their purses and shopping bags and force them away. They kneel down at the cross and begin to pray and sing. After some time, a special riot squad (ZOMO) arrives and begins to disperse the praying women with the aid of rubber batons. A few unmarked police cars pull up and the more vocal women are dragged inside and driven away by secret security police members dressed in civillian clothes. The event I am watching is a re-enactment of Nowa Huta's famous Battle for the Cross on its 50th anniversary, and the women as well as their persecutors are high school and university history students.

Reenactments and street games pertaining to the socialist period are becoming increasingly popular, targeting especially young people. The usual formula requires participants to fulfill some potentially subversive or otherwise difficult tasks, such as carrying an underground leaflet or buying a kilo of ham, while trying to evade persecution by the citizens' militia, or worse, the riot police or the secret security agency. But what do such games tell its participants about the socialist period?

In the previous chapter, I explored memories of socialism among the older generation of Nowa Huta residents. In this chapter I turn my attention to the younger generation, people who have little or no personal memories or experiences of the socialist period. I ask what they know and think about life in PRL, focusing in particular on two

sites where memory about the past is transmitted: schools and family. My research reveals that the socialist past is largely dismissed in favour of present and future concerns, but when addressed, is framed primarily in terms of repression, resistance and inefficiency. Young people in Nowa Huta learn about the past at school, through family histories, and through community programs and activities. From a combination of these diverse sources, many young people acquire what I term a “community memory” (Orr 1990),⁶¹ that is, knowledge of local Nowa Huta events, places and people which strongly informs their identities. While these sources often reproduce the hegemonic narrative of the socialist period as a time of repression and resistance, they may also allow young people to engage with history in different ways.

Defining “young people” in Nowa Huta

In this chapter I address memories of the past among the younger generations of Nowa Huta residents. In the previous chapter, I set out my approach to generation as “historical category” (Kertzer 1982; also Mannheim 1972, Abrams 1980), which views generation as a group of people whose consciousness is shaped by the same historical events and processes, and who thus share a similar “system of meanings and possibilities” (Abrams 1980: 256). I argued that socialism’s collapse can be viewed as a historical event constituting a generational boundary between those who have experienced life in a socialist state and those who did not (eg. Roberts 2009). In Poland, this latter group is defined as a generation on the basis of not having experienced life

⁶¹ Orr (1990) used the term “community memory” with reference to the “community” of photocopy repair technicians. Orr defines “community memory” as the knowledge that most members of the community share. He argues that, while “social distribution of this knowledge is not perfectly uniform... members of the community also know who of their number is most likely to know those answers which they do not” (1990: 169).

during the socialist period, and having been shaped by the political, economic and social conditions that followed socialism's collapse (Roberts 2009, Zdziechowska and Sachno 2009). This group is seen, for example, as "unspoilt by socialism" and technologically-savvy.

As with the older generation discussed in the previous chapter, this younger generation can also be divided into cohorts. In Poland, newly coined terms include for example Generation '89 (Tadla 2009), sometimes also called the Generation of Transformation (Degler 2007) to denote a group of people who were children in the 1980s and entered adulthood in the 1990s. This group is often contrasted with Generation of Freedom, that is, young people born in the 1990s (Gutkowski 2009). I do not adopt these terms here, especially since in Nowa Huta, the umbrella term "young people" encompasses everyone from children to people in their early thirties. As my discussion will show, however, there are some differences between the older and younger cohorts in terms of their interest in, and knowledge about, the socialist past. The older cohort, composed of people in their late twenties and early thirties, holds some early childhood memories of life during the socialist period, and as such constitutes somewhat of a bridge between the older and younger generations of Nowa Huta residents, as it shares characteristics of both when it comes to remembering the past.

When it comes to knowledge about the socialist period, today's "young people" are popularly seen as not knowledgeable about, or interested in, the past (Roberts 2009, Zdziechowska and Sachno 2009). For example, when asked in surveys their opinions about socialism or about specific events that have taken place during the socialist period, nearly half of them typically check off "unsure" or "no opinion," which is taken as signs

of disengagement, ignorance and passivity (Kwiatkowski 2008). Indeed, when I first asked young people (particularly teenagers and people in their early twenties) what they know about the socialist period, many of them initially responded that they themselves do not know anything and advised me to speak to their grandparents instead. Some asked to meet with me at a later date to give them a chance to brush up on their historical knowledge. Parents and teachers, for their part, frequently alluded to young people's lack of knowledge about the past. A few of my middle-aged interlocutors compared their children's ignorance of the socialist period to their own ignorance of World War II. While acknowledging the two to be incomparable, they drew analogies between the fact that, just as they themselves could not relate to their parents' war stories, so their children cannot possibly understand what it was like to live in a socialist state.

This explanation speaks to people's perception of the socialist period as a radically different political, economic and social framework from the present one. Socialism's collapse is seen to have constituted a major dividing line between the past and the present, and memory is one factor that reinforces this division. Memory becomes the currency through which the older generation claims knowledge of the past and authority to act in the present. For example, Krzysiek, a university history student, told me that there are certain topics in history (such as the past of certain Solidarity heroes) which are "untouchable," and young historians who dare to venture into this territory are discredited on account of not being able to know "what it was really like". On the other hand, Krzysiek claimed for himself and his generation of young historians a greater degree of objectivity on account of being removed from the events and political networks of the socialist period. It became clear to me that young people are popularly seen, and in

turn see themselves, as being very removed from the socialist past. However, the past is always in the present, the two being a dynamic process. The past surfaces in media discourses on current political or economic issues, in popular culture, in schools and in family stories. What kind of impressions about the socialist period do young people derive from these sources?

In the course of my fieldwork, I volunteered with Muzeum PRL-u, which organized a history club for high school students. Twenty students were recruited from different schools across the city and brought together for bi-weekly lectures and movie screenings dealing with different aspects of life during the socialist period. Participation was strictly voluntary, and participating students (all of whom hailed from the “better” high schools in Kraków), expressed an interest in pursuing history or political science in university. Prior to being recruited, students were asked to fill out an application form. One of the questions on the form asked students about their knowledge of, or ideas about, socialist period. It read: “When you think of PRL you think of...?” I took advantage of this ready-made mini-survey to get a glimpse of the students’ thoughts on the topic.

Altogether, the twenty students surveyed came up with forty images/terms that they associated with the People’s Republic of Poland. While these by no means can be seen as “representative” of what young people know or think about socialism, they do give us some idea of the sort of associations they have. By far, the most prevalent terms listed were those pertaining to political events/elements, mostly repressive or otherwise negative ones. These included: “Iron Curtain,” “Gierek’s decade,”⁶² “martial law,” “May 1st parades,” “propaganda,” “voluntary labour brigades,” “security police,” “lack of

⁶² Gierek’s decade refers to the decade from 1970-1980, during which Edward Gierek was Poland’s First Secretary (the highest-ranking politician). The decade was characterized by rapid economic growth in the first half, to be followed by recession in the second.

trust,” “Polish United Workers’ Party,” and “censorship.” Some terms pertained to the legacy of resistance: “Solidarity,” “opposition,” “workers’ strikes,” “my Grandpa in Radom⁶³ during the 1976 strikes.” A few young people also alluded to socialist government’s inefficiencies, usually related to shortages, such as: “chocolate-like products,” (*wyroby czekoladopodobne*) “no choice of products,” “ration-coupons,” “waiting in lines,” “empty shelves,” “homemade sweaters,” and “absurdities.”

As the above example suggests, young people’s knowledge of the past is informed by themes of repression, resistance and inefficiency. But where do young people get these ideas from? Existing research from across the former Soviet Bloc identifies school, media and family as the principal sources of information about the socialist period among the post-socialist generation (eg. Baeva and Kalinova 2010, Dimou 2010, Hranova 2010, Vodopivec P. 2010). In this chapter I focus on ideas about the past that are derived from school and family. I discuss each in turn, although I recognize that, since memory is social and the product of interaction of multiple relationships, discourses and representations, it is impossible to pinpoint ideas about the past as originating from any one single source.

Socialism as history

Formal educational institutions play an important role in instilling the worldviews and ideologies of ruling elites (Gramsci 1971, Burke 2005 [1999]; see also Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). In postsocialist states, history was re-written and curricula in schools were changed to teach students the “new past” (Dimou 2010, Hranova 2010, Vodopivec P. 2010). By virtue of being presented as part of the history curriculum, the new accounts

⁶³ Radom is a Polish city in which in June 1976 a major wave of strikes broke out, in which 20 thousand people took part.

of the socialist period acquire a certain degree of legitimacy and authority. At the same time, however, it is worth remembering that education is not solely a top-down process and does not merely reproduce official versions of history; for example, Richardson's (2004) research on the subject of memory/history in post-Soviet Ukraine revealed that teachers, students, and students' families engage with textbook histories in multiple ways that sometimes challenge and at other times reinforce them.

In the course of my research I spoke with about a dozen history teachers and about thirty high school students about what students learn in history class about the socialist period. In Polish schools, information about the socialist period is usually conveyed to students in two subjects: history and social studies (*Wiedza o Społeczeństwie*, or WOS). However, as I will show, much depends on the particular school and on the individual teachers and students.

When I asked students what they have learned in school about the socialist period they typically replied “nothing” or “not much.” They explained that postwar history always falls at the end of the school year and that teachers typically either do not get around to it, or else cover the material in June when “nobody comes to class anymore.” A particularly poignant example of this is captured in my conversation with Ala, an 18-year old high school student.

KP: What did you learn about PRL in school?

AG: I don't know...nothing. We don't really talk about it. Maybe we'll talk about it if there is some anniversary or something.

KP: There was just an anniversary this past June (the 20th anniversary of the collapse of socialism).

AG: Really? Oh well then I don't know.

When I spoke to teachers about teaching Poland's postwar history in the classroom, they voiced many critiques of the curriculum, complaining that it does not allow them to dedicate nearly as much time to it as they would like to. At present, students learn postwar history in the last grade of each school level: primary school, middle school (*gimnazjum*) and high school (*liceum*). A high school history teacher told me that students who take a basic history program have an hour of history a week; students enrolled in an advanced program (these are students who plan on taking a matriculation exam in history, for example if they plan on studying history at the university level) have four hours. A basic history curriculum allows for about seven or eight 45-minute lessons on postwar history. She typically divides it in the following way: lesson 1) Europe after World War II; 2) world issues after World War II, with a focus on decolonization; 3) Stalinism; 4) the "thaw" of 1956 and Gomułka; 5) the 1970s and Gierek; 6) martial law; 7) collapse of socialism in 1989. If students have a field trip somewhere in there (and there are a lot of field trips towards the end of the year) she might lose a lesson. Since she also teaches WOS (social studies), she tries to squeeze in an extra lesson about the Roundtable discussions of 1989 and Lech Wałęsa (Solidarity's hero and the first democratically elected president of Poland after 1989).

Other history teachers voiced similar views. A middle school history teacher told me that students come to middle school having learned nothing in primary school, so he has to teach them everything from scratch. He said that depending on how quickly he can cover the program, he can usually devote about 4 to 6 classes to Polish postwar history. Similarly to the high school teacher, in his lessons he places emphasis on key political events such as the "thaw" of 1956, the Prague Spring and Polish strikes of 1968,

subsequent strikes in 1970 and 1976, martial law of 1981, and the collapse of socialism in 1989.

