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having left the old Yugoslavia at the age of three years, I spoke her language and knew
nothing of the country.

But it would seem that life inevitably led me to the study of post-socialism.

By the turn of the millenium, I knew neither the languages, nor the conflicts that had
followed the demise of socialist systems.

Yet another decade later, I just started to conciously think of the reality of a past called
socialism. A visit to the Siberian lands had finally revealed to me a dimension of my
own life. And for having led me to that path and to my awareness of it, I owe the
highest gratitude to you

Mira and Gerd.

Russian post-socialism:
socio-political transformation and the industrial towns of the Kuzbass

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Preface

The following pages present the results of my studies of institutional life in Soviet Russia and since its disintegration with a focus on industrial areas, placed into the wider context of recent Russian history; results are presented in two stages. To begin with, I introduce the questions that led me into fieldwork in an industrial region of Siberia, the Kuzneck Basin, better known as “Kuzbass“, and I report the outcomes of fieldwork itself. Then, following analysis of the data produced in the field, I give an account of my reading of relevant literature in socio-cultural studies through detailed examination of selected works that I have found to be particularly instructive, the key ideas of which are summarised in the concluding chapter. Together with the main body of text and samples from my memory notes and interview excerpts, I provide some additional material which I found to be useful during my fieldwork.

The transliteration of Russian words from Cyrillic to Latin has been carried out according to a German system, elaborated by the DIN in co-operation with the ISO. The transliteration rules are placed before the beginning of the thesis, to facilitate the reader’s familiarisation with them. I hope that the system of transliteration and any other deviations from the norms of written English will not impede understanding.

I am deeply indebted to many scholars who have supported my efforts and given advice and assistance when I have asked for it: Gertrude Saxinger and Ol’ga Povoroznjuk in Vienna, Irina Nam in Tomsk, as well as Evgenija Safonova, Elena Kranzeeva and Anna Maljar from the University of Kemerovo. Particular gratitude is owed to my supervisor, Prof. Peter Schweitzer at the University of Vienna, whose patience and dispassionate way of approaching delicate questions of defining a field (and any other questions as well) have been essential for my success. I can hardly imagine how I would have surmounted the difficulties, which I often created myself in the course of my studies, without them all. Assistance which other people, including my friends in Vienna and beyond, have provided, including advice, proofreading, moral support, or just inspiring conversation, has been of the greatest value as well and I wish to thank them all.

Transliteration rules

The following rules of transliteration from Cyrillic to Latin do not follow established English models, instead using the system developed by the Deutsches Institut für Normung (DIN 1460 of 1982, similar to ISO/DIS 9), with which I am more comfortable and which, additionally, conveys more adequately the pronunciation of words in the Russian language.

Cyrillic	Latin
А	A
Б	B
В	V
Г	G
Д	D
Е	E
Ё	Ë
Ж	Ž
З	Z
И	I
Й	J
К	K
Л	L
М	M
Н	N
О	O
П	P
Р	R
С	S
Т	T
У	U
Ф	F
Х	Ch
Ц	C
Ч	Č
Ш	Š
Щ	Šč
Ъ	”
Ы	Y
Ь	,
Э	˘E
Ю	Ju
Я	Ja

I. Research interest and overview

To begin a thesis meant to earn its author the academic title of “Magister Artium” by referring to a television show, one intended for a broad audience, may not look like the best way to start. This is however the story of my modest beginning. “Soviet Storm”, produced in 2010 to represent to audiences of the Russian Federation and the world at large a “Russian” perspective on the events of the Second World War, gave me the impetus to enquire what (beyond patriotic shows) constituted the historical memory of a nation, if indeed collective memory can be assumed to be a useful concept. To understand the ritualised, as well as the spontaneous, expressions of memorising and historicising implies a profound understanding of the society concerned. It was soon clear that such a task could only be managed with questions specifically addressing its present condition, trying – if indeed it is possible – to demonstrate a national characteristic. In the case of post-Soviet Russia, the present condition could be characterised precisely to lie in the end of the Soviet, in other words: of the communist project. Communist rule not only claimed to find its purpose in the creation of a so-called “socialist” society. It also did so by declaring itself as a “dictatorship of the proletariat”, claiming for itself the support of an industrial working class, the supposed progressive class in the philosophy of Marxism (cf. Engels 1932).¹ The obvious implication for me is to ask myself: So what has been made of that working class? What has become of it, as the collapse of the communist project has deprived it of the ascription of being the leading class in history?

It was unavoidable, if one were to take the above idea seriously, to enquire after the options for empirically and theoretically representing to oneself the Russian working class of our days. Since the Russian Federation is the legal successor to Communist Russia (the “SSSR”, in Russian), it seemed appropriate to study such a problem within its present borders; it is also the country within the former empire, with which the author of the present thesis was familiar, at the time of formulating the research project.

I hope that a better understanding of institutions in industrial workers’ lives, in urban settings, would allow me to come to at least some conclusions, keeping in view the original interest. It seemed and still seems appropriate that my research interest reflect these ideas and allow for an enquiry into the institutional and identity questions involved. Most importantly, an approach based on fieldwork and intended to apprehend institutions, as well as the changes visited on them since 1991, may well allow for the kind of insights, which the study of history and written accounts will not: They must originate in the rough, uneven texture of personal experience and the resulting doubts it awakens in the fieldworker’s mind, even regarding the most plausible and well-researched academic texts. The choice of a locality became my main preoccupation, fortunately only for a short lapse of time, as it was relatively soon established that the coal-producing and processing region of the Kuzneck Basin offered a very favourable setting for the projected fieldwork. My guiding question, it is hoped, reflected all these considerations: What kind of institutional changes is affecting the definition of identity in the urban-industrial milieu of the Kuzneck Basin?

1 The author does not wish to deny the problematic nature of notions such as the “progressive class”, but he does recognise their importance in shaping many protagonists’ views on the nature of Russian society in the last century, which is enough to justify not only a mere reference to this fact, but also an enquiry which will discriminate in favour of a kind of social milieu, which one can assume to be characterised by the presence of industrial workers, first and foremost.

Studying industrial sites in Russia

No fieldwork can occur outside of geographical space. It requires the definition of a specific geographical area, considered relevant for the purpose of the enquiry. For my purpose, the Kuzneck Basin, located in Southern Siberia, offers the appropriate setting for the study of a society, in which industrial workers constitute a majority. The region, also an administrative unit of the Russian Federation formally called the Kemerovo Territory, is attractive in that it has largely conserved, as well as partly modernised its inherited industrial structures, the earliest origins of which date back to the eighteenth century. “Workers”, as a category in its own right, still therefore constitute a relative majority of the workforce there. Fieldwork helped to confirm the peculiar nature of this situation, as much as bringing new insights, to be developed in Chapter III of the present thesis. Certainly, a lot has changed and the prominence of pensioners in my account is as much a reflection of the specific approach to engagement with the field chosen by the author, as of the decrease in the labour force resulting from restructuring, although the latter has been held back by the territorial government, to some degree at least. However, the analysis of my findings alone would hardly allow for enough new insights to defend a thesis of any relevance, the reasons being elaborated in the corresponding chapter. It must be acknowledged: The material collected during the field trip, during the summer of 2015, does not entirely satisfy my interest in the matter. Whatever reasons I can now distinguish for this, it means that, rather than a conventional analysis of ethnographic work, my use of findings based on fieldwork should rather serve as the ground for a critique of earlier studies, which have already presented relevant results for my topic. The study of my empirical material can guide a critical reading of other theses and this in turn might yield new insights and thus I may ask: in the light of my findings about the Kuzneck Basin, which ideas in relevant contributions on post- socialism, as well as in studies on Soviet Russia, seem promising for future research?²

A retrospective reading of my fieldwork recordings reveals the weaknesses of my approach. This, however, merely works as a reminder that better knowledge can, by the very nature of scholarly work, only be gained with hindsight, albeit some particular mistakes might have been recognised even while in the field. The specific kinds of those mistakes will be elaborated upon in Chapter III, so that I may at this point content myself with some remarks on the object of enquiry.

Fieldwork: choices and findings

The institutions and the institutional changes characteristic of life in socialist and post-socialist Russia are, at least in ordinary European perception, the “poor cousins” of Russia’s political scene.³ The latter remains as spectacular as ever, while even persons who have had experience of the former Soviet republics, tend to give secondary importance to the institutional dimensions of unfolding events. This may well be due to the fact that Russian cultural production, apart from great composers and a few writers, is infrequently made accessible to a broader public. Be that as it may, the endeavour to approach this object leads me to set aside considerations about the general path and direction of the polity and to engage with it immediately. Theory guides a student’s work, but it can be cumbersome if one has such a vague concept of a research topic, as is the case here. Some reflections on my choice of conducting fieldwork in one particular region should also help to make the point that the absence of previous experience there did not constitute a disadvantage.

2 This should serve as my second research question.

3 This is to borrow an expression from Sarah Ashwin, where she describes the police (rus. “milicija”) as the poor cousins of the state security agency, the KGB (Ashwin 1999).

The point here is that events of an explicitly political order, usually taking place in Moscow, are reported widely across the international press, whereas almost all other phenomena of Russian life appear underreported.

To start work on the specific project above, the easiest thing to do could have consisted in looking for industrial structures in urban settings already known, however remotely. These might have included the cities of Moscow, Kazan', or Novosibirsk, as well as smaller settlements in the same areas. This would have implied however acceptance of previously formed views about regional particularities, such as ethnic and socio-cultural relations, which would have strongly influenced my every move in the field. To distinguish actual new findings from such preconceived ideas would not have been the easiest of tasks. Furthermore, the regions already named are not perfect examples of industrial urban environments. In contrast, the abovenamed cities, all among the largest in the country, have seen a significant degree of de-industrialisation, starting from the early days of market reforms, from 1991 on. This second problem deserves particular attention. Even if one assumes that industrial enterprises are still operating in each and all of them, the difference between an agglomeration with some industry and one, whose economy is based on processing raw materials, appears more significant: Since the intention is to understand how those who have been socialised in an industrial urban milieu during socialism have had to adapt institutionally to changing circumstances, the closest one can come to an observation of institutional change in such a setting has to be in those areas where local economic processes have not been disrupted to the same degree. In other words: To seek for institutions and possible evidence of their evolution, it seemed a priority to achieve data production through fieldwork in a locality or region, where conditions would have remained as close as possible to those of the socialist era. For a few regions in the Russian Federation, this has largely been the case, due to geographic factors and investors' choices. In particular, Western Siberia and parts of the Ural are still characterised by petroleum production and processing, with Čeljabinsk Territory conserving its specialisation in metallurgy. Togliatti still produces cars, while the Altaj March (Altajskij Kraj) continues to process its agricultural production. The Kuzneck Basin, being characterised by large reserves of hard coal and a specific political culture of relative stability, is interesting in that it has continued to push the development of its coal-based industries until now. There is no indication that this course of regional specialisation may be abandoned anytime soon, although the export of coal from there causes considerable transportation costs to the Russian economy. Metallurgy has also not been displaced by other activities, the corporations involved having instead striven to reshape production sites and find more customers abroad, as a response to falling domestic demand. To cut it short: the Kuzneck Basin ("Kuzbass" to most Russians) remains a region of dense urbanisation and still relies on its industrial structure, as much as it would have in the past. Adding to this, another aspect of the decision was a pragmatic one: As the visit of scholars from Tomsk University had provided an unexpected opportunity for arranging for an academic invitation to the Russian Federation – a necessary condition for the issuing of visa permitting research – a visit to Tomsk would become an evident necessity, if only for expressing gratitude. In fact, advice from the knowledgeable scholars at that university turned out to be a blessing. This situation made the choice of the Kuzneck Basin clearly a superior one, for the two regions are immediately bordering on each other: Kemerovo Territory is located in the South of Tomsk Territory and the river Tom' (the origin of the name "Tomsk") runs through the former, before reaching the latter. In this way, transit from one to the other of the regional centres could be achieved in half a day's journey, or even less.

The choice to carry out fieldwork in Kemerovo still brought sufficient difficulties with it and upon my arrival there I could soon appreciate the far too optimistic character of assumptions which had led me to a research concept (s. Chapter III), at the core of which stood the unacknowledged idea that local private (corporate) and, more importantly, public organisations would prove to be prepared to help me in my task. Whether I could have known better is fruitless speculation; suffice is to say that the intention to find access to local workers' lives and take part in some of their cultural activities would, in this approach, be reliant upon the willingness of formalised bodies and their administrators to support this. However open-minded one believes oneself to be, this way of proceeding did impose limits on my options and restrict them more, than was perhaps inevitable.