As the teachers' outlines show, the focus in history classes dealing with postwar history is on political events dealing with repressions and resistance, leading up to the collapse of socialism. The amount of lecture time dedicated to postwar history is rather sparse, with fifty years of very rich history squeezed into six or seven hours of class time. Teachers, for their part, complain about the constant erosion of classroom time dedicated to teaching history. Some of the teachers with whom I spoke perceived this as a sign of the times, a feature of the postmodern condition characterized by an orientation towards the present and future, the "here and now"⁶⁴. Others attributed it more concretely to the priorities of the political party currently in power (Platforma Obywatelska, or Civic Platform), which is stridently pro-market, strongly oriented towards moving Poland along a common European Union trajectory, and as such likely to promote "market oriented" disciplines such as business or information technology at the expense of the humanities and social sciences, and especially at the expense of history which is seen as best left in the past.

The present curriculum is slated to change in the near future, with a new curriculum commencing in 2013. The new curriculum will have students learning no recent history until high school. In high school, students will cover 20th century history in their first year, and in the following two years history will be combined with social studies and will

⁶⁴ This reflection on the part of the teachers is interesting when viewed in light of current literature on memory. The prevailing view informing this literature is that the postmodern age, characterized by new information technologies, as well as "new patterns of consumption, work, and global mobility" (Huyssen 2000:31) occasions amnesia, which in turn is countered by an obsession with memory (see also Nora 1989). Perhaps in Poland this "turn to memory" is taking place in ways other than through history curricula. Perhaps the memory that it is concerned with is not the memory of socialism; indeed the past two decades have been characterized by an outpouring of reconsiderations of World War II-era history. Or perhaps it is yet to come.

address certain chosen themes such as “Europe and the world,” “language, communication and media,” or “the rulers and the ruled.” The curriculum promotes European integration and identity, democracy and democratic values (there is an emphasis on terms such as “freedom of speech,” “free elections,” “free media,” and references to socialism’s “totalitarian ideology”), and seeks to instill in students the principles of “entrepreneurship”.⁶⁵ Even a cursory glance at the curriculum reveals that history and social science are intended to reproduce the notion of the socialist period as inefficient, characterized by repressions and resistance, and, because of this, as ultimately slated for downfall. Emphasis is placed on forging a shared European identity founded on democratic values and common economic interests.

I asked teachers how students respond to the lecture material. Are they interested in learning about the socialist period? Do they ever bring alternate accounts from home? A primary school history teacher told me that her students have an easier time understanding very distant history than recent history: “It’s much easier for them to imagine kings and castles than to imagine a world that looks sort of like theirs but all the shelves in the stores are empty.” A middle school history teacher observed a declining interest in history on the part of his students:

A decade ago more students were interested in history than there are now... many students of that cohort had parents who were active in the student strikes in the 1980s, and you could tell that this was talked about at home... But the students right now, their parents were in the 1980s the same age as they are now, and so they weren’t as politically aware.

⁶⁵ Curriculum outlines and objectives for history and social studies are available at http://www.men.gov.pl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2060%3Atom-4-edukacja-historyczna-i-obywatelska-w-szkole-podstawowej-gimnazjum-i-liceum-&catid=230%3Aksztacenie-i-kadra-ksztacenie-ogolne-podstawa-programowa&Itemid=290

One art history teacher related an anecdote about a time when she off-handedly referred to the phenomenon of “empty shelves.” A student put up his hand and asked with disbelief whether in a store such as Tesco (a British grocery/household chain) all the shelves would really be empty. For the teacher, this incident was a poignant example of students’ inability to piece together the fragments of information they receive about socialism from different sources into a coherent whole. The student was trying to fit the information into his existing worldview, not realizing that in socialist Poland there was no market as he knows it and no Western companies.

Teachers told me that students sometimes, though infrequently, bring accounts from home that challenge the versions of history they learn at school. For example, students may hear from their grandparents that in PRL it was easier to find work, easier to get an apartment, and even though there wasn’t much in the stores, one nonetheless had money to buy things. A primary school history teacher told me:

AK: Some children hear at home that their parents did not have all the great toys they (the children) have, but they were still happy because families had more time to spend together... Or, a few children have told me that their grandparents have received medals for their service to the country.

KP: And what do you say to that?

AK: I could never tell a child that their grandpa got a medal from a bad system.

A middle school teacher told me that he does not shy away from the complexities of history and welcomes class debates on the topic, although with every year that passes there are fewer and fewer students who bring accounts of the past from home. Although he himself was active in the student opposition in the 1980s, he said that it is important not to paint an overly one-dimensional picture of the past. He recalled a time during martial law when he and his friend were stopped by the citizens’ militia (*milicja*

obywatelska) patrol when walking home from a student group meeting after curfew. The patrol pulled up in a car, asked them where they were heading and offered them a ride. He gave them his home address, certain that instead he was being taken to a police station for questioning. To his surprise, the patrol indeed drove him and his friend home. This incident, he said, taught him to appreciate the nuances and complexities of the socialist system. He told me that he tries to convey to students that there were both positive and negative aspects of life during the socialist period, but that on the whole the system was repressive and inefficient.

Repressions, resistance and inefficiency indeed seem to be the principal key messages that the teachers with whom I spoke tried to convey to their students regarding the socialist period. One young middle school teacher in his late twenties took this even further. While he was in accordance with the others in that he, too, viewed the socialist period as a failure, he was the only one who expressed reservations about dwelling too much on the negative experiences of the past, instead advocating a form of forgetting that Connerton (2009) would term “prescriptive forgetting”, done in order to forge a new identity. Below I include a large excerpt from his e-mail to me (translation is mine):

I want to show them (ie: the students) what a hopeless system communism was... But I would much rather show them positive examples of past successes/wisdom/justice/courage, etc. This is how I understand the point of history. With PRL the problem is that the system spoiled all these values and often there are no positive examples.

To put it differently, I would prefer that they remember that Mieszko I⁶⁶ was a wise courageous ruler who united different lands, than to have them remember that fifty years ago in order to buy a laundry machine one had to finagle, stand in line for two days, demean oneself etc. The thousand years in between don't make a difference to me, the important thing is that they have a positive example...

⁶⁶ Mieszko I was a Polish prince who ruled circa 960-992, credited with consolidating the Polish state.

The Japanese adopted a method of “collective amnesia” after World War II. They know that there was so much evil that there is no sense remembering it all, it has to be sentenced to being forgotten. I wonder if it would not be best to implement the same method with relation to PRL.

The above cases lend themselves to a few observations regarding the role of schools in disseminating a particular version of Poland’s socialist-era history. First, there does not seem to be much top-down emphasis on teaching about socialism in schools, as evidenced by student perceptions that they learned “nothing” about socialism in school, and teachers’ complaints that the curriculum does not dedicate sufficient time to recent history. Second, whatever history is taught concentrates mainly on political events rather than accounts of the social, cultural or everyday life, a phenomenon also noted by Dimou (2010) and Vodopivec P. (2010) in their respective analyses of German and Croatian textbooks. This history presents the socialist period mostly in terms of repression, resistance, and inefficiency. Vodopivec P. (2010) echoes this finding almost literally, writing: “the dominant image of communism that Slovene and Croatian students will most likely get from recent history textbooks... [is] that communism was a politically repressive, popularly unattractive and economically inefficient system” (2010: 343).

Taken together, the relative lack of emphasis on history teaching, and the depiction of socialist-era history largely in terms of political repression, resistance, and inefficiency, reflect the larger trend in hegemonic memory which I described in the introduction. However, while the school curriculum may not prioritize recent history, much depends on individual schools and teachers. In Nowa Huta, there are many schools whose principals and teachers promote students’ involvement in local affairs and awareness of local history. Since the history of Nowa Huta is intertwined with the history

of the socialist period, students indirectly absorb knowledge about the past while learning about local events and affairs. Over the past decade in particular, there has been a more concerted effort on the part of key community players (eg. cultural centres, the local newspaper and museum) to promote knowledge about, and a sense of pride in, Nowa Huta's history. These efforts also reach into schools, influencing both the curriculum and extracurricular activities.

Many teachers try to incorporate knowledge about Nowa Huta's history into the curriculum even when it is not strictly part of the program. One history teacher described her efforts in the following way:

There is no reference to Nowa Huta in history textbooks, except maybe for a brief mention of it as a punishment for Kraków... It is up to the teacher to debunk this negative stereotype and to tell students about the tremendous effort made by people who built it and about life in Nowa Huta following its construction. Then, there may be another mention of Nowa Huta with relation to Solidarność strikes in the 1980s, but the emphasis is on Solidarność activities in Gdańsk, not in Nowa Huta. I try to add in information about Nowa Huta's role in Solidarność, and emphasize Nowa Huta's contribution to fighting for freedom... Over time, a lot of historical knowledge pertaining to Nowa Huta's history is lost, and students need to be taken to important places and explained why they are important.

The teacher went on to tell me that in the past she has taken her students to Arka Pana church (the Lord's Ark) and was surprised to find that even students who are parishioners of that church and have been attending masses there for years, do not know much about it and need to be given a tour. "By now, not all students hear at home who Bogdan Włosik was and need to be taught this at school," she observed.

A history teacher in primary school told me that she tries to bring in knowledge about Nowa Huta's history under the umbrella of "regional education," since the history curriculum does not cover postwar history until the last grade (grade 6). Students in

grades 1-3 begin by learning about their immediate neighbourhood, including the names of streets and their significance, the significance of their church,⁶⁷ and about interesting places around Nowa Huta and their history. By grades 4-6 students do activities such as interviewing family members on topics such as “a day in the life in the 1980s” or “what was life like when you were my age?”

In addition to complementing the curriculum with information relevant to Nowa Huta, many teachers also involve their students in various extracurricular activities related to Nowa Huta’s issues, such as various contests. One initiative that I followed closely throughout my stay in Poland was an annual history contest for middle and high school students called “Od Wandy do Sendzimir” (“From Wanda to Sendzimir”⁶⁸). The contest is a partnership between the Norwid Cultural Centre (OKN), the Nowa Huta historical museum, as well as participating schools (in the past year, 17 schools participated). The contest involves Saturday field trips to important historical sites associated with Nowa Huta (from the 12th-century Cistercian monastery to the steelworks), lectures, field games, and a final knowledge contest. Student teams composed of 3-5 students from each school along with the supervising teachers work on their own time on various assignments and tasks as well as prepare for the final knowledge contest. Students who participated in the contest told me that they learned interesting things about Nowa Huta that they did not know, and visited places that they

⁶⁷ This particular school is located in the Mistrzejowice neighbourhood. During the 1980s, its local parish (St. Maximilian Kolbe church) was a major site of political opposition. It was there that Father Jancarz, chaplain of Nowa Huta’s Solidarność, held his weekly Thursday “masses for the Fatherland,” attended by thousands of people. The church also organized meetings and conferences as well as organized help for members of the oppositions who were imprisoned or fired from work.

⁶⁸ The title refers to Nowa Huta’s history from its legendary beginning until the present. Wanda is a mythical Slavic princess, first mentioned in the historical record around the first century AD, after whom a mysterious mound located in Nowa Huta is named. Sendzimir is the name of a Polish-American engineer after whom Lenin Steelworks was renamed in the early 1990s.

do not normally get to see. A big hit among them was a trip to the steelworks, which is nearly impossible to visit otherwise. At the same time, the contest seemed to privilege pre-socialist history over more recent history. More than half the sites visited during the field trips were pre-war ones, such as the Cystercian monastery or churches and manor-houses in the outskirts of town. In fact, many students seemed to prefer older sites to more contemporary ones. Many remarked that they never knew that there were such pretty manor-houses in Nowa Huta and that they enjoyed seeing how much “old history” there is in the district.

The “Od Wandy do Sendzimira” contest is an example of a trend on the part of Nowa Huta schools to promote a knowledge of Nowa Huta’s history and a sense of local identity among the students. The emphasis on Nowa Huta’s history prior to the town’s construction reflects a growing trend among the community’s principal “memory-makers” (Kansteiner 2002) to move beyond Nowa Huta’s identity as a “communist town” by emphasizing its pre-socialist heritage (I discuss this in depth in Chapter 3).

In addition to programs such as the contest described above, many schools also take part in various community events held to celebrate occasions such as anniversaries. The year 2009 marked Nowa Huta’s 60th anniversary; as such, it was an occasion for schools to organize a variety of commemorative events. Nowa Huta schools organized field trips, concerts, and various artistic (art, photo, film, literary, web design) contests and exhibits related to Nowa Huta as well as its different neighbourhoods. These contests, exhibits and performances took up various themes related to Nowa Huta’s life and history, including architecture, sport, legends, literature and poetry, role of the Church, important Nowa Huta people, the first Nowa Huta residents (builders), and

Nowa Huta monuments.⁶⁹ In addition to the anniversaries of the town of Nowa Huta (since a “big” anniversary falls only every 10 years) schools also celebrate occasions such as school anniversaries, or anniversaries related to the schools’ patrons, which may also provide opportunities for students to learn about Nowa Huta’s history. Much depends on the interest and drive of school principal and teachers. Below, I describe two schools that I found particularly active in this regard.

Liceum XI is the oldest high school in Nowa Huta (founded in 1956) and is considered to be one of the better high schools in Nowa Huta. It is very grounded in local traditions and tries to instill in its students a sense of local identity and a knowledge of local history by organizing various community-oriented initiatives, frequently in collaboration with other local organizations. Several teachers at the school themselves attended the school, with some of the older teachers having taught some of the younger teachers when they were still students.

The school marked the 60th anniversary of Nowa Huta by organizing a number of contests: a geography contest whose purpose was to develop a walking or bike tour of Nowa Huta; an art contest to develop a coat of arms for Nowa Huta; a film contest where students were asked to produce a 5-15 minute short film about some aspect of Nowa Huta’s life; and a multimedia presentation about a specific Nowa Huta topic/issue. The contests culminated with an event called “Ballada o Nowej Hucie” (Nowa Huta Ballad), which was organized by over a hundred students, with almost the entire school taking part. For a few days, the school became a sort of a museum. The school’s building was initially a workers’ hostel (*hotel robotniczy*), and the school gym was built on the site of

⁶⁹ A complete 60th anniversary program detailing activities of all Nowa Huta schools is available at <http://www.60nh.pl/pl/8/0/5/edukacja>

Nowa Huta's first movie theatre *Stal* (Steel). For a day, the gym again became a movie theatre where movies and slide shows about Nowa Huta were screened. The school's former teachers and some of its first students came to talk to students about what life in Nowa Huta was like in the 1950s. Hallways were filled with displays about every aspect of Nowa Huta's life, including landscapes, churches, sports, green spaces, underground publications and architecture. A few of the students interviewed their family members and produced Nowa Huta family sagas. Students and teachers also brought in a variety of objects from the past 60 years, including old televisions and money – there was even the first Polish laundry machine *Frانيا* (Franny). This exhibit, the teacher told me, was the biggest hit among students, whose imaginations are triggered by such “artefacts.”

Another school particularly active in promoting local history is elementary school #85. The school's principal was an active member of *Solidarność* in the 1980s, and promotes Nowa Huta's legacy of resistance in the school's programming. When I walked into the school, I was struck by a sizeable display in the main hallway entitled *Oltarz Solidarności* (Solidarity Altar) consisting of crosses, statues and other *Solidarność* paraphernalia made by activists and trade unions during the 1980s. The walls in the hallways were covered by displays of projects made by students, many of them pertaining to Nowa Huta's historical legacy, in particular martial law. The majority of projects featured were students' interviews with parents and grandparents, combined with pictures and collages with titles such as “1980-1989: A time of nonsense,” “Memories of witnesses 1980-1989,” or “December 13 1981.”⁷⁰ Many of the projects dealt with the subject of Nowa Huta churches, or the role of the Church in the political opposition, as evidenced by projects entitled “An interview with my Grandma about Father Jerzy

⁷⁰ December 13 1981 was the day when martial law was declared in Poland.

Popieluszko⁷¹,” or a display about Father Jancarz.⁷² In fact, the school has recently (in 2006) changed its patron from Polish poet Jan Kochanowski to Father Jancarz. The school’s librarian, herself a passionate collector of Nowa Huta archival material, explained to me that Father Jancarz was an important figure in their neighbourhood (Mistrzejowice) and that the school wanted more of a local patron. She also noted that the school became more active in promoting historical education among students since the adoption of the new patron. While the school is somewhat atypical in its emphasis on religious-political ideology, its emphasis on Nowa Huta’s legacy of resistance and the role of the Church in resistance activities resonates with many of the public representations of Nowa Huta discussed in Chapter 3.

In this section I explored the role of schools in conveying to students a particular version of history of the socialist period. I found that the national school curriculum does not place a lot of emphasis on the teaching of most recent history. Whatever history does get taught emphasizes political events, with the overall message being that the socialist period was a time of repression and resistance, and the socialist system inefficient. This also seemed to be the message that the teachers with whom I spoke said they tried to convey to their students. At the same time, there are many opportunities for Nowa Huta schools and teachers to convey to students knowledge of the past that goes beyond the history curriculum. Nowa Huta has a very strong local identity and a sense of distinctiveness, grounded in its unique place in Polish history. It is also home to many local organizations who are actively involved in various community-oriented initiatives

⁷¹ Father Popieluszko was the chaplain of Warsaw’s Solidarność, murdered in 1984 by secret police agents for his involvement in oppositional activities.

⁷² Father Jancarz was the chaplain of Nowa Huta’s Solidarność during the 1980s, who organized the famous “Thursday masses for the Fatherland”, as well as other oppositional activities such as meetings and conferences.

such as anniversary celebrations. Such occasions provide interested schools and students with opportunities to learn about different aspects of the town's past. Many of the messages about the past that emerge in the course of these school activities depict the socialist period as a time of repression and resistance, with Nowa Huta as the locus of this resistance. This depiction reinforces the overall impression of the socialist period that students derive from history lessons. At the same time, activities that highlight the positive value of Nowa Huta's unique urban landscape or the hard work of its first builders, present a more nuanced version of history than that offered in school textbooks, and convey to students the message that a "socialist town" may still have a good urban design or valuable architecture. Taken together, these messages reflect the spectrum of public representations of Nowa Huta that I discussed in chapter 3.

Socialism as memory

In addition to schools, there are many other ways in which ideas about the past are transmitted to the younger generation. Family, it has been shown, is one of the principal agents of this process (Halbwachs 1992, see also Bertaux and Thompson 1993, Hirst and Manier 1996, Middleton and Edwards 1990). Indeed, many young Nowa Huta residents derive their knowledge about the town's history from family histories pertaining to local events. In this section I focus on young people's impressions of events that they did not experience themselves, but memories of which have nonetheless been passed down to them, for example through family narratives (Hirsch 2008, c.f. Landsberg 2004⁷³.) These memories then "become part of one's personal archive of experience, informing one's

⁷³ This phenomenon has also been referred to as postmemory (Hirsch 2008) or prosthetic memory (Landsberg 2004).

subjectivity as well as one's relationship to the present and future" (Landsberg 2004: 28). At the same time, family cannot be seen as simply a "storage for memories" (Welzer 2010: 5). Welzer observes that "family memory consists of highly controversial, inconsistent and incoherent stories, on whose courses and contents not even the family itself agrees" (2010: 5, see also Billig 1990). Middleton and Edwards note that "conversational remembering," as in the case of family reminiscences, allows participants to "create together, a joint version of remembered events" where "dispassionate accuracy" may not be the principal goal or concern (1990 b: 23-25). Finally, Welzer's research on the transmission of World War II memories also illustrates that accounts of the older generations "are always interpreted by members of the follow-up generation on the basis of their experiences of their own culture and time," in effect taking on a different meaning (Welzer 2010: 10, see also Bertaux and Thompson 1993).

When I talked with young people about what they have heard about PRL from their families, their accounts largely reproduced the three themes of repression, resistance and inefficiencies. A few students mentioned family accounts of the Battle for the Cross. One told me "my Grandma prayed at the Cross," another said "my Grandma watched it from her apartment across the street... she tells the story of how she had to take her baby, my uncle, to another room, because rocks were flying in through the windows." Many more students alluded to the period of strikes in the 1980s – a not surprising phenomenon, considering that it is a more recent period in the town's history, and as such is part of "living memory" (Nora 1989) of the generation of people who now have teenage children. Many of the students with whom I spoke mentioned that their relatives took part in the strikes. One teenage boy said with pride "my Dad used to throw rocks at

ZOMO (the riot police).” Another one said “my Grandpa was active in Solidarność and lost his job because of it...he was intimidated, and he had to stop being active.” One girl told me that she is really proud of her grandfather, a former judge who refused to preside over trials of strikers, even though his career suffered because of it. One boy told me that because of the clouds of tear gas that shrouded the town his older sister (then a baby) developed breathing problems. One fifteen-year old boy perceived the socialist period as a time when “people were getting killed on the streets.”⁷⁴

Many of the students alluded to the role of religion in political resistance, citing the cases of the Battle for the Cross and the role of local priests and churches in oppositional activities in the 1980s. A number of them referred to the Battle for the Cross, which they perceived as an instance of “people in Nowa Huta fighting for their faith.” Many talked about the strikes and demonstrations that took place in front of the Lord’s Ark church throughout the 1980s: “I know there were strikes in front of the Lord’s Ark,” or “my Uncle said he took part in strikes in front of the Lord’s Ark.” Two young people from Mistrzejowice neighbourhood mentioned the famous “green shack”⁷⁵ (*zielona budka*), a site of religious teaching prior to the construction of a church in the neighbourhood. A few young people mentioned Pope John Paul II’s visits to Nowa Huta⁷⁶: “my Grandma went to see the Pope when he came to Nowa Huta.” Lastly, young

⁷⁴ Throughout the socialist period in Poland there were a number of instances of violent repression used against strikers, resulting in casualties. In Nowa Huta, the best known example of this is the case of Bogdan Włosik. However, many teenagers seem to think that killings were much more widespread than they in fact were.

⁷⁵ Zielona budka (literally “green shack”) is the name given to a compound in Mistrzejowice neighbourhood used by Nowa Huta priest Father Jancarz for religious teaching at a time when Nowa Huta did not yet have a church. Zielona budka thus became a symbol of Nowa Huta residents fighting for their faith, and of resistance against the socialist government that opposed the construction of a church.

⁷⁶ Pope John Paul II is by far the most venerated figure in Poland, praised especially for his resistance and opposition to the socialist government. In the 1970s he was Cardinal of Kraków and strongly supported the construction of the Lord’s Ark church. After becoming Pope he visited Nowa Huta in 1983 and consecrated

people with whom I spoke alluded to stories of ubiquitous shortages, relating knowledge such as “there were empty shelves, nothing to buy,” “you had to stand in lines for hours to buy anything,” or the infamous line “there was nothing in the stores except for vinegar.”