This approach through highly formalised relations was actually encouraged through discussion with scholars, both in Vienna and Tomsk, whose well-intended advice to consider discovering institutions through different bodies, public as much as private, had an unintended effect. Again, with hindsight, I can now see more clearly that trying to cover all of them, or as many as possible, led to overstretching, if one may say so, the research effort and thus contributed to a lack of focus.

However complicated my action in the field may now look, some basic understandings can be said to have resulted from fieldwork in the Kuzneck Basin. A helpful circumstance probably consisted in the fact that fieldwork was carried out just as the campaign for both the regional assembly's and the governor's elections gained momentum, in the summer of 2015. It became apparent that institutions pertaining to the field of cultural production, if observed alone, could seriously distort the perception of a newcomer in the field. It is to a large extent gratitude to the elderly and particularly to miners, partially embodied by the veterans' councils (*soveti veteranov*), on which the plausibility of political displays rests. Besides this, observations lead me to conclude that the apparent hierarchical thinking, in conjunction with the stereotypes of Russian authoritarianism (Stalinism, Leninism etc.), would tend to mislead researchers, if taken at face value. I think they can be better understood as pragmatic political arrangements on the part of the majorities of local populations, who occupy subordinate positions within the present social order, rather than as immutable and primordial characteristics of the mind.

What is valuable in earlier scholarship

To me, this means having to pay particular attention to that kind of post-socialist literature, or literature on communist Russia, which gives priority to my object or to social relations within the industrial peripheries of the disintegrated socialist world. This should include works by scholars from inside the country, or native speakers who have chosen a similar topic, such as the contributions by Il'in to an anthology on "Conflict and Change in the Russian Industrial Enterprise" (Il'in 1996 a & b). Whoever is interested in grasping the urgency of restructuring the coal industry, resulting from the Kuzneck Basin's dependence on these economic activities, during the 1990s, will be well advised to read the ISITO research groups publication on the topic, in the midst of that process (Bizjukov et al. 1995). This does however not mean that works from a supposed "Russian" perspective should be privileged necessarily and by all means. The enquiries of Douglas Rogers into the post-socialist realities of industrial and provincial Russia deserve mention at this point (Rogers 2015 & 2006), for they seem helpful to me in introducing an inexperienced reader to (literally) vast fields of enquiry to be discovered. For an understanding of the process I will deal with here as "transition", reading the study of the relations of persons to production in the course of institutional change by Birgit Müller is most rewarding (Müller 2012). Her enquiry enlightens the reader on what it means to perform productivity under the successive socio-economic regimes. And Stephen Collier's reflections on the possible directions of "neoliberal" reform in small industrial towns (Collier 2011) have inspired me in thinking about the making of and the shifts in Russian urban modernity.

My final selection of literature deserving close reading might however appear arbitrary and aleatory, justifying that I dwell on it a little more. Most of the books to be introduced in the following lines have been brought to my attention by scholars, who showed an interest in the topic of my work. This is true of a number of other publications as well, which are not mentioned in this introduction, but did inform my approach. Both Ashwin's monograph on Russian Workers (Ashwin 1999) and Kotkin's on the town of Magnitogorsk (Kotkin 1991) were recommended to me as providing valuable insights by scholars in Vienna, while searching for the former also brought to my attention more publications, including those edited by Ashwin (2006) as well as by Burawoy and Verdery (1999). Of similarly great relevance, the publications of Christopher Hann (1994 a,

1994 b & 2002 a) found their way into my work through the friendly advice of Prof. Peter Schweitzer. Discussion with and advice from scholars at Kemerovo and Tomsk universities also helped to complement my selection with publications in Russian. Among the latter, some have been challenging to read, but at the same time provide insight into how the Soviet Russian system and its evolution conditioned research in urban-industrial settings; an excellent example is Alekseev's auto-reflection on his research among industrial workers in Saint Petersburg during the 1980s (Alekseev 2003).

Regarding in particular the strategies or attitudes adopted by so-called ordinary citizens in the face of one-party-rule and dictatorship, the research of Sarah Ashwin has proven very valuable. Many articles and book reviews have had an influence on my thoughts, but Ashwin's studies of the Russian labour market, its self-sorting of labourers according to gender in particular, and of life in a rural coal-mining settlement in the Kuzneck Basin have probably been most influential of all (cf. Ashwin 2006 & 1999). They help to highlight why a labour movement has failed to materialise as a constant force after 1991, notwithstanding the material and moral degradations suffered in industrial regions during that time. Her findings are at times confirmed by my own, namely the fact that most persons will rather seek individual solutions and try to avoid outright confrontation with their superiors, as long as possible, because guarantees of participation in the normal economy and safety, broadly understood, were conditional upon a system of highly personalised relations within every enterprise. However collectivist society under communist rule was made to appear, the downside of this was the absence of actual organisation, apart from spontaneous moments of resistance, among the supposedly "leading" class, the workers. This was complemented by a gender division of labour, which prioritised male solidarity at work, to enable men to provide for their families, while women were rather encouraged to manage a broader range of tasks, including the management of household budgets. This moral order, as one may call it, has recently been rendered increasingly obsolescent and has made both genders' lives more difficult, because the relative lack of regular employment in the Russian market economy makes it impossible for many men to rely on their networks in the same way as in earlier times. So while women can somehow manage the additional difficulties, because such an arrangement is at the very heart of their duties within the nuclear family's household, men are often at risk of becoming redundant and undesired elements, in particular during periods of unemployment. This does little in the way of helping them to unite and articulate positions of – let us call it – masculine resistance to socio-economic oppression, resulting instead in early loss of dignity and death, primarily due to alcohol abuse. This is all the more interesting, as the late socialist period seemed to lead to a massive increase in worker activism, testified to by studies that explicitly made it their topic (Clarke et al. 1995; cf. Christensen 1995), as well as relating it to the appearance of democracy that seemed so prominent in early post-socialist politics.

For the purpose of theoretical advancement, it will be in order to focus on a selection of literature with more or less immediate relevance for the present thesis. Most publications I have been considering do not deal with the region of my fieldwork at all, but all of them have been relevant for my understanding of workers' lives and culture in a post-socialist environment. One way to approach it has been the comparison with findings from the very early stages of the transformation from socialism to post-socialism. Perhaps the most relevant among the studies concerned, but certainly a very remarkable one, is Stephen Kotkin's (1991) monograph on Magnitogorsk during *Perestrojka*. Its strength lies in a historically informed attempt at ethnographically describing and analysing the changing fortunes of a local political system, economic model and in relating this to a national context of tremendous challenges and to a Soviet culture, of which the town was, in some ways, a perfect materialisation. What one learns from it, in a sense, is that socialism's ability to survive depended on a social base that had been created decades ago and that this construction, resting on the existence of and control by the communist party, was shattered by the state-led reforms of the 1980s. If post-socialist society today struggles to

build viable institutions, this could at least partly be related to the fact that some radical changes undertaken since, in particular during the early 1990s, by dismantling that construction immediately without yet possessing an alternative, produced outcomes that were in fact highly undesirable from the point of view of actually transforming society and adapting it to a reality of market relations.

This said, an understanding of actually existing socialism as a reality of specific institutional arrangements, including its undesirable aspects, is helpful here and could for instance be drawn from early studies which were frequently, although not exclusively, set in rural environments. One example would be Martha Lampland's research which, although devoted to socialism in a Hungarian context, has turned my attention to the diversity of ways in which communist rule would try to integrate into its realm the preexisting social relations it had to deal with (Lampland 1995).⁴

This last point directly leads to the contributions of Ol'ga Urban (2013) and Michael Burawoy (1993 & 1999), both of which highlight incomplete or deficient institutional transformations as the essential reasons for current ills. Urban's approach, to define a "social mechanism of institutional transformation" for the specific case of the Kuzneck Basin, leads her to conclude that for effective (legal) regulation of the economy – the labour market in particular – to take place, the main challenge resides in overcoming the informal practices underlying the regional social agreement in the Kuzneck Basin: They may give income security to a majority of workers, but an improvement of their situations, let alone structural economic modernisation, appear largely out of question under the present model. But what resonates best with our above mentioned finding is the idea that, precisely as a result of government policies aimed at the creation of markets, the actual outcome is perceived as disappointing, whether seen from a liberal or a paternalistic point of view. In the anthology edited by Burawoy, attention is specially drawn to the fact that, although markets could be and were being created almost overnight, the consequences of this have been entirely unpredictable and very far from the kind of institutional outcomes that had been imagined by the proponents of neoliberal reform (Burawoy 1999).

Among the publications edited by Christopher Hann that could command attention, there is an anthology on property relations (Hann 1998) and one on socialism itself (Hann 1993), both of which give socio-cultural and socio-economic depth to an engagement with historical events and processes. A solid knowledge of the chronology of the unfolding of communist rule in Russia is nonetheless valuable here, in particular regarding the turbulent period of forced modernisation in the inter-war years, and I was fortunate to have one at my disposal at home (von Rauch 1955). More recent works, reflecting or covering the entire era of communist rule, have had critical importance for my personal thinking on the topic and should consequently be recommended (Koenen 2010; Kagarlickij 2016). A most necessary reference has to be another anthology edited by Hann, which is meant to give an overview over the field of post-socialist studies (Hann 2002 a). It may be needless to say that not every single contribution to this book has been relevant for me; it is the overall frame and the general ideas articulated by Hann, as well as other authors, which make it valuable. Most importantly, they portray possible futures for the investigation of post-socialism and do so by contextualising them globally, rather than prioritising a conventional area-studies approach, which would mainly concern itself with Eastern and Central Europe, perhaps with Eurasia. One is thereby made aware of the array of opportunities for further refining research, whether through increasing attention to the achievements in other, globally oriented fields of study (post-colonial, in the first place), or by integrating the perspectives of scholars in formerly socialist, "eurasian" countries. Additionally, accounts by what may be called "insiders", whether of life in late Soviet Russia (Jurčák 2003), or concerning its early years (Asmis 1926), have been greatly useful in relating the processes I have been otherwise reading about to the overall context of that polity's history. The reflections by Jurčák on the seeming stability of communist rule (and of communist convictions) are

4 Another relevant study would be Caroline Humphrey's "Karl Marx Collective: Economy, Society and Religion in a Siberian collective Farm" (Humphrey 1983).

among the most inspiring accounts of how a Russian citizen could experience Russian socialism and manage this experience's tensions in moral terms, before its obvious demise set in; and Asmis is a pleasure to read in that he offers a detailed picture of the evolving and highly challenging social and political environment within which the communist dictatorship had to take roots.

The common element one would like to highlight is that most, if not all, of the named authors consider institutional evolution to represent the most challenging task, as well as the most important one; there appears to exist a potential for consensus over the idea that this cannot be achieved in voluntarist ways through short-term action by governments.

The following chapters will roughly reflect this order: following Chapter II, an account of my fieldwork will be followed by a comparative critique of relevant publications and by an attempt to answer the research questions. In Chapter II, a few key concepts are explained in detail, in order to allow the reader an understanding of my own use of essential concepts for the reader. These should be: transition (from one form of industrial society to another, but not from one social reality to another⁵), institutional change, identity (chosen and ascribed), post-socialism itself and, last but not least, leisure and work. Chapter III is entirely devoted to my fieldwork account, with what I hope are adequate observations on the shortcomings in my conceptualisation of the field of study and on opportunities in my approach to making contact with informants. Chapter IV looks at the above-mentioned academic works in some detail and tries to pinpoint those ideas which, in the light of my own experience, appear most conducive to future research. Chapter V will summarise all of my findings and indicate, how these might advance future research, going as far as suggesting problem areas which could become topics of new research.

5 cf. Hann (1994 b)

Chapter II

Essential concepts:

Framing an understanding of socialist society and post-socialist reality

While it is true that every thesis accords certain terms more prominence than others, this one may be overburdened with a number of concepts, some of which could be considered antiquated (post-socialism) or of dubious pedigree (transition) and analytic value. It will be for the reader to judge, whether my use of these concepts is a meaningful one, but to me it seems that the kind of study I have tried to conduct cannot do without them. To avoid being accused of carelessness in the way I am using some concepts frequently, at later or earlier points in the present thesis, it would seem recommendable to elaborate definitions for the most prominent ones, those whose use might also be most compromised by lack of clarity. I have therefore selected post-socialism, leisure and work, identity, transition, as well as institutional change as the “essential concepts”. This should not obscure the fact that other concepts are being employed; nor can I avoid acknowledging the fact that such a list will by necessity remain incomplete. This however should not mean that the selection of just a few, as the perceived most problematic ones, is an expression of arbitrary choice. It results from my determination to confront the potential for confusion and manipulation inherent in popular imagery and discourses about the former socialist countries and to offer the transparency which alone should allow the readers to form their own opinions on my work.