Young people’s impressions of the past reflect both public Nowa Huta representations as well as larger national narratives dealing with the socialist period. Accounts of the Battle for the Cross, Solidarity strikes, and the role of Nowa Huta’s churches and priests in the political opposition, appear in many public representations of Nowa Huta’s history, and also feed into larger hegemonic accounts of repression, resistance, and the role of the Church in resistance activities. At the same time, however, some young people related memories that challenged the hegemonic notion of the socialist period as unequivocally bad. For example, a few young people pointed out that their parents or grandparents fondly remember employment security during PRL: “back then there was work and money, and now there is neither” or “back then work looked for people, now people are looking for work.” Ania, a 16-year old student, noted a diversity of memories within her own family.

AL: My family is divided on this... my grandma says these were better times than now, except that there was nothing in the stores, and my grandpa says back then at least there was order when it came to politics...

KP: And your parents?

AL: My dad is very different... he likes possibilities.

KP: How do you feel when you hear different accounts of the past? What do you think about PRL?

AL: Well...I like the time that I’m living in now. I can’t imagine what life was like during PRL.

another church built in the Mistrzejowice neighbourhood. Many local representations emphasize his special connection to Nowa Huta.

Ania's comment about liking the time that she is living in now resonates with the findings of Kenneth Roberts whose research focuses on the postsocialist generation of East Europeans. Roberts observes that today's young East Europeans are "overwhelmingly pro-reform" and "share little of their elders' nostalgia for the old system" (2003: 493). He goes on to argue that while young people may have heard about certain benefits of the old system, they nonetheless "prefer the new insecurities to the old guarantees" (2003: 494). For today's twenty year olds, phenomena such as unemployment or job insecurity are not a departure from the norm, but rather, how things have always been during their lifetime (Roberts 2003, Markowitz 2000). Inundated with accounts of repression, resistance and empty shelves, young people find little reason to look to the socialist period for inspiration on alternate ways of living (Majmurek and Szumlewicz 2009).

It is important to note here the diversity among young people with whom I spoke. Some know more about their family histories than others; some are more interested in history than others; and some have more opportunities to learn family histories than others. Many of the young people with whom I spoke told me that their parents and grandparents do not talk much about "those days" and that they themselves do not ask. A few told me that their grandparents are more prone to recalling war stories than stories relating to the socialist period and as a result they know more about World War II than about socialism.

While teenagers answered my questions mostly in one-line keywords or short phrases,⁷⁷ people in their late twenties or early thirties told more in-depth family histories, frequently supplemented by some of their own childhood recollections. One such person was Zosia Hajduk, a 33-year old event planner at the OKN cultural centre. Zosia was born in Nowa Huta, and her parents were both basketball coaches for the Nowa Huta sports club Hutnik (Steelworker), which until the early 1990s was owned by the steelworks. Her parents were both active in Solidarność and suffered repercussions because of it. In her conversations with me, Zosia was very critical of the “old system” and the people associated with it.

Over the years that my father worked for Hutnik, he made that team into a first-league team. But then when he became active in Solidarność he was removed, and some opportunist just came along and took over his life’s work, reaping all the benefits. He just stopped existing for the team... When he passed away the team did not even send a banner to his funeral! But a year later they reconsidered that and sent one to his memorial service.

On the other hand Zosia and her colleague and childhood friend Monika once began reminiscing about their childhood summer camp experiences in the 1980s. As children of steelworks employees, they were sent to summer camps through the steelworks. They took turns fondly recalling objects and foods associated with these trips, such as *kawa zbożowa* (literally: grain coffee, a roasted grain beverage that is caffeine-free and was frequently given to children), or *zupa mleczna* (literally: milk soup, a sort of thin oatmeal floating in a sea of milk). They concluded their trip down memory lane by

⁷⁷ This could be due to the fact that I spoke with many of the teenagers in small groups, and the setting discouraged them from more in-depth personal reflections. It could also be a sign of young people’s limited knowledge of the past, which is being reduced to keywords such as “empty shelves”.

telling me: “When people talk about PRL they always talk about the horrors of martial law, but nobody remembers the joys of drinking burned milk soup from a steel canteen.”

Joanna is a 34-year-old administrative assistant at the OKN Cultural Centre. She was born in Nowa Huta where she lived all her life until two years ago when she and her husband built a house on the outskirts of town. She began her account of life in Nowa Huta by telling me about her grandfather who came to Nowa Huta having lost everything in World War II. Joanna’s mother was an accountant at the same cultural centre (which used to be owned by the steel factory) and her father, now retired, was a manager at the steel factory’s coke plant. An active member of Solidarność, he was fired from the steelworks in the 1980s for distributing underground materials. He was blacklisted from work, and could not find employment for years. He returned to the steelworks after 1989.

I asked Joanna what she herself remembers about life in socialist Poland. Her family lived in Urocze neighbourhood of Nowa Huta, close to the church Arka Pana (the Lord’s Ark) where many demonstrations and battles with ZOMO (the riot squad) took place.

I remember seeing my grandma cry when she found out that her children (Joanna’s uncles) had been arrested... My aunt’s wedding dress was burned to a crisp the day before her wedding. It was hanging in a window and a *ZOMOWiec* (riot squad member) threw a firecracker at the window... he probably thought it was a person standing there, observing the demonstrations... I also remember playing Solidarność and ZOMO with my friends. There was a hill near our building. So half the children would be Solidarność and would stand at the bottom of the hill yelling “Solidarność” and the other half would be ZOMO and would run down the hill, and attack them with sticks... The neighbours would often look out the windows to see who was demonstrating so loudly, and would see that it was only a group of children playing!

Besides the demonstrations and repressions, she also recalled the ubiquitous shortages.

I remember empty shelves of course... although ever since I can remember there were also private entrepreneurs at Plac Bieńczycki (Nowa Huta's biggest market square) who sold bananas and real chocolate with hazelnuts. That was the only place in Nowa Huta where you could get bananas... I remember that the churches received parcels from abroad (parcels were frequently sent by Polish and other charitable organizations from abroad, and distributed through churches)... I remember the priest handing out Juicy Fruit gum to students during religion classes.

Joanna's parents were active in the political opposition in the 1980s, and she recalls what she then knew of their activities.

They would frequently organize meetings in our apartment, late into the night... the entire apartment would be filled with cigarette smoke. They even had a secret knock! Because of them, I was very politically aware as a child, I knew the names of all political figures.

Taken together, Joanna's and Zosia's accounts touch on many of the themes found in local representations of Nowa Huta's past as well as in hegemonic accounts of Polish history. Their childhood memories are of the 1980s, a time characterized by frequent strikes and demonstrations in Nowa Huta's neighbourhoods as well as ubiquitous shortages. Both of their parents had been active in the political opposition and persecuted because of it, and Joanna recalls playing out strikes with her childhood friends. These childhood experiences have shaped Joanna and Zosia's perception of socialism as a repressive system. Even within that, however, they cherish some fond memories of experiences which speak to shortages but also to the small joys of everyday life: Joanna of a priest handing out Juicy Fruit gum during religion classes, and Zosia of summer camps.

As the cases above show, when asked about the socialist period, young people relate primarily stories of repression and resistance. At the same time, it is worth keeping in mind Olga Shevchenko's observation that "history comes in many guises" (2008: 9). Young people who disavow any knowledge of, or interest in, history, as well as those who perceive the socialist period largely through the framework of repression and resistance, may nonetheless possess a repository of historical knowledge that they may not consciously acknowledge, or do not articulate in interviews. In Nowa Huta, many young people have a strong sense of local identity that is rooted in local history and knowledge of local places, people and events. Many of the young people I met are engaged in various community-oriented projects or pursue education or employment-related projects that are inspired by local places or events. For these people, local history may carry more meaning and relevance than larger national history, although as I have noted elsewhere, Nowa Huta's local history is strongly intertwined with national history.

Ola, a 16-year old high school student at a Nowa Huta school, has herself never lived in Nowa Huta but chose to attend high school here because of her family's connection to the district. Both her parents had lived in Nowa Huta until shortly before she was born, and ever since she can remember she has been coming here to visit her grandparents and aunts. "From when I was little I associated Nowa Huta with family, a good dinner and the smell of good cake" she says of those visits. Attending the previously-mentioned Liceum XI, one of the most "active" schools in Nowa Huta in terms of community involvement, gave her the opportunity to pursue her interest in Nowa Huta. As part of the school's 60th anniversary programming, Ola researched her family's history to produce a "Nowa Huta family saga." She learned, among other things, that her

grandfather was an electrician and wired a number of sites around Nowa Huta, including the soccer stadium, the theatre, the lights around a man-made pond (*Zalew*), and even one of Nowa Huta's landmarks, an electronic clock on Central Square.

Ola spends a lot of her time in Nowa Huta. After school she frequently goes to her aunt's house across the street from her school. She often babysits her nephews and likes to take them on walks around Nowa Huta. One of the sites she likes to visit is an old Soviet tank parked in front of the Combatants' Museum. The tank has sentimental value for her because she was told that in the days when her parents were still dating and her father was in the military and stationed in Cambodia, he came home on a short leave and went on a date there with her mother.

Like Ola, many other young people I spoke with also had a strong sense of Nowa Huta identity, often as a result of their family's history (see also Dargiewicz 2007). A number of people I met in the course of my fieldwork underscored their family's contributions to the town. Some were more vague, as in "my grandfather built this town," others more specific, as in: "my grandfather planted trees here when he was in the volunteer work brigade (*w czynie społecznym*)." For these people, their elders' labour contributed to building the town gives them a sense of ownership of it. Piotrek Dukat, a 28 year-old local patriot whose grandfather worked on the town's construction, talked to me about the importance of respecting the work of Nowa Huta's first builders.

People who came here worked very hard to rebuild Poland after the war... their work can't just be written off as communist ideology. Right now, people such as work leaders (*przodownicy pracy*) are mocked, but really they were just people who took pride in their work. A bricklayer who was a work leader was just a worker who wanted to put up a good brick wall. He saw himself as a good bricklayer, not as a communist.

In this quote, Piotrek alludes to the characterization of Nowa Huta as a “communist town”, and the demonization of its residents as puppets of the socialist system. For Piotrek, a strong sense of local identity developed as a response to Nowa Huta’s marginalization within the city of Kraków. This marginalization, it is worth recalling, harkens back to the late 1940s/early 1950s, when the location of a “communist town” on Kraków’s doorstep was seen as a “punishment” for the city (I describe the negative stereotypes surrounding Nowa Huta in Chapter 1). The negative stereotypes clashed with his own happy childhood memories of growing up in Nowa Huta.

Growing up in Nowa Huta, my childhood was rosy... all my school friends lived in the same neighbourhood as me, so it was always easy to get a group of people together for a soccer game after school... Because of where I lived (a neighbourhood on the edge of Nowa Huta, near an old Austrian fort), there was so much space to run around, we could play in the fort, light campfires...

He did not become conscious of Nowa Huta’s marginalization within the city of Kraków until he turned 14 and chose to attend high school (*liceum*) outside of Nowa Huta.

All of a sudden I was told that Nowa Huta is a bad place, a town of communists, that it pollutes the entire city of Kraków, that people get murdered all over the place, and that my parents were peasants (*wieśniacy*, which is a derogatory term in Polish)... All these opinions came from people – and not just students, teachers too – who never set foot in Nowa Huta. We (ie: the people from Nowa Huta) are always portrayed negatively. First they called us peasants and made fun of our rubber boots. Then Nowa Huta became a town and a new generation was born, at that point we weren’t really peasants anymore, so they called us communists. Then that generation proved themselves to be politically active, they fought for the cross and then in the 1980s they brought down communism... After that we couldn’t be called communists anymore so instead Nowa Huta became a place ridden with crime, where all the *dresiarze*⁷⁸ live... Now, that too is starting to

⁷⁸ A word largely synonymous with hooligan, stemming from the word *dres*, or track suit, which are associated with soccer hooligans.

change because Nowa Huta is becoming trendy, artists are moving here, young people are inheriting their grandparents' apartments and starting their own families... I wonder what new labels they will come up with for us next?

In response to the negative stereotypes, Piotrek made it his mission to change the stereotypes associated with Nowa Huta, one person at a time. He opened Klub 1949, a coffee shop that he envisioned as a “sort of a private cultural centre,” dedicated to promoting a sense of community in Nowa Huta. A coffee shop was a much-needed place in Nowa Huta, a district starved for places to eat, drink and hang out (a handful of pubs do exist in Nowa Huta, but Klub 1949 was the only establishment that did not sell alcohol and was thus a nice casual place to sit down for coffee and a chat). In addition, Klub 1949 was a space where for a very small fee, people could organize art exhibits, poetry readings, public lectures, or any other event they wanted. Piotrek frequently collaborated with other Nowa Huta organizations in organizing community events; for example, his pub hosted several talks and meetings that took place as part of Nowa Huta's 60th anniversary celebrations.

In addition to running Klub 1949, Piotrek was also recently involved in a controversial attempt to take over the management of Nowa Huta's soccer team *Hutnik* (Steelworker) after the team filed for bankruptcy. Along with a group of friends, he formed an association of fans that supported the team in a period of financial difficulties over the past few years. Piotrek invoked the team's role in Nowa Huta's history as an explanation for his activism:

When I was a little kid my dad took me to Hutnik's games, and when I have children I want to take them to these games as well, because they are part of the Nowa Huta tradition... It's important to support Hutnik, not because it's a particularly high-profile team (in fact it has recently dropped down to the 4th

league), but because it's our team, a team from Nowa Huta. The players are boys from the neighbourhood (*chłopcy z osiedla*), they're guys with whom I went to school, my friends and my neighbours... And they play for this team not for money, but for the love of the game.

Indeed, Piotrek eventually succeeded and in March 2011 the team began a new season under new leadership.

Although Piotrek has told me on several occasions that he is not particularly interested in history and that he cares about the future not the past, his sense of identity as a Nowa Huta resident is clearly informed by the town's history. In his account, he connects Nowa Huta's current socioeconomic marginalization to its historical roots. His two projects – the coffee shop and the soccer team – bridge Nowa Huta's historical legacy with its current needs and issues. In the course of my fieldwork I met several other young people who pursued education or career-oriented projects that were inspired by, or in some way drew on, Nowa Huta's past. A few of my acquaintances took up Nowa Huta-related issues in their Master's dissertations. For example, Marta Kurek, a young landscape architect created a revitalization plan for Nowa Huta's historic core as part of her Master's dissertation. Jacek Dargiewicz, owner of another Nowa Huta pub, conducted research with Nowa Huta's youth for his Master's thesis in sociology and his wife Katarzyna Iskrzycka took up the subject of Nowa Huta's tourist potential for her Bachelor thesis in travel and tourism. Nowa Huta is home to several young local rappers and other musicians (eg. Wu-Hae, Tater, Szajka, Proforma), as well as artists and photographers (eg. Grzegorz Ziemiański, Paweł Suder) who take up Nowa Huta's issues in their artistic expressions. Nowa Huta is also said to have more internet websites dedicated to local events, issues, history and tourist attractions than any other town in

Poland, with the majority of these being created by young people.⁷⁹ The names of two Nowa Huta pubs, both owned and operated by young people, are inspired by the town's history: Klub 1949, alluding to the year Nowa Huta was built, and Kombinator, a term derived from *Kombinat*, Polish word for metallurgical complex, alluding to Nowa Huta's industrial heritage. A film group associated with the OKN cultural centre, composed primarily of young people, has recently reinvented a socialist-era tradition of screening public service announcements/chronicles (*kroniki*) at movie theatres prior to show times. Its chronicles document current Nowa Huta events and are screened at OKN's movie theatre as well as available online.⁸⁰

Initiatives such as the ones described above illustrate that for many young people, memory resides in, and is disseminated through, community events, places and people. In his research on memory among the Kiowa, Luke Lassiter (2002) makes a case for the importance of what I would term community memory (and he variously terms "community aesthetic" or "community dialogue") in shaping people's experiences and identity. Although young Nowa Huta residents may disavow knowledge of, or interest in, history, they in fact absorb a lot of historical knowledge through their involvement in community affairs. When asked directly about the socialist period, they may draw on the hegemonic framework which frames the socialist past primarily in terms of repression, resistance and inefficiencies. At the same time, their knowledge and appreciation of local events such as the hard work of the town's first builders or Nowa Huta's industrial legacy, challenge such an unequivocally negative assessment of the past.

⁷⁹ A few notable examples include terazhuta.pl, <http://1949.pl>, <http://polskihh.host.sk>, www.nowahuta.yoyo.pl, <http://nowej.hucie.w.interia.pl>, www.blog.fotohuta.pl, and a recent Wikipedia-inspired Nowa Huta encyclopedia, aptly titled "nhpedia", available at www.nhpedia.pl.

⁸⁰ Nowa Huta chronicles can be viewed at <http://www.kronika.com.pl/odtwarzacz/index.php?KID=last>

Finally, I would like to caution that just as we should not overestimate the role that education plays in shaping young people's ideas about the past, the same should be said of family. Not all young people have generational ties to Nowa Huta, and as time goes on, there are more and more families that move into the district from other parts of Kraków or from other parts of Poland. These families do not have personal experiences of historically significant Nowa Huta events and as a result are unlikely to pass on to their children or grandchildren an appreciation of these events. It is also true that not all Nowa Huta families talk about the past, for many different reasons. Some families may have had difficult experiences that they do not wish to bring back in conversations. Some may have had experiences which do not conform to currently hegemonic accounts and may prefer to remain silent on the topic. Furthermore, with every year that passes, "living memories" (Nora 1989) fade; for example, the parents of today's teenagers may not themselves have many firsthand memories of the socialist period to share with their children. Such is the case of Majka, a 43-year-old office administrator and the mother of two teenage children, aged 19 and 14. Majka grew up and to this day lives in a building overlooking Arka Pana church, where numerous strikes and demonstrations took place throughout the 1980s. I asked her what she remembers about the events that took place literally right under her windows. "You know what, I wasn't really paying attention" she replied. "Back then I was still in high school... I was too stupid to understand what was really going on. We never spoke about politics at home." Although Majka told me that she believes that knowledge of history is important, she admitted that she herself does not spend much time talking about the past with her children. "There are so many things going on, we just never get around to it," she explained.

Conclusion

Twenty years after socialism's collapse, the socialist period feels very far away for the younger generation who has little or no personal experience of that time. To borrow an expression from David Lowenthal, for young people the socialist past is "a foreign country" (1985). The experiences of the younger generation illustrate that the postsocialist transformation has been characterized by "setting aside" the past, which is perceived to be very far removed from everyday reality. This can be seen, for instance, in the relative lack of emphasis on teaching socialist-era history in school, the concomitant emphasis in school curricula on forging in students a European identity that is tied to Poland's future in the European Union, as well as in the perceived generational gap between those who remember the socialist period and those who do not.

The existence of a generational gap between older and younger Poles is not in itself a surprising phenomenon; after all, this also happens in societies that have not experienced drastic changes or ruptures. However, in Poland this gap is more pronounced, with socialism's collapse constituting a major turning point in the country's history that divides those who have experienced (and who remember) life during the socialist period, from those who have not. To put it differently, generational categories are assigned on the basis of people's memory (or lack of it) of the socialist period. Young people are seen by their elders as not knowing or caring much about the past, and they generally agree with this characterization, although the older cohorts of the younger generation (ie: people in their late twenties or early thirties) have patches of personal memories of strikes or empty shelves, and a better knowledge of their family histories

than teenagers. This cohort can thus be seen as sort of a bridge between the older and younger generations of Nowa Huta residents, since they share characteristics with both.

Whatever knowledge of the socialist period young people do possess is largely framed in terms of repression and resistance, and lacks some of the complexity and nuance captured in the accounts of the older generation in the previous chapter. The hegemonic discourse on the past that is reproduced through schools depicts the socialist period in terms of repression, resistance and inefficiency, as do many local representations of the past and accounts of the older generation. This suggests that people draw on available discourses in their personal accounts, although at the same time, some aspects of family and community memory can provide alternate accounts of the past. Many young people, for example, have a strong sense of local identity, developed in reaction to Nowa Huta's history of marginalization by the city of Kraków, as well as an appreciation of Nowa Huta's legacy of work as a result of their families' contributions to building the town. As a result, while young people may be quick to disavow knowledge of, or interest in, the socialist period, they may be engaging with this history in other ways. Their appreciation of elements of socialist-era legacy, such as work, or industrial heritage, is generally not consciously evoked to challenge the hegemonic representation of socialism as a time of repression and resistance, although in the future it may come to do so.

Although parents and teachers speak to the fact that "living memories" (Nora 1989) fade over time, the disappearance of memories is not inevitable. Studies from other parts of the world illustrate that memories can be brought back and instrumentalized for political purposes "when relations of power and conditions change" (Farah 2004: 147).

For example, Farah's research with Palestinian refugees illustrates that the subjectivities of young generation of Palestinians are strongly informed by historical events they did not experience themselves, and by a desire to return to a homeland they have never seen (Farah 2003 and 2004). While Poland's young generation generally prefers to leave the socialist past in the past, the case of Nowa Huta illustrates that elements of this past may be brought back to be "exonerated" from their negative connotations (see also Majmurek and Szumlewicz 2010).

In this and the previous chapter I examined memory in Nowa Huta through the lens of generation. This completes my quest to examine the production, reproduction and contestation of memories in Nowa Huta through several different lenses and in different contexts, including the town's cityscape, the steelworks, public representations and sites of memory, and generation. In the following chapter I draw together insights derived from these different contexts to consider what they can tell us about memory and its relationship to identity, place and generation in postsocialist Poland.

CONCLUSION

This work deployed the lens of memory to explore the “social life of socialism” (Berdahl 2010) in contemporary Poland. It examined how the socialist past is remembered, represented, and negotiated, two decades following the dismantling of the socialist system in Poland. Nowa Huta is an ideal place to study the postsocialist transformation in Poland, having originally been built as a “model socialist town,” and subsequently having experienced with particular acuteness socialism’s collapse and the political, economic and social events and processes that followed.

What became clear during my fieldwork is that memory articulates with many factors, and in this research I focused on two important aspects: place and generation. I explored phenomena such as the rewriting of local and national histories, resignifying spatial landmarks, redefining ideas about, and the connection between, work and community, situating one’s history in relation to the changed larger narratives, and transmitting ideas about the past to younger generations. All of these, I argue, are aspects of what Katherine Verdery has termed the “reordering of meaningful worlds” (1999b) that characterize the postsocialist period in East-Central Europe.