Post-socialism

Post-socialism will be regarded as the ascribed state of a society after the end of “actually existing socialism”, in the Russian case starting as of 1991. It can be defined primarily by the absence of communist rule – the political order – though historical socialist order may not, in this view, be reduced to this one aspect. For an understanding of “socialism”, one reference ought to be Christopher Hann’s article “After Communism: reflections on East European Anthropology and the Transition” (Hann 1994 b); Steven Sampson (Sampson 1991 : 18) provides a more detailed reflection on the term:

The political system of socialism – communist party rule – was the work of party intellectuals, founded upon a moral vision, but also on their self-deception, the author suggests. The end of socialism as a political endeavour can accordingly be considered as the beginning of a new era, itself paradoxically characterised by an abundance of reference to the abandoned project. With regard to this, it is again Hann whose formulation seems most to the point, since he articulates the sense of the closing of an epoch and contends that a sense of living after communism remains palpable in much of Eastern Europe (Hann 1994 b : 229), at the time of his writing.⁶

Caroline Humphrey (Humphrey 2002 b : 12) rests her use of the category of post-socialism on three assumptions: First the stability of social phenomena, or ways of life; second, the pervasive nature of socialism, “existing not only as practices, but also as public and covert ideologies and contestations”; third, a foundational unity, both in ideology (resting on Marx) and in practice (derived from Lenin). I shall, following her explanation, assume as one of the defining characteristics of post-socialism its longevity, itself deriving from the pervasiveness of the socialist experience, as well as from the stability of its social phenomena – ideological and practical.

6 Hann (1994 b) writes of a “post-socialist world” on page 246; this is apparently one of the early uses of the term.

Adopting Humphrey's three assumptions, I justify my use not only of the term as such, but also highlight my use of a hyphen in spelling the word, which serves to emphasise the defining character of that socialist experience.

Leisure and Work

Transformation/Transition has likely led to an erosion of leisure time (for men in particular) and has led to highlighting the distinction between genders, as the activities engaged in outside of main employment have diverged significantly. Although Ashwin (2006) uses other terms, I assume that this is one crucial implication of the researchers' findings. The researchers in her team have found that men's contributions to households consist primarily of money. They are therefore significantly more likely to engage in secondary employment (Ashwin 2006 : 213). This is related to the perception of their deserving in society at large (Ashwin 2006 : 216).

As opposed to this, women have a domestic role, which widely shapes beliefs about gender difference (Ashwin 2006 : 214-217). They also (are forced to) accept lower pay and are considered second-class workers. However, the fact of their association with the household has also contributed to protecting them (Ashwin 2006 : 217-219).⁷ Additionally, the norms of the Soviet era permit them to draw on state resources more easily. Besides this, a drinking culture proscribing heavy drinking for women also encourages it in men, which makes them even more vulnerable, adding "to the cocktail of risks which attend men's marginality within the household".

The key finding, if there were one, might be that the domestic division of labour and duties, as shaped and upheld in socialism, essentially helps to explain both success and lack thereof in the labour market.

The meanings of work-time and leisure-time are seldom spelt out, in the literature at my disposal, and hardly ever in these terms. In particular, there is relatively little attention in the relevant literature for "leisure", as one might call time spent outside of primary employment. In the anthology edited by Sarah Ashwin (op. cit.) in particular, one finds significant focus on "work", while anything concerning its counterpart can only be discerned indirectly. If it is clear that much of leisure-time is eaten up by activities related to making a livelihood and organising the household, this is not being dealt with very explicitly, at least in the conclusion. As opposed to this, Stephen Kotkin's account of life in socialist Magnitogorsk between 1987 and 1989 dwells quite extensively on cultural activities of all kinds, as well as on the overlap between free time and time devoted to activities of economic significance, as well as to political involvement (Kotkin 1991). Although "work" and "leisure" are not actually being defined by the author, Kotkin leads to insights that show the significance of both continuities and changes in people's adaptations. A most striking discontinuity concerns the degree of political involvement of Kotkin's informants, as illustrated by his remarks on the rising politicisation of Magnitogorsk's residents (Kotkin 1991 : 257-260), though it may be that this is in part a result of the researcher's own focus on the process of *Perestrojka*. The author also highlights the importance for local (also political) life of institutions such as the city newspaper (Kotkin 1991 : 39-43) and local theater (Kotkin 1991 : 48-51; 70-73). To him, the ability of the communist system to endure rested primarily on "ordinary people's ability to find a tolerable niche in which to conduct their lives" (Kotkin 1991 : 156). In Ashwin's rather focussed study (Ashwin 2006), one could find indications of the same, but it nevertheless appears to analyse its interviewees' fate strictly in economic terms, leaving not so much room for how precisely labour market failure or success are being crafted out of the complexity of everyday life. Networking activities in post-soviet society (s. Ashwin 2006 : 217) are being dealt with at some length, whereas political involvement appears virtually absent. Kotkin's book, on the other hand,

⁷ For this finding and other aspects, see also Chapter IV of the present thesis.

also gives significant space to the expression of the very mundane concerns of his informants: Some of the most dramatic shortages persisted with regard to housing (Kotkin 1991 : 120-121), which, of all concerns, is described in the most dramatic forms.⁸ Severe problems related to drink afforded new informal economy opportunities (Kotkin 1991 : 123-124) – an example of how time for leisure would be devoted to work.⁹ The citizens' of Magnitogorsk main worries appear to be purchases, housing, alcoholism and transportation, but health care appears to be prominent as well, although news coverage may have been insufficient, with regard to the effects of the steel plant on the environment, for Kotkin to cover this question more extensively.

To me, the meaning of “leisure” and of “work” will largely be mutually defining. Whatever activity does not constitute work, qualifies as leisure. This implies a significant overlap of the two terms, in so far as secondary employment, when occurring, necessarily takes place outside of working hours at primary employment. There is therefore a potential for some of any individual's time to be devoted to either work – self-employed, or under secondary employment – or leisure activities, depending on that persons pecuniary, or other, priorities at any given time. While “leisure” encompasses, in my use, all sorts of cultural activities, including politics, “work” will be understood as any employment, or activity, intended for earning a livelihood.

Identity

In the last instance, although my attention will be turned more to class identity than other expressions, the concept is a widely encompassing one, determined as it is by hierarchical relations in society which can be apprehended in several ways, through gender, race, or socio-economic and (in relation to these) geographic origin. Some of the most insightful reading concerning identity formation in late Soviet Russia is to be found in Anna Krylova's article “Soviet Modernity: Stephen Kotkin and the Bolshevik Predicament”, dealing with the individual's place in the course of collectivism's slow evolution, starting as early as the 30s (Krylova 2014).

Within the literature in use here, working class identity is perhaps most thoroughly dealt with by Sarah Ashwin in her monograph “Russian Workers: The Anatomy of Patience” (Ashwin 1999). The difficulty of identifying with collectives at different levels of the enterprise, which can be more encompassing, or less so, puts workers in a vulnerable position, subject to manipulation on the part of managers, who repeatedly appeal to workers' identification with the entire enterprise's labour collective (Ashwin 1999 : 138; 187). Already in socialism managers would employ such an approach to motivate workers to meet plan orders, effectively instrumentalising workers' sense of the dignity of their labour, itself an element of their identity, distinguished from that of supposedly “unproductive” managers. The labour collective's dual significance is put forward (Ashwin 1999 : 121): “it was at the same time the locus of social control and the locus of self-realisation, the point of intersection between the totalitarian aspirations of the party-state and the individual and

8 As Kotkin (1991) makes clear, the problem is not so much with the production of goods, as with their distribution, in a command economy. So, for example, there is some likelihood that the piling up of stocks actually constituted a major impediment for sales. As he observes, there were significant concerns among Magnitogorsk residents about the frequent shortages of goods of everyday consumption, such as toothpaste or laundry detergent. However, one of the witnesses he encounters (Kotkin 1991 : 119) in front of a shop supposes that the rumours about shortages do not arise accidentally, but instead are put out by “them”, in order to achieve the purpose of fulfilling the plan, in other words: Rumours would be spread by the agencies responsible for retail sales “to move the stuff sitting in warehouses”. Whether this was true or not, it does illustrate the heightened sense among consumers that more goods were produced than were usually on sale, meaning that there had to be stocks of them, which then might occasionally be “moved”. The topic of stocks accumulating, all the while shortages were still occurring, is a recurrent theme in most literature on the Soviet way of life and economy. See Ashwin (1999) and Koenen (2010) for further readings.

9 Regarding informal economy opportunities, s. also the Introduction by Kotkin (1997).

collective aspirations of the workers in whose name the party-state ruled.”¹⁰

The author takes an unambiguous stance, concerning the complexity of both articulation and perception of class (Ashwin 1999 : 7): workers’ collective identification is shown to constitute a function of relations of production and organisation of work, but one which needs to be distinguished, as a matter of fact, from the discourses which express it. Such discourses (of class) cannot be understood in isolation from social relations, but to understand their origins necessitates distinguishing between the two. Membership in the labour collective was encouraged only as “communist collectivism” – a cunning combination of incorporation through social provision, for each and every member, with the individualisation of every worker, when facing managerial authority (Ashwin 1999 : 13; 66). An enterprise was more than a unit of production: It stabilised society through compulsory employment and minimum payment.

To be sure, identity, including class, is co-determined through a number of factors; very prominently among these, in Ashwin’s account, figures the role of gender. It can be shown that, within the communist enterprise – in this case, the mine under study – men and women socialise in significantly different ways, as every collective at the shop level is either male or female, within the larger whole (Ashwin 1999 : 150). While men socialise with one another in their collectives, women tend to have different friends outside of work from those in the collective, a fact which may reflect the gendered division of tasks inside the household, characterised by mostly unpaid female work for the family.

The kind of “alienated” collectivism¹¹, which was characteristic of the Soviet enterprise, appears to have come under pressure from the fact that provision for workers’ needs has become less sustainable, where enterprises have been running at a loss. The transition period, it appears, has therefore been marked by an effective withdrawal of workers from collective strategies, as they are increasingly forced to rely on individual contacts for making a living (Ashwin 1999 : 169; 176). Endowed with a shifting sense of collective identification, reaching almost all the way from the household to the entire firm, workers are finding it too difficult to formulate a stance of their own, which might allow them to articulate their specific interests, as members of collectives distinct from the enterprise as such. They effectively take no active part, even as shareholders, to defend specific workers’ interests in the campaigns waged by competing management factions.

Significantly as well, Anna Krylova identifies an uneven development, with several visions and practices of social modernity existing side by side, although her sources are found in archives, rather than derived from fieldwork (Krylova 2014 : 190-191). Through her approach, she has found evidence that to “[accomodate] individualising discourses, this emerging language [of the press, literature, film and social sciences] signalled the beginning of a fundamental restructuring of the relationship between individual and society, away from the Bolshevik collectivist imperative.” (ibid.).

Assuming this last insight to be correct, one may adopt, as an operational definition, the idea that identity is to be understood, firstly, as an individualising notion, allowing variously for subsumption under a collective entity (but not a n y), or distinction from it; assumption of an identity forces individuals to position themselves, whether through subsumption or distinction. Secondly, “class” in particular is determined in its potential breadth by the facts of professional belonging, hierarchical position and thus by social organisation of labour (cf. Ashwin 1999), without this already predetermining an individual’s involvement in collective action, on behalf of the community of their identification.

10 In Chapter 6: “Our mine”: workers and the labour collective

11 This is Ashwin’s term for the designation of the above described identification, which however does not lead workers to take up autonomously organised collective action in defense of their rights (Ashwin 1999).

Transition

The exact content and causal implications of transition from socialism have been the object of more than one intense debate. It remains, indeed, debatable even now, when and by what it has begun and how it came to an end. Though my readings and personal observations have not allowed me to give any clearer indications as to the question of time-frame and circumstance, I can still accept the broad definition that transition has been the outcome of political processes under way in most communist countries by the 1980s. Marked, in the Russian case, by the turbulent events of the *Perestrojka* – revolution from above – it led, by the early 2000s, to more or less consolidated market-oriented economies and political systems often highly dependent on foreign trade, possibly too much so (s. Kagarlickij 2016 : 436).¹² To illustrate the drawn-out character of debates, alluded to earlier, I shall in the following elaborate on several contributions from economic anthropology, dealing in particular with the concept of “merchant capital”, as used by Burawoy and Krotov (1993), borrowing from Engels and Marx, as well as others.