My research revealed that the “social life of socialism” is a complex and paradoxical one. Despite attempts to either dismiss the socialist past, or to frame it in terms of repression, resistance, or inefficiency, alternative and more complex understandings emerge in the accounts of “ordinary people” as well as in local representations. The case of Nowa Huta embodies these tensions, since the town initially symbolized socialist ideals, but later became a site of resistance against the socialist

government. At present, the legacy of resistance is an important narrative framing the identity of Nowa Huta and its residents, although local representations and people's accounts also enumerate positive aspects of Nowa Huta's socialist-era legacy, such as the town's contribution to the country's postwar rebuilding and economic development, its architecture, urban design, or rich cultural life.

In the first chapter I examined Nowa Huta's cityscape as a site of contestation over how the past should be represented, its meanings and implications in the present. I argued for a notion of Nowa Huta as a palimpsest of memories, a place characterized by the circulation of multiple ideas about the past, informed by different historical periods, ideologies and political-economic conditions that shaped the town's development. For example, while the socialist legacy is firmly embedded in the town's urban plan and early architecture, there have also been attempts to re-invent Nowa Huta as a site of resistance against the socialist period, a trend that is manifested in the renaming of streets and erection of monuments that commemorate Nowa Huta's legacy of opposition to the socialist government. At the same time, the town's landscape also bears traces of the area's pre-socialist heritage, which is increasingly highlighted in local representations.

In chapter 2 I turned my attention to Nowa Huta's steelworks, an institution that has been at the heart of the town's life since its construction. I approached the steelworks as a particular "site of memory" (Nora 1989) that speaks to the changing political, economic and social conditions over the past sixty years: first the creation of socialism, with its attendant processes of industrialization, urbanization and the creation of a working class, then socialism's fissure and collapse, and finally, the changes that arrived along with post-1989 market reforms, including privatization, deindustrialization, and a

changed relationship between work and community. For example, whereas in the past the steelworks used to be the town's principal employer as well as the heart of all social life, this role has dramatically declined following the company's privatization and sale to Arcelor Mittal. Workers' accounts speak to changing work conditions, based on the "market principles of discipline, efficiency and competitiveness" (Ong 2006: 4). While workers critique certain aspects of postsocialist market reforms such as unemployment, they also highlight certain problematic aspects of the socialist workplace, such as mandatory work orders or the assignment of benefits based on party membership. Lastly, I showed that ideas about the socialist past become invoked in discourses regarding norms, behaviours and values surrounding work and workers, and that work habits and values that are associated with socialism are devalued in hegemonic discourses in favour of traits that constitute the "enterprising subject" (Miller and Rose 2008b) such as independence, individualism, flexibility, and ability to bear risks.

In chapter 3 I explored the public representations of Nowa Huta's past conveyed through the town's 60th anniversary commemorative ceremonies and its two museums. Following Nora, I argued that these "sites of memory" convey particular ideological, political or national ideas, representing the struggle over what should be considered the shared national history of Nowa Huta (Winter 2008). I showed that several threads of memory-making co-exist in Nowa Huta's public representations, some of which celebrate the town's socialist-era legacy while others strive to sidestep this legacy in favour of a focus on its pre-socialist heritage, or a representation of Nowa Huta as a site of resistance to the socialist government.

In chapters 4 and 5 I explored how different generations reflect on and represent the socialist past. In chapter 4, I explored memories among Nowa Huta residents who have first-hand remembrances of the socialist period. I argued that the older Nowa Huta residents draw on the array of available discourses and representations to narrate their lives. In many of their accounts, the past is invoked to critique present conditions, including unemployment, growing income discrepancies, the decline of social spending on areas of social and public value, and Poland's unequal integration into the European economy. In the following chapter I examined how the past has been transmitted to the younger generation who has little or no first-hand experiences of the socialist period, and how these memories have been transformed and understood by this group. For young people, the socialist past is very far away. The impression of PRL that they derive from schools, local representations, and the stories of their elders, is that of a time of repression, resistance and inefficiency; however, family and community memories can also provide alternative ideas about the past that challenge this construction.

The role of memory in postsocialist Poland

Taken together, these chapters illustrate that memory and forgetting have played a complex and often paradoxical role in postsocialist Poland. Following socialism's collapse, the changed political/economic order has required rupture from the past as well as its negation. The "old system" was relegated to the past and demarcated from the present with what Poland's first premier Tadeusz Mazowiecki termed a "thick line". This idea of a dividing line between the "socialist past" and what people frequently term the "new reality" can be seen for instance in generational categories which are based on

either having or not having experiences and memories of the socialist period. The past has been set aside so that the country could look toward the future, as evidenced in Poland's desire to "return" to Europe and to partake in a shared European political and economic project.

At the same time, the past continues to surface in political events, economic issues, and popular memories, and thus cannot be entirely dismissed. Hegemonic discourses thus seek to negate the past, to frame the socialist period in terms of resistance against a repressive and inefficient state. The new post-1989 elites (many of them former members of the political opposition during the 1980s) possess the resources to disseminate narratives of the past which have dominance in the public sphere (Majmurek and Szumlewicz 2010). These ideas are expressed in, and through, media such as landscape (eg. name changes, monuments), celebrations and commemorations, and the activities and programs of cultural institutions such as museums and schools. However, the past continues to be invoked to critique certain aspects of present conditions, as can be seen in some local representations and the accounts of some Nowa Huta residents.

My work reveals that hegemonic accounts and private memories are not mutually exclusive, but draw on each other. This is especially the case in Nowa Huta, since many of Nowa Huta's residents were active in the opposition to the socialist government. The private remembrances of repression and resistance became part of the official memory after 1989, and this present official memory-making in turn grants legitimacy and resonance to private remembrances that are framed in like terms.

At the same time, hegemony is a process that is never complete (Roseberry 1994) and memory is always subject to contestation. In the case of Nowa Huta in particular, we

can identify two strong discursive currents in the town's public representations: one depicting the history of the town in terms of resistance against the socialist system, the other highlighting the town's socialist-era accomplishments such as architecture, an industrial tradition, and a legacy of work. A similar dynamic can be observed in the stories of individual people, who reproduce certain elements of dominant discourses while challenging others, whether more or less explicitly. The case of Nowa Huta thus illustrates that memories can exist at multiple scales, which draw on, and in turn inform, one another: as people draw on both local and hegemonic national narratives, they in turn inform and reproduce them.

So far I have focused on how memory is instrumentalized in constructing, legitimizing and also contesting a particular version of the past. At the same time, forgetting or silencing is memory's flipside, no less important at times of change. A new political or economic order is established and legitimized through careful selection of what is to be remembered and what is to be silenced (eg. Cole 1998, Cardus i Ros, 2000, Natzmer 2002, Resina 2000). In Poland, the implementation of neoliberal economic reforms such as the "free market" necessitated the "forgetting", or at least the devaluing of, certain achievements of the socialist period such as guaranteed employment, postwar rebuilding, industrialization or education. Instead, policies such as guaranteed employment are cast as anachronistic to market logic (Majmurek and Szumlewicz 2010). Of course, just as memory can be contested, so can forgetting. For example, in Nowa Huta, the concerted effort of "the builders" to remember and commemorate the positive work and energy that went into the building of the "model socialist town" challenges

what they perceive as the erasure, or forgetting, of the positive aspects of the town's socialist-era legacy.

The political and economic reforms that have been implemented since 1989 have affected virtually all areas of life, including ideas about personhood, nationhood, citizenship, and identities such as gender, generation or social class (eg. Schroder and Vonderau 2008). One question taken up in this work is what happens to memory and identity at times of major change. Memory, it is worth recalling from the introduction, is an important element of identity construction, as it provides people with the “symbolic framework” (Misztal 2003: 13) for the construction of a worldview, a sense of collective belonging or social cohesion, and a direction for the future (Climo and Cattel 2002, Fentress and Wickham 1992, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1985, Olick and Robbins 1998). Memories can serve a legitimizing function, such as legitimizing a new government in a society undergoing an upheaval or a transformation (Olick and Robbins 1998, Natzmer 2002), although they can also be contested and become objects of identity claims and political projects (Hodgkin and Radstone 2003, Olick and Robbins 1998, Popular Memory Group 1982).

In Poland, memory is deployed in particular ways to create, legitimize, but also to contest, particular constructions of identity, and this is done at multiple scales: the local, the national, and the supra-national. One function that depicting the socialist era as a period of repression and inefficiency serves, is to validate the political and economic order that ensued after 1989 (see also Charkiewicz 2007, Majmurek and Szumlewicz 2009). For example, Ewa Charkiewicz draws on Foucault's work on power to argue that discourses that “pathologize communism” are both a “technology of rule,” intended to

legitimize economic reforms, as well as a “disciplinary technology,” that present these reforms as inevitable, in effect precluding the emergence of alternative discourses (Charkiewicz 2007: 2). These “technologies” are thus put in place in order to legitimize the position of the post-1989 elites who implemented the reforms, and who continue to benefit from them. Political scientist David Ost (2005) makes a slightly different, yet related argument. He argues that the post-1989 political and economic elites have managed to keep at bay critiques of the changed economic order by channelling people’s economic concerns into national, political or cultural issues. Economic conditions that caused hardships, such as rapid inflation, were explained in political terms and blamed in part on the remnants of the former communist order. What Ost indirectly argues, then, is that a particular kind of memory has been one of the tools deployed to justify and legitimize economic reforms.

Contemporary Polish identity is being fashioned out of two possible “scripts” (Jelin 2003) of values and ideas, both of which reject the socialist legacy (Majmurek and Szumlewicz 2009). The first script emphasizes Poland’s history of struggle for independence and its adherence to Catholic values (*ibid*). In this construction, socialism is envisioned as a foreign imposition that threatened Polish national and religious identity. As such, proponents of this particular version of Polish identity are likely to embrace a history of the socialist period as a time of repression and resistance, with special emphasis on the role of the Church as a victim of government repression and as a site of resistance. The second script is more oriented towards a common European identity based on the acceptance of “shared European values” such as democracy and the market system, and focused on building a future in the European Union (*ibid*). This is the

script that has informed Poland's political and economic reforms since socialism's collapse, framing them as necessary steps towards "returning to Europe." The language of "return" illustrates Poland's desire to identify with Europe. While this construction of identity is more focused on the future than the past, it nonetheless rejects the socialist period as a time characterized by the "wrong" political and economic structure which is to be rejected if Poland is to partake in a shared European project. The negation of the country's socialist legacy is thus one of the tools through which Poland proves to the European Union that it is on board with its political and economic agenda.

Poland's rejection of its socialist legacy also fits into the larger European Union project of creating a shared political memory, which is oriented towards building a shared future (Killingsworth 2010). For example, in April 2009, the European Union adopted a resolution on "European conscience and totalitarianism"⁸¹ which recognizes and mourns Europe's legacy of totalitarianism, including Nazism, fascism and communism. The resolution recognizes the importance of keeping memories of the past alive and underscores EU's commitment to a "peaceful and prosperous Europe founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights." In the language of this resolution, the socialist period is reduced to accounts of violence, oppression and undemocratic rule, and this characterization becomes the template for the interpretation of history of East-Central Europe.