This particular debate, as one case, helps me to sustain my case for the concept used here: By “transition”, I mean the process in the course of which not only (and not so much) the character of property has been changed, mostly from public to private, but which has meant a substantial blow to the ability of any one authority to impose its vision of society on a majority of people: Assuming this was precisely what communist party rule was about, then present-day post-soviet societies, for all their apparent authoritarianism, do no more dispose of such a unified (and not just seemingly uncontested) central organ.

In their article “The economic Basis of Russia’s political Crisis” , dating from 1993, Michael Burawoy and Pavel Krotov examine flaws of the privatisation process, which for them consist mainly in the inability and lack of interest of new owners to invest their resources for a sustainable future of their newly acquired assets. The challenge of moving from the characteristic monopolisation of Russia’s economy to competition, from worker control of the production line to firm managerial control, finally from barter of products to a market in factors of production: All of this is thought to make the substance of transition. Since the first two aspects in particular had not been remedied at all, the authors have found no reason to speak of a different organisation of production (Burawoy et al. 1993 : 64). In fact, it is in trade that new forms had been coming about: “Merchant capitalism” was taking place, since this is where profits stood to be made, rather than in productive investment. Taking their start from Weber (Burawoy et al. 1993 : 54-55), the authors argue for the difference of a transition to capitalism under globalised conditions (Burawoy et al. 1993 : 67) from that of historical merchant capital to modernity. Plunging directly into the international economy is seen as an erroneous approach to making the transition:

“The later a society launches into capitalism the more its surplus is drained away to the more advanced surrounding economies. The development of capitalism in the metropolis entails the underdevelopment of the periphery.” (ibid.).¹³

With a focus on questions of trade, Caroline Humphrey published a contribution to the anthology edited by Burawoy in 1999, which was later re-published, slightly altered, in her own collection of essays (cf. Humphrey 2002 a). This author expresses reservation with regard to the notion of merchant capital (Humphrey 2002 a : 69-71). The earlier organisation of production is

12 More interesting remarks regarding the long term development of Russia’s dependence on foreign markets can be found in the same publication: Regarding the pre-revolutionary period, chapter 11, § 8 appears instructive, as well as chapter 12, § 2, and for the Soviet period there is chapter 14, § 8 (Kagarlickij 2016 : 299-303; 309-314; 404-406 respectively).

13 s.a. Kagarlickij op. cit.

considered indeed to persist, as found by Burawoy and Krotov (1993), while Humphrey also does agree with their reservations as to the assumption that liberalised trade would necessarily lead to trade in a modern “western” form. Humphrey, however, distinguishes new players on the scene, who massively engage in petty trade, a dimension not foreseen in the “merchant capital” scenario, which she finds inadequate for grasping the character of emergent capitalism at the turn of the millenium.

To this, Burawoy responds, so to say, in the afterword of the mentioned anthology (Burawoy 1999). In Russia, transition displayed a class formation process (a “gestation”, rather, in his own terms), which makes the author think of a remote form of capitalism, the scenario of which is borrowed (again) from Max Weber (Burawoy 1999 : 303-304): merchant capital seeks to derive as much profit as feasible, not from investing into productive activity, but from trade: Exporting raw materials, importing cheap consumer goods and regulating the whole by high finance. He appears to see Humphrey’s contribution (Humphrey 2002 a : 69-71) as at least partly corroborating his earlier finding on the question of merchant capital, albeit with the qualification of calling it “latter-day merchant capitalism” in this later contribution.

One hereby sees most clearly how the concept of transition, even where it is explicitly addressed, is difficult to grasp: There may exist a significant overlap in the findings of Burawoy and Humphrey and no contradiction in the strict sense of the term; still, the two scholars perceive in distinctly differing terms the theoretical implications of it. One may deduce from this that when writing about “the transition”, one should bear in mind not so much a move from one specific order to a different one, as the replacement of one set of (theoretical) problems by a new and transnationally virulent one – a new challenge for research.¹⁴

Institutional change

To articulate my own understanding of the concept of institutional change, I shall partly rely on a regional account of transition, Olga Urban’s “The social Mechanism of institutional Transformation of Economy in a mono-productive Region”.¹⁵ That is, I try to understand the transit from one institutional state of affairs to another in the terms of a scholar at Kemerovo’s regional university. My own definition of the concept shall furthermore be the result of putting this understanding against one of my own textbook definitions, so as to highlight how I shall use it, as distinguished from the way Urban does.

The over-arching notion for Urban is that of the “Social Mechanism” (of institutional transformation), on which she elaborates specifically for the region of Kemerovo:

“The Social Mechanism is regarded as a means of regulation of socially meaningful relations. [...] At the regional level, the elements of the Social Mechanism consist of subjects, who are involved in the processes of institutional transformations, with their own interests, as well as socio-cultural and behavioural particularities, characteristic of their socio-professional status; likewise, the elements of this mechanism also consist of *social institutions, themselves determining the stable forms of behaviour and interaction of those social subjects.*” (Urban 2013 : 268).¹⁶

14 It should not omitted that the concerning scholars are aware of and, like Burawoy (1999), have pointed out the problematic teleological resonances of the term, in the way it has been frequently used by proponents of a fast transition to markets and privatisation.

15 “Социальный механизм институциональной трансформации хозяйства в монопродуктовом регионе” (Urban 2013)

16 “социальные институты, определяющие устойчивые формы поведения и взаимодействия социальных субъектов”. My emphasis.

In turn, institutional transformations may be regarded as resulting from subjects' activity (Urban 2013 : 279-280). Specifically, they appear to occur when subjects cannot achieve their ends by way of established (institutionalised) practices. When, as a reaction, this drives the motivation of social subjects in exhibiting new norms and rules and the genesis of social practices, this means a change to the institutional sphere. A dialectic between institutions' effects and subjects' activities is identified by the author as being permanently at work, thus causing institutional change.

One also finds an explicit definition (Urban 2013 : 282) of institution: formal and informal rules and norms, which find realisation through social practice. An interesting remark in the context of the Kuzneck Basin is that informal institutionalisation may lead to even increased (regional economic) specialisation and dependence on raw material production (suggesting a strengthening of the existing monopolism; s. Urban 2013 : 265).

According to Friedhelm Kröll, the complexity brought by institutional change is managed through the regulation of belonging, or of membership (Kröll 2009 : 133-145). By "institution", this author means "an aggregation of norms, relating to each other, so as to constitute a system of generalised expectations of behaviour". Institutionalisation, he writes, happens to be the unintended result of gradual processes, in which efficient forms of social interaction get validated, with corresponding norms being put into place; or otherwise there can be conscious initiation – in other words: founding – of such a normative system (Kröll 2009 : 143-144). In either case, it appears that any new institution needs to confer a distinct advantage over the preceding arrangement, or otherwise it would fail to be imposed in practice. Institutional change, according to Kröll, is therefore not to be seen as something inherently good for all those involved, but rather as a response to perceived pragmatic advantages conferred by one behaviour, or by a whole of interrelated norms directing behaviour (an institution), over another.

Adopting this definition of "institution" appears to be essentially compatible with Urban's own understanding of the term, as elaborated above (Urban 2013). With regard to institutional change in Soviet Russia, I may therefore conclude that, all reservations as to the outcome of such transformation notwithstanding, institutional change could be detectable only insofar as there has been an actual modification in practice, consciously or unconsciously achieved, leading to specific expectations of behaviour for the concerned society, or in particular communities.

If institutional change means the adoption of interrelating norms (and therefore of expectations of adequate behaviour), this makes it necessary for me to approach any account of "transition" or the end of "socialism" with a little reservation: For one must ask, whether, in what I have learned, there is evidence indicating such a process. And, conversely, if new expectations were found to be missing and evidence of such a process – immediate or gradual – was inconclusive: could this mean that, with institutional change but dubiously detected, "transition" has perhaps been less effective than it might at first have seemed to be?

Chapter III

Fieldwork account

Any form of private or collective economic activity, which was not included into the centralised system of administration, was annihilated. It is in the years of the “Great Turn” that the Soviet economy adopted a closed character, separating itself from the world market. This was induced by the chronic lack of [capital] means and the downcast condition (after collectivisation) of the rural economy, which had previously been in the role of the main exporting sector.

Kagarlickij: The peripheral Empire: Russia and the World-System. (Kagarlickij 2016 : 382)

To do fieldwork was a straightforward choice, given the fact that I had an interest in understanding the continued existence (and possible significance) of institutions of socialist society in the present day. Equally, to choose the Territory of Kemerovo, commonly referred to as “Kuzbass”, was, in a sense, very easily done, although the space of Communist Russia had been such a wide one and diverse urban and industrial regions are numerous. It was, to begin with, quite obvious that continued industrial activity as the region’s economic mainstay would enhance my ability to find the kind of forms of (“working” class) life, which might have survived the collapse of both the socialist economy and (partially) of Russia’s social relations, often attributed to the period of capitalist transition. Not only is that region characterised by significant activity in coal processing and related industries, it is also located geographically in relative proximity to Tomsk, the university of which one institute was so kind as to make this fieldwork possible. To visit the region and join Tomsk, which seemed quite unavoidable, was made thereby relatively easy. What is more, two large urban centres characterise the Kuzbass, one of them the capital, Kemerovo, the other being the historically older and significant (Novo-) Kuzneck. Both of them, as industrial centres of over five hundred thousand each, appeared to offer both the cultural environment and the urban infrastructure to make them significantly different from smaller industrial settlements, thereby embodying the “proletarian”, as well as state-capitalist character of modern Soviet life – very much the combination which had originally been of interest.

To approach the task, it seemed necessary to formulate rather broad questions, for it remained unclear, by which means institutional change in such an environment would be best apprehended. Those questions should reflect interest for both the change in concrete, objectifiable circumstances of life, as well as the subjective assessment of such an experience by the people concerned: Has the position of the industrial worker changed, regarding their objectifiable living conditions? Which possibilities exist, for the (assumed) modification in the identification with life as an industrial worker to find expression in approval or rejection of the conditions of social order?

Quite definitely, it was not the intention, in particular with regard to the second question, to be able to find a finite number of actual “possibilities”, the idea rather being that, while being there, the author and fieldworker should try to place himself into a position of participant observation, or anything as close as possible to this. This would enable him to uncover the contradictory aspects of workers’ identities, as people struggle to make life meaningful, all the while having to manage the discontent arising from frustrations and, at times, privations in the post-socialist order. I was not, however, very confident in the prospects of becoming a participant observer in local people’s lives within the matter of a few weeks in summer, even more so as I came to the region without a clear

idea of where to start and which institutional arrangements, organisations or other, I should concentrate on for a start. Thereby my period of fieldwork could, if one wanted, be likened to an intensified tourist journey, with repeated visits to a number of establishments, all with the purpose to find out which areas of social life continued to function as a legacy of socialist institutions. These would include public libraries, with elderly people's clubs meeting there, museums, veterans' councils, professional education facilities, or consumer cooperatives, or palaces of culture: The idea remains that while, at least for a moment, by participating in their activities, one could start to grasp in how far the post-socialist existence of these consisted of something substantially different from their socialist past. This navigation between various partners, consistently combined with an attempt at locating them within the social whole, contributed to the creation of a network of relations, each giving access to informants who, quite frequently, knew nothing of each other, or not much. It is for this reason that I chose the term of network-building, or simply networking, which still today appears adequate as a designation for the method employed in that specific environment.

To qualify the approach taken here, by giving it a name usually not used in ethnography, or with regard to social research, we should recognise that network-building comprised a set of various techniques. It could not be said that various methodologies were used. The methodological approach remained one throughout, but to actually have a productive face-to-face exchange with people, specific techniques of producing data were used. It should be added, right away, that one of the most important ways of gathering data, which had in fact been intended, at the beginning, was rendered impossible by the shortness and sometimes chaotic intensity of the process: Archival research had been considered as a valuable method and, with regard to producing secondary data, would still be very desirable.¹⁷

Most of the time, as occasions for meeting specific groups at work¹⁸ or during leisure were found, the standard procedure of data recording came to be the writing of field notes and of memory notes. Interviews were also conducted, although infrequently, as for most occasions there was previously too little knowledge of specific circumstances to allow for this technique to be rigorously employed: Without a better understanding of the people, the establishment concerned, as well as their respective places in the social and political environment of the Kuzbass, there seemed to be little, in terms of methodological aims, that an interview could be specifically geared to. Nevertheless, on a few occasions it appeared as the easiest way to record the significant amount of momentarily available information. In some cases, it appeared that conducting an interview was an excellent pretext for getting people's attention, or a means for intensifying the relation developing with them, for allowing the author to spend time with them and for making the inquiry appear more serious, or scholarly and valuable, since it is an obvious fact that fieldworkers do often conduct interviews, making this something of an expectable experience. In short, one could, so I can assume, earn an informant's respect and time by doing so. Some print materials were gathered, largely unsystematically, as occasions presented themselves; they were to be complemented by a

17 The uncertainty experienced regarding the object of fieldwork, in particular the lack of previous understanding of regional conditions, prevented me from making better use of elaborate methods, as for instance presented in H. R. Bernard's (1988) "Research Methods in Cultural Anthropology".