In Nowa Huta, local representations construct a particular version of local identity that simultaneously reinforces and challenges the versions of Polish and European

⁸¹ The text of the resolution is available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2009-0213+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

identity outlined above. While certain contemporary representations sidestep the town's association with socialism by highlighting either its pre-socialist heritage or its legacy of resistance against the socialist government, others celebrate aspects of socialist legacy such as its urban plan, architecture, or the legacy of work on the part of its founding residents.

The local remains an important referent for the construction of identity and memory, as illustrated by many residents' strong sense of identification with their town, and the fact that local events have shaped many people's experiences of larger historical processes such as postwar rebuilding or resistance to socialist government in the 1980s. While the Nowa Huta residents with whom I spoke seemed to accept the general direction in which the country is heading (ie: democracy, market system, European Union membership), at times they instrumentalize the socialist past to challenge present policies and conditions such as unemployment or the decline of public funding for areas of social welfare. In these accounts, Nowa Huta's legacy as a symbol of postwar rebuilding, economic growth, successful urban planning, and rich cultural life, informs people's critiques of phenomena such as decline of state spending on social programs or Poland's unequal incorporation into the global economic market.

This dissertation also contributes some insights about people's changing identities as citizens, particularly in the context of work. The socialist state built its legitimacy upon its paternalistic role of distributing resources to its citizens and providing for people's "basic needs," such as "food, shelter, education, vacations and cultural goods and services" (Kornai 1992: 54; see also Verdery 1996). Many benefits offered to citizens by the socialist state were extended to them on the basis of their roles as workers, most

notably through the workplace. Lenin Steelworks, discussed in chapter 2, was one such enterprise that exemplified this strong connection between work and citizenship. The steelworks provided not only employment, but also meals, vocational training, healthcare, housing and vacations for its workers and their families, as well as cultural and recreational services for the entire town of Nowa Huta. People whose voices are heard in chapters 2 and 4 speak fondly of these benefits, bemoaning their loss and the concomitant loss to the community on the whole.

The political and economic changes that ensued after 1989 replaced the ideals of the paternalistic state and centralized planning with a “neoliberal rationality” (Ong 2006: 4), including the privatization of formerly state-owned enterprise, the creation of a market, the shift from heavy industry towards service and technology as a strategic priority, and the withdrawal of public funding from domains such as education, healthcare or other social services (Hardy 2009). The case of Nowa Huta and its flagship socialist workplace Lenin Steelworks exemplify these changes. For example, unemployment and job insecurity have fractured the connection between work and citizenship (Stenning 2004, 2005a and 2005b). With citizenship increasingly tied to consumption rather than production (Berdahl 2010), the state not only does not guarantee employment, but unemployed individuals are increasingly limited in their ability to participate in the sphere of consumption (Berdahl 2010, Stenning 2004).

Changes to the idea of citizenship can also be seen on the factory floor. In a capitalist workplace, work is no longer a “social unit” (Berdahl 2010: 92) providing hospitality, educational, medical and leisure services to workers, their families and communities. The “privatized” workers (Dunn 2004) are no longer framed as central to

the production process, and no longer see themselves as the “real owners” of their enterprises; rather, they have been reduced to selling their labour as a commodity (Dunn 2004, Kalb 2009, Muller 2004). At the same time, the accounts cited in chapters 2 and 4 illustrate the continued centrality of work to people’s identities, both in the past and present, although in the present this stems from different reasons and is expressed in different ways (eg. Galasińska 2010, Stenning 2005a, 2005b).

The accounts of people depicted in this work also reveal that people in many ways identify with state projects, whether they are projects of the socialist or neoliberal state. People who praise Nowa Huta as the epitome of the “good life” highlight achievements such as postwar rebuilding, work, education, and a community that provided a variety of cultural and athletic opportunities – achievements that were also enumerated in official discourses during the socialist period. This does not mean that they entirely or uncritically accept socialist ideology; indeed, people’s accounts reveal that they adopt ideologies and official discourses when it suits them and ignore them when it does not.

At the same time, even people who highlight positive aspects of life during the socialist period distance themselves from overall support for socialism as a political system. The current hegemonic accounts of repression, resistance and inefficiency, while not embraced by everyone, are becoming the dominant story of socialism that is passed down to the younger generation and highlighted in many local representations. The majority of my interlocutors also seemed to have accepted the inevitability of capitalist reform and the fact that life in contemporary Poland is to be governed by different rules than the ones they grew up with.

Memory also articulates with, and is mediated by, factors such as generation. In this work I have drawn on the definition of generation as “historical category” (Kertzer 1982; also Mannheim 1972, Abrams 1980). I argued that socialism’s collapse has resulted in political, economic and social changes significant enough to warrant a generational distinction between those who have life experiences during the socialist period and those who do not. However, generational categories are also fluid, overlapping and relational, as can be best seen in the case of today’s thirty year-olds who have some patches of personal memories of the socialist period, and as such constitute a somewhat of a bridge between the older and younger generations.

Generational categories are partly self-ascribed, and partly imposed from the outside (Reulecke 2008, Shevchenko 2008). Within each such category there can also exist multiple cohorts. For example, in Nowa Huta I identified a perceived distinction between “the builders” and their “children” in terms of their attitude to the past, although I showed that the difference between them is not as rigid as popular perception may have it.

In his research on the postsocialist generation in East-Central Europe, Roberts (2003, 2009) has argued that it is by looking at the youngest generation that we can best see the conditions, norms and values that have emerged following socialism’s collapse. In this work, I ask what the youngest generation knows and thinks about the socialist period, and what this can tell us about the transmission of memory across generations at times of major changes. My research revealed that, twenty years after socialism’s collapse, the socialist past seems very far away to those with no personal experiences of it. Socialism’s collapse is construed as a major rupture in the country’s history that divides those who

have experienced (and who remember) life during the socialist period, from those who have not. At the same time, memories of past events do not inevitably fade away, and can be resummoned if the need arises, or if conditions or structures of power change (Farah 2003 and 2004).

At present, memories of the socialist past are passed down to the youngest generation through vehicles such as school, family, and “community memory” (Orr 1990). Young people’s inherited memories lack the complexity and nuance of those of their elders, with the socialist period framed primarily in terms of repression, resistance and inefficiency. At the same time, many young Nowa Huta residents derive some knowledge about the past from family histories as well as community memory, which can introduce alternate perspectives that allow young people to develop an appreciation of Nowa Huta’s legacy, forge a strong sense of local identity, and engage with local history in different ways.

The concept of generation can also be used to mark distinctions, for example between socialism and postsocialism, in a way that makes particular moral claims about the past and present (Shevchenko 2008). In the context of industrial work, for instance, Dunn (2004) showed that in postsocialist Poland, generation is used as a tool to legitimize neoliberal values and habits, and devalue those associated with the “old order.” Older age is associated with “socialist mentality” composed of traits such as laziness, a collective orientation and an excessive sense of entitlement, whereas younger workers are seen as individualistic, flexible and thus fit to function in the “new reality.” My work confirmed Dunn’s argument and in chapter 2 I showed that generational distinctions also inform attitudes to work and workers in Nowa Huta’s steelworks, with older and younger

workers typically occupying different types of jobs (unskilled and skilled, respectively) and frequently associated with a different “mentality,” although the accounts of individual workers often problematize these assumptions.

The metaphor of generation can also be used to speak more broadly about change over time. This is often the case in Nowa Huta, a town that in the 1950s was widely hailed as the “town of youth” (*miasto młodości*), both because the majority of its population consisted of young people and because the town was to symbolize a better future in the new socialist reality (Hołda 2010). Sixty years ago, Nowa Huta was young. Now, during my fieldwork, I have often heard the expression “Nowa Huta is old.” This comment pertained both to the town’s aging population, and also to what the residents perceive as the town’s decline and a lack of vitality (see also Hołda 2010). It is worth remembering, however, that after every generation comes a new one. Today’s twenty year olds are inheriting their grandparents’ Nowa Huta apartments, and the district’s lower real estate prices are attracting young families. In recent years more and more people and organizations are involved in various initiatives that strive to make Nowa Huta a better place to live. To use a generational pun, Nowa Huta is regenerating.

This work can also be read as an exploration of the relationship between place, memory and political and social change. The case of Nowa Huta highlights the salience of locality in shaping memories and identities (see also Gready 2003, Stewart and Strathern 2003). Nowa Huta remains a frame of reference for people’s reflections on the past and present; for example, many people speak of the political, economic and social changes that have followed socialism’s collapse with reference to the physical decline of the town. As illustrated in chapter 5, many young people have a strong sense of local

identity, developed in reaction to Nowa Huta's history of marginalization by the city of Kraków, as well as an appreciation of Nowa Huta's legacy of work as a result of their families' contributions to building the town.

Nowa Huta's landscape, along with its various sites of memory discussed in this work, illustrates the constestations over ideologies, political systems and histories. In this work, I have characterized Nowa Huta as a palimpsest of temporalities, since it is a place that speaks to different periods and events in the town's past, and where multiple, and often contradictory, ideas about the past confront each other. Socialist legacy continues to be an important part of Nowa Huta's identity, as evidenced for instance in the desire to commemorate the town's 60th anniversary, the recent creation of two different museums both of which in some way address the country's socialist past, as well as in the newfound appreciation of the town's urban layout, socialist realist architecture or industrial heritage. However, there are also many attempts to reinvent the town as a site of resistance against the socialist government, although this version of the past is by no means uncontested in local accounts. Finally, following Nora's observation that sites of memory emerge when there is no longer a "living memory" of events, the creation of sites such as museums and monuments can be seen as an attempt to demarcate the past from the present, to put the socialist past in the past, and to focus on the present and future.

Nowa Huta: from lieu de memoire to lieu d'avenir

In this work I have approached Nowa Huta as a "site of memory" a place that informs local and national memories of the socialist period, as well as a site where

multiple ideas about the past circulate and confront each other. In their research on a former American steeltown of Youngstown Ohio, Linkon and Russo (2002) argue that communities require a shared sense of their past if they are to thrive in the present and future. Linkon and Russo attribute Youngstown's plethora of social problems to its "failure of memory" (2002: 245). They claim that following the decline of steel factories, the town has emphasized forgetting rather than celebrating its rich history of work and struggle for labour rights. They argue that a "recovery of a positive memory of itself is the first important step toward reconstructing a sense of place, belonging and ownership" (2002: 4), and emphasize the importance of maintaining a "community of memory" (Bellah et al 1985) that is "built on shared work" (Linkon and Russo 2002: 8).

Unlike Youngstown, Nowa Huta is a town where memories of the past are constantly invoked in current projects and events. Although different people and groups may emphasize different aspects of the town's legacy, the continuous presence and salience of these representations make Nowa Huta a town that is very attuned to the issues of its past. There are many voices in the town's "discursive landscape" (Linkon and Russon 2008) that call for an appreciation of the town's legacy of work, the positive relationship between work and community, as well as aspects of socialist heritage such as architecture and urban design. The continued importance attached to Nowa Huta's legacy of work can be seen most vividly in the stories of young people who invoke their grandparents' contributions to building the town in articulating their own identities. In fact, even the legacy of Solidarity is one of collective action for labour rights and the connection between work (ie: the steelworks) and community. It remains to be seen whether people's recollections of these positive aspects of Nowa Huta's legacy will

emerge more strongly, or become instrumentalized in making political or economic claims.

In Nowa Huta, the past is not only celebrated as history during anniversary celebrations, but also enters into numerous current projects, whether more or less directly. For example, the town's recently-developed urban revitalization plan recommends returning to, and building on, some of the town's initial urban designs (Urząd Miasta Krakowa 2008). Many environmental revitalization projects draw on the "garden city" principles which underpinned the town's early urban design. The town's industrial heritage is also gaining appreciation, as seen in the new trend to hold important concerts in the steelworks' tinning plant. Nowa Huta's historical marginalization by the city of Kraków is constantly invoked by local residents and community groups, whether to protest unwanted initiatives imposed by the city or to demand certain benefits. For example, two of the city's current initiatives on Nowa Huta's territory, a garbage incinerator plant and a new highway, are generating controversy among segments of the local population, who perceive them as an attempt on the part of Kraków to "dump" on Nowa Huta projects that are unwanted elsewhere, and thus as evidence of Nowa Huta's continued marginality. Finally, Nowa Huta's legacy as a socialist, industrial town is also invoked by local organizations, for example in their application for European Union funding for the revitalization of "industrial spaces."

Throughout this work, I have argued for a notion of Nowa Huta as a "site of memory," a place that informs national memory/history pertaining to the socialist period, and a site where different memories about the past circulate and confront each other. However, following Weszkalnys (2010) who examined the revitalization of Berlin's

Alexanderplatz following the collapse of socialism, I want so suggest that Nowa Huta is not only a “*lieu de memoire*” but also a “*lieu d’avenir*” (Weszkalnys 2010: 31), meaning, a “site of arrival, onto which expectation and desires for particular futures are projected” (ibid). For a town that is only sixty years old, Nowa Huta may have a rich and contentious past, but it also has a future. In his research on myth and history in Papua New Guinea, Jorgensen (1990) observes that “placing the past” helps a community to “move the present.” Right now, Nowa Huta is in a good place to deploy its past to move the present and future. Admittedly, much remains to be done in order for the town to become the thriving community it was in the past and could be in the future. Following Lincoln and Russo’s line of argument, I argue that the town needs to continue to draw on its rich and multi-layered heritage and to celebrate its legacy of work and community.

Nowa Huta is a unique place on the Polish landscape. It offers very fruitful ground for an exploration of the workings of the socialist system in Poland, as well as the political, economic and social processes that have taken place since socialism’s collapse. In this work, I explored these events and processes through the lens of memory. I argued that Nowa Huta is a place that embodies current debates and contestations pertaining to the “social life of socialism”. However, the issues which I raised in this work introduce a plethora of other questions that warrant exploration. These include, for example: how have the forms and meanings of work in Nowa Huta changed following postsocialist and neoliberal market reforms? What does the relationship between work, life and community in Nowa Huta look like twenty years after socialism’s collapse? What revitalization or gentrification projects are currently taking place in Nowa Huta, and what kind of future (or perhaps multiple “futures”) do they envision for the town? And finally, how does the

case of Nowa Huta compare with other former industrial towns worldwide, and what knowledge can it contribute towards a better understanding of “global capitalism”, and the diverse and uneven ways in which global processes and neoliberal governmentality articulate with local places, lives and livelihoods?

APPENDIX: ETHICS APPROVAL

**Office of Research Ethics**

The University of Western Ontario
 Room 4180 Support Services Building, London, ON, Canada N6A 5C1
 Telephone: (519) 661-3036 Fax: (519) 850-2466 Email: ethics@uwo.ca
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Use of Human Subjects - Ethics Approval Notice**Principal Investigator:** Dr. R. Farah**Review Number:** 16063S**Review Level:** Full Board**Review Date:** April 03, 2009**Protocol Title:** Memory and Identity Construction in Poland and Among Polish-Canadians**Department and Institution:** Anthropology, University of Western Ontario**Sponsor:****Ethics Approval Date:** June 11, 2009**Expiry Date:** September 30, 2010**Documents Reviewed and Approved:** UWO Protocol, Letter of Information and Consent (English), Letter of Information and Consent (Polish).**Documents Received for Information:**

This is to notify you that The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (NMREB) which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the approval date noted above.

This approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the NMREB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information. If you require an updated approval notice prior to that time you must request it using the UWO Updated Approval Request Form.

During the course of the research, no deviations from, or changes to, the study or consent form may be initiated without prior written approval from the NMREB except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazards to the subject or when the change(s) involve only logistical or administrative aspects of the study (e.g. change of monitor, telephone number). Expedited review of minor change(s) in ongoing studies will be considered. Subjects must receive a copy of the signed information/consent documentation.

Investigators must promptly also report to the NMREB:

- a) changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;
- b) all adverse and unexpected experiences or events that are both serious and unexpected;
- c) new information that may adversely affect the safety of the subjects or the conduct of the study.

If these changes/adverse events require a change to the information/consent documentation, and/or recruitment advertisement, the newly revised information/consent documentation, and/or advertisement, must be submitted to this office for approval.

Members of the NMREB who are named as investigators in research studies, or declare a conflict of interest, do not participate in discussion related to, nor vote on, such studies when they are presented to the NMREB.

Chair of NMREB: Dr. Jerry Paquette

Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grace Kelly (grace.kelly@uwo.ca)	<input type="checkbox"/> Janice Sutherland (jsutherl@uwo.ca)	<input type="checkbox"/> Elizabeth Wambolt (ewambolt@uwo.ca)	<input type="checkbox"/> Denise Grafton (dgrafton@uwo.ca)

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2011 *Communism and Communist History in Slovene and Croatian History Textbooks*. In *Remembering Communism: Genres of Representations*. Maria Todorova, ed. Pp 335-345. New York: Social Science Research Council.
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Żaryn, J.

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VITA

KINGA POZNIAK**EDUCATION**

- 2007- 2011 PhD Anthropology, The University of Western Ontario
Dissertation title: “Model Socialist Town, Two Decades Later: Contesting the Past in Nowa Huta, Poland” (Supervisor: Randa Farah. Thesis defended September 7 2011)
- 2003-2005 M.A. Anthropology, The University of Western Ontario
Thesis title: “You Have to Take the Best of Everything You Know”: Identity Construction Among Colombian Newcomers to London ON”
- 1998- 2002 B.A. Honours, English and Linguistic Anthropology, University of Toronto

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

- 09/2005 - 04/2007 **Lecturer**, Department of Anthropology, University of Western Ontario
- 09/2003- 04/2011 **Teaching Assistant**, Department of Anthropology, The University of Western Ontario
- 09/2005-08/2007 **Research Assistant**, Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children, University of Western Ontario

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- 08/2009- 06/2010 Doctoral research on memory, identity, place and citizenship in postsocialist Nowa Huta, Poland. Research funded in part by Ontario Graduate Scholarship program.
- 09/2005-08/2007 Research assistant, Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children, The University of Western Ontario. Conducted research on violence, exclusion and belonging in the lives of girls using participatory action research.
- 01/2006-06/2007 M.A. research on immigrant experiences and identity among Colombian refugees in London, Ontario.

PUBLICATIONS (all single-authored)

[In press] Talking the “Immigrant Talk”: Immigration Narratives and Identity Construction Among Colombian Newcomers. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*. Expected publication date September 2011.

[Under review] Generations of Memory in "Model Socialist Town". *Focaal Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology*.

[Submitted] Memory Sits in Places: Reinventing and Representing the Past in Former “Model Socialist Town” of Nowa Huta, Poland. Under Review. *City & Society*.

REVIEWS

[Forthcoming] White, Anne. Polish Families and Migration Since EU Accession. *Anthropology of East Europe Review*.

PRESENTATIONS TO PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS

- 2011 Capitalizing on Communism? Traces of the Past(s) in the Reinvention and Revitalization of “Model Socialist Town” of Nowa Huta, Poland. Paper accepted for presentation at the Annual American Anthropological Association Meeting, Montreal, November 16-20.
- 2010 Between the Hammer and the Dollar: Memories of Socialism in Nowa Huta, Poland. Annual American Anthropological Association Meeting, New Orleans, November 20.
- 2010 Memories and Generation in "Model Socialist Town": the case of Nowa Huta. European Association of Social Anthropologists, Maynooth, Ireland, August 26.
- 2008 Halfieness and Multisitedness: Reflections on “Native” Fieldwork in Poland and Canada. Annual Meeting of the Canadian Anthropology Society. Ottawa, Ontario, May 7-10.
- 2007 Girl Talk in the Context of Violence: Creating Safe Spaces for Research, Action, and Change. Nursing Network on Violence Against Women International Conference. London, Ontario, Oct 18-20.
- 2007 Girl Talk: Using Participatory Action Research with Girls through Mentorship and Photonovella. Annual Meeting of the Canadian Anthropology Society. Toronto, Ontario, May 8-12.

- 2007 Violence in the Lives of Girls in Canada: Using Knowledge to Create Action and Change. Children Exposed to Domestic Violence Conference, Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children. London, Ontario, May 9-11.
- 2006 Weaving Identity: Citizenship, Nationalism and Transnationalism among Colombian Immigrants to London, Ontario. Annual Meeting of the Canadian Anthropology Society. Montreal, Quebec, May 9-14.
- 2004 Is Language the 'Essence' of Culture? Identity and English Language Acquisition Among Colombian Immigrants to London, Ontario. Annual Meeting of the Canadian Anthropology Society. London, Ontario, May 6-9.
- 2004 The Cultural Construction of Masculinity in North American Popular Culture. History in the Making Conference, Montreal, Quebec, March 6.

PRESENTATIONS

- 2009 Pamięć, tożsamość i przekazy pokoleniowe: przypadek Nowej Huty. [The post-socialist generation. Memory, identity and generational transmission: the case of Nowa Huta]. Department of Anthropology Colloquium, Uniwersytet Jagielloński. Kraków, Poland, November 17.
- 2009 Capitalizing on Communism? Memory and Identity in Nowa Huta. Department of Anthropology Colloquium, The University of Western Ontario. London, Ontario, Jan. 12.
- 2005 Londombia: Colombian Newcomers in London, Ontario. Department of Anthropology Colloquium, University of Western Ontario. London, Ontario, April 15.

OTHER CONFERENCE ROLES

- 2009 Co-organizer and chair of several conference sessions at the Safe, Respectful & Inclusive Workplaces: Strategies & Stakeholders Conference, Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children. London, Ontario, May 28-29 2009.
- Sessions chaired:
- "Canadian Workplace Initiatives To Address Domestic Violence/Woman Abuse"
 - "Corporate Best Practice for Addressing Domestic Violence/Woman Abuse in the Workplace: The American Experience"
 - "Best Practices for Fostering Healthy Work Environments for Health Care Professionals"

2009 Chair of conference session “Framing the Issues”, Perspectives of Media and Communications in Ukraine Conference, London Ontario April 25 2009.

HONOURS & AWARDS

External

2010-2011 Ontario Graduate Scholarship, \$15,000

2009-2010 Ontario Graduate Scholarship, \$15,000

Internal to U.W.O.

2007-2011 PhD funding 4 years at \$20,000 per year

(reduced 2009-2011 due to external scholarship)

2010 Western Graduate Thesis Research Award, \$750

2009 Regna Darnell Graduate Award for Fieldwork, \$500

2008 Graduate Scholarship in Migration & Ethnic Relations, \$2000

2008 Conference travel grant, for participation in the Canadian Anthropology

Society Meetings in Ottawa, \$200

2003-2005 MA funding, 2 years at \$15,000 per year

2004 Conference travel grant, for participation in the History in the Making Conference in Montreal QC, \$200