For either of those methods to be used with success, it would have made sense to have organised two separate field trips, with the distinct purposes of learning about the field generally and covering at least one aspect of it systematically. As it happened, the two stages were more or less fused together during my stay in the Kuznekk Basin.

18 In some instances, the distinction of an activity as "work" opens room for ambiguousness, as in particular pensioners often continue to work; in the case of veteran council's officers, it is less than clear whether they should range among working people. According to the understanding of "work" and "leisure" used here, they would range among people engaging in a leisure activity, even though they are paid a compensation for their efforts, which may be motivated by the thought to be doing something valuable per se; it is not, after all, a strictly economic employment they are engaged in, as it cannot be said to consist of activities performed primarily with the aim of earning a livelihood.

few photographs of downtown areas in Kemerovo, as well as by an attempt at description of the central area, which I however did not take to the point, where one could confidently speak of a sketch of institutional arrangements within space, which had been the original idea. This may betray a lack of understanding of the interconnections governing the regional capital's urban arrangement, on the researcher's part, as well as resulting from the fact of frequent socialising activities, which limited the time available for vigorously studying the urban space as a geographical reality in itself.

Whatever my original intentions had been, network-building in fact consisted, for the most part, in social interaction, documented through memory notes, as well as in additional attempts at producing evidence of my experience of the urban space.

By taking this way, one could in fact speak of a default approach to data collection, keeping in mind the central task imposed on this enquiry by the first research question: To find out, how and whether at all the lives of working class people, as a dominant group in industrial towns, had seen their lives and their location within the life of society changed, in immaterial as well as in material regards. Socialising interaction with the targeted group, or with the mediators needed to approach them – veteran councils' officers, museum employees, a businesswoman in the tea trade, librarians and local sociologists – became and remained the unquestioned priority during the time spent in the Kuzbass. The success of such an approach was conditional upon the willingness, in many cases, of employees and officials to support my effort. The fact that the authorities in charge of educational facilities in the region took over one month for allowing access to professional education facilities decisively influenced the process of fieldwork. As a result of being denied, until one week prior to departure, access to those facilities, the opportunity for learning more about the operation of those crucial loci of knowledge reproduction across generations, of socialisation of the young workers into the world of a preceding Soviet professional generation, was largely lost. Not least, thereby no contact was established with the experienced individuals teaching there, who are looking back on careers as qualified workers and, correspondingly, on the experience of institutional transformation in their chosen professions.¹⁹ These circumstances led to an orientation focused rather on the celebration of past achievements, as well as on the transmission of values correspondingly created and sustained by earlier generations of workers. The activities of the mining museum "Krasnaja Gorka"²⁰ (Красная Горка), but also of the councils of veterans²¹ (Советы Ветеранов) and, by force of circumstance, those surrounding the celebration of the "Mineboy's Day"²² (День Шахтёра) and the mentioned organisations' perspective on it correspondingly acquired greater importance, certainly more than could have been foreseen. Other opportunities, mediated by the libraries, as well as by occasional contacts, coincidentally enriched this fieldwork experience with informants, most of whom had also entered retirement and were delightfully eager to share their views and understandings with a foreign researcher. In fact, some of my most intense – one might say jovial – interactions in both Novokuzneck and Kemerovo municipality occurred as a result of mediation by municipality and district libraries. Of no little importance were impressions and contacts found at a consumer cooperative, as well as occasioned by visits to the regional museum of ethnography and archaeology – a part of the university campus and therefore easily accessible.

All the same, it turns out that the larger part of individuals, with whom relations were established, either were retired or had reached retirement age. With regard to answering the research question, this appeared, if not as an advantage, then at least not as a problem: For obviously, two decades after the end of socialism, it has clear implications, whether a person has had an experience of socialist life in adult age. Only those beyond a certain age are able to give their own account of

19 The term for chosen careers used here obviously should not mean the same as in the common English use of the word "profession". This point has been made by Sarah Ashwin (2006) and her team of researchers.

20 Meaning "Red Hill" in Russian, in reference to burning coal deposits found there in the eighteenth century.

21 "sovety veteranov" in Russian.

22 "den' šachtëra" in Russian

what professional life, as well as culture generally, were like, and can compare leisure activities, industrial labour, or the performance of values of post-socialist times with those of the more distant past. If the (until too late) denied access to educational facilities did not further my efforts at finding out more about institutional transformation, it luckily did not deprive the enquiry of opportunities for data collection with a diachronical thrust in general. The methodology applied therefore can be regarded as having been at least partially adequate and adaptable to the task defined by the first research question. As for the second question, it certainly can be approximatively approached through my data, but the fact that the empirical basis is thin, containing little evidence about the views of active industrial workers of present days, means that the subjective views, the tensions in personal opposition to, or approval of, the post-socialist condition would be apprehended largely through specific lenses: Those of people no longer active in today's industrial jobs and those of cultural specialists²³ who, after all, should be assumed to have a somewhat different perception of the benefits and shortcomings of the path along which post-socialist society has changed. This is not to argue that individuals working outside of industry do, or should, consider themselves privileged within the larger social context. But as producers of cultural activities in the present, it should be suspected that they will be more inclined to justify the present operation of institutions or, at least, to negotiate their own explicit participation in contributing to the culture of the present in the light of deficits which they are likely to notice as much as anyone else. This has been particularly forcefully brought to my attention by conversations with my hosts for a significant part of the time spent in Kemerovo municipality: A married couple of highly educated intellectuals, working at the regional museum of fine arts and for a nationally distributed newspaper, respectively, who found it difficult, it seemed to me, to reconcile overall approval for the transformation undergone by the country in its abandoning of communist rule and of socialist norms with the illiberal, chauvinist tendencies apparently exhibited in Russian society in recent years. The tension here may less have been one of identity, threatened by the changes experienced in industrial organisation, but clearly reflects what could be seen as a negotiation of locating their own implication in an encompassing social process, the outcome of which they cannot unequivocally agree with. So it is indeed questionable whether our data would allow us to reasonably trace either approval or rejection of current society, as seen by industrial workers, given the set of data which we have at our disposal and which needs to be explored further below.

Novokuzneck

Starting with Novokuzneck was, paradoxical as it may be, an accidental choice dictated by intention, as the following lines will show. The fact that the author got an opportunity to travel alongside recent acquaintances from Tomsk, who were headed to the southern metropolis of the Kuzbass, made this a straightforward decision, since he had already been advised to turn to local sociologists there. The head (at the time) of the local department of sociology²⁴ had graduated from Tomsk University and was remembered there.²⁵ At the same time, there was no way of knowing which of two places should be given priority. Contacts with scholars of the regional university had been arranged both in Novokuzneck as well as in the capital, Kemerovo.

The peculiarity of Kuzbass history is that it has produced two centres of similar importance. This is well reflected in the fact that Kemerovo has become the capital of a region named the "Kuzbass", a construct referring to the full name "Kuzneckij Bassejn".²⁶ This name derives from the fact

23 This meaning mostly the employees at museums, or officers at socially integrative organisations, such as the veteran councils.

24 Belonging to the regional university of Kemerovo.

25 personal communication revealed in the diary

26 cf. Rosenberg (1938), for details about the building of a planned economy, as an evidence that the name "Kuzbass" was not yet commonly used at the time. For an example of popularisation of the communist narrative about the

that the region, long before being shaped into the administrative entity it now constitutes, had been known for the line of fortifications facing Mongolia and, more importantly, China, of which the fortress of Kuzneck was a prominent element (cf. Collins 2005). The town of Kuzneck, developed alongside the fortress in the seventeenth century, an early settlement of the Russian Empire, was to become later a hotspot of metallurgy named Stalinsk and more recently has been renamed Novo-Kuzneck.

It is possible to consider Novokuzneck the historical centre of the basin, north of the Altaj mountain range. The fact that it did not become the administrative capital, occasionally raised in conversation by the region's inhabitants, may be traced to its comparatively late connection to the Trans-Siberian railroad – only after the civil war, according to those accounts.²⁷ It nevertheless was developed into a centre of industrial activity on a par with the regional capital in size and no less important, in terms of cultural infrastructure and industry. Since my interest was to achieve an understanding of the region as an industrial zone, rather than of any of its constituent parts, it was perfectly sensible to start with Novokuzneck, whose importance for Russia's metallurgical industries was constituted from the 1930s on, as part of the process of construction of several agglomerations, a series of *kombinat* in communist terminology²⁸, in the Ural and southern Siberian areas in parallel. The continued industrial importance of the town is easily illustrated, if one looks at some of those enterprises which one could find listed on the town hall's website: For coal producing mines, these are "Antonovskaja", "Polosuchinskaja", "Bolševik"; there is also the group "Južkuzbassugol", with several mines for coking coal, crucially needed in steel production. There are several coal processing facilities: The ironworks "Zapadno-Sibirskij Metallurgičeskij Kombinat" (ZSMK) and "Novokuzneckij Metallurgičeskij Kombinat" (NKMK), now largely shut down, both belonging, with Južkuzbassugol, to the larger corporation "EVRAZ"; there is "Kuzneckie Ferrosplavy", specialised in iron silicon alloys; a mechanical reparations factory; a railway carriage construction factory; a metal constructions factory; an aluminium processing factory; and at least nine others, several of which are food processing factories.²⁹ It is not an exaggeration to state that the town is full of and surrounded with factories.

Nor would it be right to dismiss Novokuzneck as a location of cultural activity, education in particular. The best indication for this may once have been the monumental classicistic building of the drama theater, built in conjunction with the industrialisation effort. Most important however appears to be the fact that the town continues to play a role as a site of education. Setting aside the already mentioned regional university, which has a local establishment called the "Novokuzneck branch", the rectorship being located in Kemerovo, there is also a university of the industries – the higher education facility, in whose guest rooms the author rented a room, for the time of his stay. There are a few colleges providing professional education: An industrial "Technikum", as well as two "Kolledž", respectively for mining transportations and broader professional education.³⁰

The other educational facility of importance, which the author's had been drawn to early on, is the municipal (central) "Gogol" library, affectionately called the "Gogolevka", located immediately next to the industrial university and its dormitory and guest houses. The author found himself, so to say, in the immediate proximity of local cultural reproduction. Furthermore, it is only

Soviet history of industrialisation see Suslova (1984).

27 The portrait of the region in Suslova/Petrova's (1984) album, although succinct, appears to confirm that explanation, or at least does not contradict it.

28 The term *kombinat* is somewhat difficult to correctly define, but it certainly means a complex of factories, thought to work in a strictly interrelated manner and built to do so. Whereas Rosenberg in the 30s used the term for a "combination" of production sites accross several regions (the "Ural-Kusnezker-Kombinat"; Rosenberg 1938), it more recently is used for locally combined shops or factories, where several steps of processing, going as far as from raw material to final product, are spacially concentrated.

29 cf. appendix "Predprijatija"

30 cf. appendix "Obrazovanie"

a short distance from there to the “House of Creative Associations” (Дом Творческих Союзов), where artists of various fields have rooms for meetings and exhibitions. This facility houses an organisation for which I could not locate anything equivalent in Kemerovo.

It could be claimed, with some justification, that Novokuzneck constitutes an urban space rich in all the aspects of socialist life, for which our inquiry would find attention in the course of fieldwork: There are the inhabited areas of ordinary working class housing, factories and *kombinaty* stretching the length and breadth of the town, but there are also those institutions with a location of their own, which are assigned specific political and economic functions, within the local society, the most obvious of which – education facilities – relate to the reproduction of knowledge, of capacities, as well as of norms. The equivalence of Novokuzneck and the capital as urban areas is also well evidenced in demographical data, for which I draw on publications in the journal “Soviet Geography”. Data from the 1980s indicate that this was in fact the largest municipality in the region, in terms of population, for the entire recorded period (Shabad 1985 : 136). While Kemerovo grew from 385 000 inhabitants (1970) to 502 000 (1984), the respective numbers of Novokuzneck went from 496 000 (sic) to 572 000 inhabitants, in the course of the same years. If anything, these numbers suggest a complex relation between the region’s development and that of Novokuzneck, as one of its centres, and the development of Russia as a whole, with the Kuzbass turning into one of the Soviet economy’s powerhouses, rather than being a regional economy that would have been integrated into the national context further on.

The findings here summarised at any rate appear to corroborate the impression one gains upon a first walk through the central districts of Novokuzneck: If this is merely a provincial centre, then it has been meant to become an important one. Visits to the industrial areas and cultural infrastructures additionally reinforce the understanding that the town, indeed the whole region, has been developed in order to serve for the functions of a larger, national structure.

The stay in Novokuzneck had lasted for little over a week, from the early morning of 31st July until nine days later, when the author left for Kemerovo on 9th August. The specific constellation of the Kuzbass made it seem at least appropriate, if not necessary, to see both centres, first to be able to assess their differences, then to identify, which opportunities the regional political landscape offered for doing fieldwork. As the capital, Kemerovo would offer specifically different opportunities for studying institutional conditions. If there was an option to stay there and learn more about the evolution of Soviet-era institutions, it seemed that a return to Novokuzneck might take place, should circumstances complicate our approach in Kemerovo. However, such a return was not to be.

Upon reading the diary of those days, it turns out as more than obvious that there were significant opportunities for quickly developing a decent field access, while in Novokuzneck. This locality not only offered the structural preconditions for inquiring further into the life of ordinary industrial citizens; it was also a very welcoming environment, in every regard. If proper field notes have not been taken, as was to be the case later, in the form of memory notes, this must be explained by the fact that the first stay in Novokuzneck was thought of as merely an introduction, when circumstances for fieldwork were thought to be significantly restricted: The access to professional colleges and the staff working there had not been given and was to be expected in the course of the month of August. Meanwhile, going to the northern centre – Kemerovo – and discovering its specificities as regional capital did not seem to preclude any future opportunities. According to the task list, kept additionally to the diary, we see that only by the 6th of August was the information recorded that a decision would be made no earlier than 20th August, regarding our request for access, by the Department of Education and Sciences of Kemerovo Oblast.³¹ Any request to be allowed a visit to the colleges was not to be addressed to their respective principals, but

31 see appendix “Vorgehen”

had to go through a process of clearing and formal agreeing in the corresponding department of regional government, which apparently would take weeks and thereby set a different time frame, at the least, for the realisation of this part of the intended effort. Since, in the worst of cases, this might mean one could not expect to do serious work with professional educators at all for lack of time, it seemed appropriate to use the time to gain an insight into the urban life of Kemerovo and its infrastructural arrangement. A sense of corresponding fatalism arises from the last two days' diary entries³² of Novokuzneck, where the author lends himself to a surprising joyfulness, which appears rather disingenuous, judging from today. This reflects the fact that in retrospect, what looked like an impediment and a delay for planned proceeding now appears to have hidden from his view the opportunities already alluded to. To make this statement is an outcome of repeated reading of the diary and the task list, which leads me to see several facts pointing towards a possible different course of events. A speedy return from Kemerovo would have meant that already established contacts could have been put to work with a low level of normative hurdles pertaining to them. Certainly, all those contacts were not equally valuable. Through a personal acquaintance³³ of earlier times, introducing the author to some of the managers, visits at the metal construction group KMSD and to the iron silicon alloy factory "Kuzneckie Ferrosplavy" had been arranged for. It was soon clear, if not from the beginning, that such unofficial interaction implied the encumbering necessity of having to handle a special relation with the firms' administrations, a factor which would likely have complicated, as much as facilitated, any efforts at understanding the day-to-day operations at either of them.

There were other ways. Three avenues, at the very least, could be identified for approaching ordinary citizens in a straightforward interpersonal way. There was, to begin with, a society of very friendly retirement-age women and men, said to be regularly meeting at the central municipal library (the "Gogolevka").³⁴ The meeting with them had been arranged through the kind support of its director, a middle-aged woman who did her best to make it attractive for the author to find interest in local cultural environment. It was, however, the intense and (without exaggeration) inspiring interaction with the local sociological staff, from where the most immediate impression of assistance, interest and support was derived. It is by no means inadequate to say that some of the teachers, as well as graduate students, showed a surprising willingness to interrupt their routines for a chat with another university's guest.³⁵ This included an employee of the local historical museum, a graduate of sociology, as well as the debating club, which regularly meets to discuss one topic, in this case choosing the author's fieldwork plans. Of those working at the institute of sociology, several would have been able and willing to establish contacts with relatives and acquaintances who had worked in the industries, an offer testified to by the diary entries of the 3rd and 7th of August. It is obvious that one could not have turned down such kind offers in the event of a longer stay in town. Beyond this goes the exceptionally generous reception offered by my earliest contact, a young scholar of Tomsk University, with his family living in Novokuzneck. Having traveled from Tomsk, together with the young man's female companion, the author had an opportunity to rest in the flat, in which his new acquaintance's mother lived and to which he was invited on more occasions. On several occasions this woman, a geologist by profession³⁶, and the scholar's brother and sister-in-law would invite the author, during the following days, to join them and share their

32 August 7th and 8th

33 More accurately, an acquaintance of the author's mother.

34 One of them took me on a tour through town, to several sites of interest, including the wooden house in old Kuzneck, in which the writer Dostoevskij had been housed, when he traveled through on the occasion of his being banned from European Russia.

35 It should be remembered that accomodation was provided not by the University of Kemerovo, whose institute of sociology is located in the capital and whose local department in Novokuzneck is here the topic, but rather the Industrial University, which, as noted, owned facilities for housing guests.

36 There may be a slip of memory here, as one can not find an indication of this fact in the diary or any other note.

leisure, visiting other parts of Novokuzneck into the bargain. Not only could one learn a lot through the open-mindedness of such friendly informants, but it does not appear absurd that tapping on the profound knowledge of the town and the peculiarities of life they possess, having grown up and lived there, would constitute a reliable resource for learning about the area of Novokuzneck as an urban-industrial milieu. In particular the fact that my friend's mother had spent her professional life working as a geologist in a mining region seemed promising to disclose new avenues for observations. Both her age and professional experience could have constituted a resource for developing a so far non-existent network of informants; this however requiring return from Kemerovo and a sustained effort at nurturing recently established bonds. The fact is that a different choice was made and, looking from a present understanding of the matter, it seems perfectly clear that the possibilities, however modest, to access the author's field of interest were not understood.

Kemerovo

Located downriver on the Tom' from Novokuzneck, Kemerovo is easily reached by bus. This means of travelling was considered the cheapest and this is likely due to that fact that, by the nature of their business, bus lines are in a position to compete against each other, whereas the railroad is essentially a monopoly. Leaving aside such idle considerations about the incomplete nature of post-Soviet markets, the one thing which was consistently brought back to me was the fact that Kuzneck Basin industries have been privatised, though some of them have subsequently been monopolised by the large corporations in their sector.³⁷

In Kemerovo one already sees even before arriving at the main bus station the ever-burning fire above the "Koks" (Coke) factory, where gases are set on fire upon leaving the chimney, more or less twenty-four hours a day. The dominating enterprise in coal processing in the town of Kemerovo has been the production of coke at that plant, since the inception of industrialisation there.

One cannot help but recognise that the situation faced in Kemerovo significantly distinguished itself from that left behind in Novokuzneck. For one, there was accommodation. For the first week of my stay, it was provided by the kind couple, with whom Professor Nam, of Tomsk University, had established contact. The disadvantage of having to commute for sometimes half an hour by bus, before reaching the centre, was amply compensated by the intense and informative conversation with two highly cultivated and gentle guides. Nevertheless, the transition was rather difficult, for at least two reasons: Embedding in the local academic community was now somewhat shallower and there was a whole new project of discovering a town to be carried out. The latter task was not made any easier by the fact that my goal of learning about institutions now implied serious efforts to locate the organisations in charge of public life and cultural activities in the town and the region, as well as trying to secure support for my efforts.

The question of accommodation in Kemerovo was a pressing one, which this time was to be solved through Kemerovo University, whose campus is located right in the town's centre. In itself, however, this step of moving to a dormitory there did not make my relation with the local academic community more intense, as the month of August is usually the one which is characterised by hardly any academic activities, of either teaching or exams. In comparison with Novokuzneck, the difference appeared significant: Although the author's efforts were well guided and encouraged by the kind advice of a local sociologist – a contact mediated, again, through her colleagues in Tomsk – it was obvious that a single person could not perform the same kind of moral and practical support, as could have been offered by the team in Novokuzneck.

The fact that there was yet another urban area (or set of such, on the two banks of the river)

37 At least one obvious case is known: The already mentioned company group EVRAZ controls production of coking coal, as well as the regional steelworks (s. above).

to be covered would perhaps not have constituted much of a problem, had it not been for the pressure of time, increasingly felt during the second week of August. Activity, however productive, became the order of the day. Since the permit, to be issued by the regional Department of Education, for entering professional colleges was not to be expected before the end of the third week of August, other facilities came into focus even more: Museums, municipal libraries and, as we might have thought, trade unions, as well as enterprises, complemented by the veterans' unions at regional, town, district and enterprise levels.

The importance of the host family during the first days of my stay needs to be qualified, but is hard to overstate. They had not been chosen as informants, as conventionally understood, because those were sought for in the organisations mentioned earlier; however, the information provided by them was often valuable and even highly relevant, although remaining frequently unrecorded, because of its abundance... Memory notes from the 9th of August, the day of arrival, show that the author learned a lot regarding the industrial structure of the region, right on that first day.³⁸ Igor', the husband, being a journalist at a nationally distributed daily, had a fairly complex and detailed understanding of his native region's development. His rather detailed account of the fate of regional industries gave important indications for the direction our inquiry would soon take. Most relevant was the indication that all of the region's industrial development is traceable to the fact of its rich deposits in hard coal. The fact that there is no diary entry for the 9th of August in any case appears to show that first impressions may have been sufficient to distract attention from this routine.

As a town, Kemerovo can be roughly divided along the river Tom', with the mines located on its right bank and the large factories on its left bank. The left bank is also where the administrative centre, not only of Kemerovo itself, but of the entire region, is located, together with several museums, the drama theater, shopping malls and the university. One could sum it up by saying that representative activities mostly take place on the left bank, although it must be emphasised that the author regularly had to come to the other, which houses many of Kemerovo's inhabitants, the mining college, as well as being of central importance to the local economy. It is due to the museum "Krasnaja Gorka", situated on the right bank, that he learned about the mining settlements, built in the area together with the first efforts at introducing modern mining.

My stay in the regional capital, in short, was characterised by much mobility through the town and its districts, which did occasionally yield interesting results, but more often than not was a reflection of a difficult position in establishing working relations with organisations or specific individuals. It should be emphasised that civil servants, as a particular case, were generally friendly and sometimes appeared to make sincere efforts in helping my project, but the degree to which this yielded results needs qualification. If the lady in charge of answering requests, who handled my case at the Department of Education, for example, was very forthcoming and indeed was doing her best, this may not necessarily be claimed of her superiors, whose attitude towards the question of granting access seemed to me to betray indifference. Other examples will be given, but it is important to note here that if my project did advance in Kemerovo, this was in spite of the fact that key potential informants and agents did little to help my case, while I experienced much support from many other individuals – in particular moral support. While my attempts to proceed through offices and interaction with public organisations probably did little to give me access to the courtyards and homes of ordinary people and to the life of the working class of today, it may have helped to familiarise myself with aspects of institutional life nevertheless.

General reflection on fieldwork

The choice of a region dominated by large factories was to a degree dictated by my questions. It

38 see "Anhang Industrie und Umbruch"

could have been different. The Kuzneck coal basin represents an ideal case of a region formed through the construction of large mines and coal-processing factories, yet is at the same time a neighbour to the Tomsk Territory and therefore easily accessible from the University which had originally invited the author. One can imagine fieldwork being carried out with the explicit aim of studying social relations in the industrial districts of Tomsk and, equally interesting, the town of Seversk, known for its nuclear fuel production and research. Tomsk certainly offered convenient conditions and excellent company, in the form of a local academic community. The fact that the diary contains no entries from the 2nd to the 5th of September, when the author was in Tomsk, indicates the degree to which academic business kept him from following fieldwork routine. What clearly follows from this is that one might find Tomsk an enjoyable environment, but only in the southern region, the Territory of Kemerovo, could one expect to find the socio-cultural environment which my research should concern itself with, rather than distraction. This turns attention to the one aspect, which has been highlighted in preceding lines: The kind of situation one faces when starting to enter the field is, to a significant degree, the result of one's own doing.

By choosing Novokuzneck and Kemerovo, I chose an approach which would make me even more of an alien element than in comparatively multinational, cosmopolitan Tomsk. The environment is Russian-only, with different ethnic communities represented, but clearly no escape from the "host culture", if one may call it so. Furthermore, it was a fact of my own doing that necessitated the collection of data from diverse occasions and sources, because it had been an avowed intention to find out about existing institutions through different channels, using my modest skills to build a network, to learn how institutions operate within and between different organisations, hierarchical levels, or even places. If this in itself did not preclude a profound penetration into an urban-industrial milieu of working class, what did make the task more difficult was the decision to approach organisations as such, through their offices, so to speak. Going from one address to another, always with the idea in mind to convince potential partners to let me in, I spent not only a significant amount of time, but also de facto facilitated the formal kind of interaction, rather than the informal, by and large characteristic of successfully conducted participant observation. Rather than approaching institutional workings through people and place, I did so through the formal route, thereby constructing the situation in the field as one, in which one side would have to formally grant what the other (the fieldworker) requested. Clearly, this did not facilitate an appeal to any counterpart as a person, who can choose with regard to their own inclinations. The eclectic character of the resulting data is a consequence of this mobility between different organisations, with memory notes portraying different attempts at relating to others, rather than an evolution of relations over time. The task remains to extract the institutional characteristics of such interaction out of the available material.

Re-constructing net-working using memory notes

The description and analysis of fieldwork done in Kemerovo is based, more than anything else, on memory notes. The product of recalling what had been experienced the same day, if possible soon after the event, they were to a significant extent based also on field notes, which were taken, though in a rather chaotic form, at all occasions during events, when it seemed that the author would be tolerated in doing so. The booklet containing field notes having remained unstructured, without dates and with dense information on different events on the same pages, it follows that I exclusively consider as data, strictly speaking, the organised, as well as dated, memory notes. Two qualifications here are necessary: Taking into account that opportunities for taking fieldnotes were not always equal, for instance when informal conversation or small talk was expected, there remained ample room for variation in the successive memory notes' length. Some of them cover

only the most limited amount of information on the event concerned, hardly adding detail for a reader's attention. The other qualification here somehow counterbalances this fact: The diary, already useful to me in reconstructing the experience of Novokuzneck, often happens to contain details, for the same days, on which memory notes were written down. This compensation might be explained by the fact that some detail, originally escaping the author's memory at the moment of writing a note, later could be recalled, as every evening was also spent on writing the diary. Conversely, some of the reflection of recent experience, interpretation, or just thought which goes beyond the description of recent observations, can be found, sometimes rather extensively, on the pages of memory notes. If the original intention had been to strictly separate the two, then this appears to have been a futile one: The supportive effect of the diary for reading my data is significant, but memory notes resembling a diary and, at times, a diary making up for thin description in notes, definitely blur the lines between these types. If separating the two would make understanding more difficult for me, there only remains the opposite approach, namely reading them as two instances of accounting for the same events, for each single day.

This procedure now should allow me both to chronologically reconstruct the fieldwork experience, as well as to explain how it developed, highlighting both limitations and opportunities conferred by the institutional environment of Kemerovo. This begins with relating several experiences, at the beginning of my stay, to one another, as a reflection of the network-building to which I committed myself. Help and advice was received from several sides, complementing one another: The couple hosting me offered detailed accounts of Kemerovo Territory's history, which produced the first memory note (August 9th); very similar information was given by the employees of the local museum of the history of mining and industrialisation, the "Krasnaja Gorka", the name of which is both toponymical and a reference to the past.³⁹

The synthesising result of using these two sources has been a memory note, recollecting the understanding finally gained of Kemerovo's history as a mining settlement, developing into the regional centre. This memory note, which was manually written and left in a folder, was re-discovered later, unfortunately undated. It was, in any case, produced after the 12th of August, at which date a visit to the museum afforded us the opportunity of a guided tour, complete with an explanation of the historical development of Kemerovo's coal mining. The main conclusion from reading this note (and looking at maps with some detail) is that the river Tom' is really the centre (or central element) of the town, since it is on its right bank that mining activities started and have mostly taken place, to the present day, while settled areas were (and largely are still) mostly located on the left bank, where the large coking plant was also to be built.⁴⁰ While originally not particularly important to the Trans-Siberian railroad, the Kuzneck Basin, Kemerovo in particular, was connected to it through the involvement of the joint-stock-company "Kopikuz", which was afforded an exclusive contract for exploiting the mineral resources by the (then) imperial government, in return for building this particular section.⁴¹ This was due to the fact that hard coal was easily mined there and could be transported on the Tom'; but as this could not be done throughout the year (although in winter, Siberians would use sledges to travel on frozen rivers),

39 The name "Krasnaja Gorka" (the Red Hill) reflects probably the "red" colouring, observed by the first expedition to discover the coal deposits, more precisely by Michail/Michajlo Volkov, a mineral specialist, due to a fire that had ignited some coal lying under the open sky, on the right bank of the Tom'.

40 S. the Appendix "Map of central Kemerovo". The river Tom' is shown on it, flowing from East to West, with a significant portion of its left bank (between *Prospekt Soveckij* – Проспект Советский – and the river) being occupied by the coking plant, in large part identical on the map with a zone coloured in homogenous grey.

41 It also started the building of the coking plant, which was to be interrupted by the revolution of 1917. It is only after these events and the end of Kopikuz that the locality came to be known as "Kemerovo", following the name of the village, whereto the railroad originally led, while the larger locality's name had been Ščeglovsk. As the town grew and villages were merged together, it was decided to give up this local name in favour of "Kemerovo", nationally known because of its relevance for the rail network. For more detail, see Suslova (1984).

means of transportation had to be developed to deliver the desired quantities of coal (and later – coke) to the *Magistral*, further North. If we add to this the memory note of the 9th of August, we come to better understand why industrial development took place on the spot, rather than just exporting its raw material. According to Igor, the communists were not first to envisage the building of a steel plant in the region. They did however set the stakes much higher, as the “Kuzneckij Metallurgičeskij Kombinat” (now NKMK) was meant to produce one million tons of steel and iron per year, a gigantomaniac plan, in our informant’s view. To achieve this, the coking plant was quickly built and a significant number of people settled, so that 180 000 inhabitants populated Novokuzneck (then Stalinsk) by the outbreak of the Second World War. The social dimension of communist planning demanded, however, that women be included into the labour force and thus a textile industry was also built, to prevent them from having to choose between working in the home and entering jobs (in metallurgy and mining) which were, for the most part, clearly identified as “male” activities.⁴² If this sensitivity for the gender division of labour is really fascinating in Igor’s account, there should remain an awareness that this informant positions himself as a liberal of sorts, displaying values significantly different from those one finds outside his household, among other citizens of the region. This is obvious not just in the terms he uses for qualifying Soviet industrial planning (above), but also in his – one-sided, but reasonable – explanation for the failure of many industries, at the end of the socialist economy: If metallurgy was mostly rescued through the closing down of many production units (shops), textile production has mostly been terminated and other sectors have literally broken down; as the memory note clearly shows, for Igor this was due to lack of investments over decades, which left the industries wholly uncompetitive, with the exception of a few chemical factories. As I can hopefully show here, most of my informants (unsurprisingly) did not adopt a view similar to this, the transformation of the economy having been a traumatic experience.⁴³

About its role in the socio-cultural environment, the memory note from my visit to the museum tells precious little, the note itself being quite short (233 words). It mostly consists of the answers to a short questionnaire, prepared for this specific occasion. This fact is unsurprising, given what that day’s (August 12th) diary entry tells: Data collation was not the actual intention behind the visit. If this appears to contradict the idea of a questionnaire, the solution is simple: Indeed, the main intention in going there and asking only specific questions was not to gather data about the museum’s employees, its operation etc. It was rather about achieving orientation regarding other possible sources and partners, primarily the veterans’ council of Zavodskij district; questions were asked concerning veterans’ councils in general, as well as the municipal library and the specialised museums, run by some local enterprises. This is because my hosts Galja and Igor, as well as the local contact and advisor at the institute of sociology, Mrs. Kranzeeva, had told the author that the staff of “Krasnaja Gorka” could give useful advice, regarding how to proceed with regard to veterans’ councils, as the museum happens to work intensively with “social associations” and with the university. This picture, which places the museum in a central position of regional cultural activities, is interesting in that later observations, around the “Day of Miners” celebration (August 30th 2015), confirm it, thereby also assigning it a prominent role in institutionalising the memorialisation of regional history.⁴⁴

What one also learns from the diary and memory note about this day, besides my having been encouraged by the staff to meet the veterans’ council of the Zavodskij district, which is considered to be an important access point for setting up contact with veterans of labour, is that the

42 For further explanation of the matter, concerning gender roles in professional life, see Ashwin (2006).

43 *ibidem*

44 It is important to note, in this context, that the museum was created only in 1991, towards the very end of the socialist era. It can therefore be seen as an important case of an essentially post-socialist (late Soviet) agency participating in the process of reproducing (and affecting) the Soviet memorialising practice and the cult of mineworkers and other protagonists populating it.

socialist way of life remained in place to a larger degree than might be expected, after 1991. For the abovenamed reason, it is only in the diary that one reads of two young members of the staff recalling their childhood, in the 1990s, when they were integrated into the communist (sic) youth body for the youngest, the “Oktjabrata”, notwithstanding the fact that communist power had already fallen apart, in the Kuzneck Basin perhaps faster than in other regions.⁴⁵ In those young women’s view, this must have been even more true (“due to inertia”) of life in small towns, than in Kemerovo. Soviet socialism and its “new man” – in any case their childhood – had been institutionalised firmly enough to outlive the formal rule of its creators. One ought to take this as an indication that much more of what had become consolidated in people’s life cycles may have survived, however adapted to serve present purposes.⁴⁶

One dimension requiring attention is the fact that the author’s approaching the museum staff started from the assumption that work with the Zavodskij district, as well as the Kemerovo municipal and possibly other veterans’ councils, should be among his priorities. This assumption can be traced back to the first contact with the local advising sociologist, Mrs. Kranzeeva, as well as to a visit at the regional museum of history, on 11th August (diary entry). Both the scholar and the senior museum manager gave the same indication, that contact with the members of the Zavodskij council should be valuable, not least with regard to the mediating function those might play.⁴⁷ Here, the idea that valuable information was likely to be received from the councils was already clearly expressed. Further on, the sociologist Kranzeeva indicated that this approach – through work with the veterans – might need to be prioritised; this, in any case, is indicated by the diary for 14th August, at which date she managed to find time to discuss my progress with fieldwork at length.

On close observation, one inevitably notices the prominence of veterans’ councils in the data. It is significant that these provided the subject for five out of eleven memory notes, of which eight were produced to record a visit or participation in an event. Only twice (out of eleven cases) did the “Krasnaja Gorka” play a similar role and all other types of partners occur once at most. If I had been looking for an institutional access to the field, it was in the veterans’ councils of different levels that I found it most easily.

It does not appear as an exaggeration to state that relative concentration on establishing relations with the veterans followed the kind of prioritisation my local “supervisor” suggested. The choice was not an inevitable one. During the early days of our stay in Kemerovo, several different avenues were given equal consideration. These included the municipal (main and district) libraries, the above mentioned museums, the regional trade unions’ association and the centres for social care services. Adding to this there was an offer by a local businesswoman to join the tea tasting she was organising for a group of pensioners.⁴⁸ Some of these options quickly ruled themselves out, as phonecalls to and personal meetings at the trade unions and with the municipal head of social care made it clear that those agencies would not participate in research. The others, however, remained on the table and did ultimately lead to some valuable recordings. To understand the difference encountered here, it makes sense to give some additional reflections on my local partners.

There was, to begin with, Elena Kranzeeva, of the institute of sociology, a *Kandidat Nauk*

45 For more detailed accounts on politics after 1991, see Christensen (1995) and Clarke et al. (1995).

46 In this, one should be mindful of not tautologically assessing such realities as “continuity”, as opposed to “change”, a challenge of which Sampson reminds his reader in an article written even before the formal dissolution of Soviet Russia (Sampson 1991 : 19).

47 It should be noted that the term *Zavodskij* means a reference to *zavod*, Russian for “factory”. This is the district in which the early and historically (in terms of urban development) determining factories were located, including Koks. My early assumption being that contact with working class individuals would be possibly established through the enterprises employing them, one avenue was thought to lie in finding mediators to those enterprises and their staffs. Apart from this, there had been the advice to turn to the veteran workforce as possible informants long before.

48 This was after the author had bought tea in her shop and shown an interest in her business, explaining then, at her demand, his intention of hearing people’s recollections about the Soviet era.

working on a thesis about the social mobility of women. Taking into account that she was the only person from her team available in August, it must be said she made an unexpected effort at giving counsel and patiently guiding my efforts. If she gave the advice she did, this may in part be explained by her respect for my “office-oriented” approach, together with an understanding of local institutions, particularly the need for personal relations with officers, who were in a position to promote research efforts and establish further contacts. In any case, facing the potpourri of different accesses I was pursuing, she unequivocally called for priorities. In the face of time running out, it was not difficult to opt for following these.

It would be surprising, if this course of events did not in itself contain an institutional dimension. Much like the university, museums would operate as agencies for the propagation of (selected) knowledge, as partners within the same educational and scientific framework. This distinguishes them from both trade unions and social care, which have a comparatively limited mandate (serving their clients and/or members); the latter two organisations would not per se have an interest in assisting any research, except if that were done with the explicit aim to advance their purposes, to collect knowledge immediately useful to them. Moreover, a sense of unease seemed to be felt by their senior officials, resulting in an impression of insecurity, possibly born out of their lack of experience in interacting with researchers and, what is more, with foreign researchers.

As the record of memory notes shows, the aptitude for constructive interaction was an entirely different one in museums and the municipal libraries, which both tried to mediate contacts, in the first case leading to my visit at the Zavodskij veterans’ council, in the second to an introduction into the handicraft circle of retired women in the Kirovskij district library (August 25th). In all the named instances, there existed a strongly perceived interest on my interlocutors’ part. The interaction with the Krasnaja Gorka staff has already been elaborated upon, but I shall try to give an account of my experience at the district library below.

Taking account of the fact that my attempt at finding access to professional colleges seemed doomed to failure, due to the slow operation of the government department responsible until 24th August, the decision to follow given advice was a straightforward one. The veterans’ councils, which know region, municipal, district and enterprise levels, although they largely did support me, remain a puzzling case. As organisations obliged to represent a specific basis, they do not, in themselves, possess more of an inherent interest in working with fieldworkers than would the unions, or social care. And during the whole period of my stay, there was indeed precious little I could do, or have done, to further their causes, except distracting them from their work. One therefore must hope to shed some light, through this thesis, on the question of why those of their officers, whom I could personally meet, took such a relatively interested attitude. It certainly distinguished them from the disregard, if not wariness, which I believe to have perceived elsewhere.

The case of the businesswoman, whom for the sake of clarity I call Lena, constitutes that of an individual who did not display the least kind of reservation with regard to my project. If it is unclear whether she could have hoped to draw advantage from collaboration, her case also appears to allow at least for one modest hypothetical statement: Mistrust or indifference are not norms of post-socialist life; in fact, as we had become acquainted through my visiting her shop, it now appears expectable that positive interaction would result.

Office hours

In accordance with the above, one should evaluate data relating to the veterans’ councils not just chronologically, but also systematically, because of the constructive role councils played and for their prominence in the available data. To explore the significance of normative hurdles, particularly where they were lifted, I take the five memory notes concerned, the corresponding diary entries, as well as one recorded interview together as documentation of one continuous process.

This, one can assume, will reveal more about the role played by concepts immanent in the field, such as normative hurdles, hierarchies, or collective tastes.

The first two occasions for meeting the municipal veterans' council were on 13th and 19th August, at which occasions aspects of the local hierarchies start to emerge through my data. It was apparent, for instance, that the deputy head of this structure (Mrs. Kuzminična, let us call her) found it difficult to assimilate the idea that my interest in visiting the council, or indeed any of the councils, was not necessarily to meet its president. From the very beginning, at our first acquaintance, she repeatedly referred to him and to the possible time, when one could meet him.⁴⁹ To her, it would have been normal to look for the supreme individual within an organisation, or so it seemed. When she was told that the next visit would be to the Zavodskij district council, she took the initiative of calling there, finding out that this council's president was also absent. Although she did explain to me how to find the locality, here too Mrs. Kuzminična emphasised the need to make an attempt on Monday, the following week. It is not explicitly clear, but still rather obvious, that she could not see any point in my attempt to establish contact generally, in the absence of chief decision makers; that said, one should not exclude the possibility that she may have considered the visit annoying, quite simply.

Just like the staff at Krasnaja Gorka, Mrs. Kuzminična considered meeting the Zavodskij district veterans' council to be most relevant, because in her opinion, it had to be in touch with the councils of individual factories (and, consequently, their workers). As opposed to the Kirovskij district's, for instance, factories in the Zavodskij were still working, she emphasised.⁵⁰

The next opportunity for developing this resource came on 19th Wednesday, the following week, when a pretext was found to spend a significant amount of time within the council (unmeasured, several hours altogether). This was due to the specific fact that a visit to the Zavodskij council⁵¹ had yielded some results, which, however, also lead to unexpected trouble, in fact forcing me to turn to the municipal level, in search of assistance.

The immediate reason or pretext appears to have been the difficulty experienced in reaching any of the council members at factory level by telephone, after our visit to the Zavodskij district's council. In particular, though the president at the "Koks" (coking) factory did answer the call, her answer was restrictive, asking for a written request from the municipal veterans' council to the enterprise administration for any fieldwork to be carried out on enterprise ground. In short, she did not consider this as a question to be decided by herself. Being in this sense forced to come to the municipal council, I was thereby also afforded an opportunity to observe some of its operations. This interaction was, as such, rather constructive and encouraging. The municipal council turned out to be unable, or perhaps unwilling to take the step demand by the enterprise council's president, so it became quickly clear that any idea of visit concerning "Koks" was a dead-end. What exactly made this aspiration appear hopeless could not be elucidated.⁵² Regardless of what their difficulty was, the officers of the municipal council, starting with its president Sergeevič, were supportive of my idea to meet workers and it was suggested the representative of miners in the Rudničnyj district, Nikolaevič, could do a lot. In this instance, it was agreed he should meet me in his office, on the

49 The 13th was a Thursday; the lady insisted the president could only be met as of Monday, as evidenced by the memory note: "Sie wiederholt sich damit, ich könne ihn wohl am Montag antreffen, bzw. mit Bezugnahmen auf ihren Vorgesetzten. Obwohl ich schon zu Anfang deutlich feststelle daß, sofern er es nicht selbst wünscht, das Gespräch mit ihm für mich nicht zwingend notwendig ist [...], reißen die Bemerkungen diesbezüglich nicht ab [...]"

50 This theme of the degradation of industry in the Kirovskij district was met again during the visit at this district's veteran's council, so it is fairly safe to assume that industrial transformation here has had a massive impact on the population's perception, which one can only vaguely apprehend, however, through the shallow data achieved so far.

51 On 18th August, as recorded in the diary.

52 The only thing one may guess at is that, for the municipal council, asking "Koks" to let us visit the council on their ground would have been seen as asking for a favour. That might have looked to them like too much of a humiliation for the purpose, which was by no means one of the council's priorities, after all.

next day. The whole process was characterised by a certain nervousness on the partners' side. This is easily explained by the fact that they – Sergeevič in particular – were busy with several events taking place in parallel: By the time the author had arrived at the council, the president was attending a celebration of miners concerning the anniversary of their departure from work. And just after introducing the author to Nikolaevič, he rushed the latter to continue any conversation in his office, as another event was to begin soon. All this activity could be ultimately related to the ongoing campaign around events of the near future: The Miner's Day, scheduled for 30th August, as well as the elections for the regional parliament and governor's office, on 13th September, in which the veterans' council did all it could to provide the incumbent governor with a high degree of participation.⁵³

The conclusion which was drawn from this follow-up invitation, supported by memory note and diary, and generally from the friendly tone, was that the relationship with this and other (open-minded) veterans' councils ought to be developed as strongly as possible.⁵⁴ This certainly resonates with the suggestion of Mrs. Kranzeeva and thus seemed to add plausibility to her configuration of priorities. The reception had, in any case, been quite friendly, the fieldworker even having been invited to the team's lunchtime tea break.

The observations made in my memory notes occasionally contain a lot of speculation, together with insufficient description of the scene observed. Participation at an event organised by veterans of the Kirovskij district for children due to enter school in September, on 21st August, surprisingly led to a memory note in which as much space is devoted to the possible political significance of a town council (municipal parliamentary) representative, as to the description of actual detail of the scene, for instance of the buffet. This gives a sense of the author's irritation at the unfamiliar character of the event, from which he feels alienated, not least because of its seemingly well-rehearsed functioning, although it must be doubted whether the children did have much to prepare for it. It seems likely, on the other hand, to see this as a consequence of veterans' experience, who certainly have staged similar events in the past and know how to manage them. The scene, unfolding in a courtyard, is likely to be repeated every year, since there will always be children to enter school and the obvious purpose of the veterans' council, well reflected in the Kirovskij's activities, is to achieve a degree of integration between generations, to pass on the qualities of the "Soviet generations", as its president later put it. It is indeed this district's veterans' council which I visited next, on 24th August.

A keen interest in discussion, albeit constrained by the normative boundaries constituting the dignity of their function as officers of a quasi-public body, is clearly distinguishable. The elderly, in my experience of staying in Kemerovo, are no less accessible than are the young. Although, in the field note, description is again found to be amiss for detail of the situation, the perception is that as

53 This partiality was openly acknowledged by Kuzminična, who also said it was unfortunate the author had come around this time, as did others. She unemotionally explained that the ongoing events had the purpose to tell retired miners whom they ought to vote for. Cooperation with Kemerovo's authorities on this and other matters is standard, though the council, she said, was free to do campaigning in the way it found appropriate. Later, Sergeevič would express his fondness of the governor; even later, another officer desired to hear from the author what was being said about the governor elsewhere in the region.

54 The open-mindedness at the municipal level was expressed in the fact that one senior officer, a survivor of Axis occupation during the Second World War, expressed her view of research as being important, notwithstanding the fact that miners, whom she had spoken to, had shown no interest in a possible interaction with a researcher. Their declarations, as reported by her, one of which said that they did not want "to do advertisement", are intriguing in that, whenever old workers could be spoken to personally, there was little difficulty in having at least an informal conversation and willingness to cooperate was frequently perceived. The difficulty of formally involving individuals and the discrepancies between official claims and actual values are a recurrent theme in this study and are well illustrated, below, in my account of the event (August 28th) preceding the great ceremony in commemoration of and honouring miners. This is also a central topic in the interview with my host Galja, revolving around the theme of "dvoemyslie" (Dual, or ambiguous thinking) in Soviet times.

they saw serious interest in their activities, the ladies did their best to give full answers to our questions.⁵⁵ There was an awkward atmosphere of sorts, resulting from the environment and possibly added to by the nervousness of my interlocutors, who insisted on being anonymised, as if they feared identification by third parties, who might (somehow) get access to the data. This is interesting, in so far as others, to whom the same option had been proposed, did in no way demand that this be done. The awkward aspect is probably well explained by the built, or material, and the institutional environment in which the enquiry was taking place. The office of this particular veterans' council is placed in a building, which probably had recently undergone renovation; in any case it looked very tidy. Besides the veterans, the same facility houses the offices of the employment agency, whose leaflets were on display and could be taken by anybody.⁵⁶ One can perhaps conclude that their standing was accorded significant attention by settling in a new, or rather well kept, building, which was in marked contrast to the neighbourhood, a part of whose private housing appeared seriously run down.

One needs not guess at the perception this may create among neighbouring citizens; it is clear enough that those with poor housing must perceive the comfortable condition of the employment agency, in particular, as a materialised expression of their own bad fortune, regardless of how earnest the agency's efforts in support of job seekers may be. The dependence and submission of the ordinary citizen, in this juxtaposition, is only made more clear to them when reading the leaflet, which exhibits a mechanism entitled the "offer of state assistance service to citizens in searching suitable employment" and even explains how to complain about officers' actions (and inaction)... to the head of the agency. If this might remain a footnote, it nevertheless sheds a light on the context in which the veterans' union operates and can easily be perceived as but one part of this "institutional block" of services, the common purpose of which is to structure the lives of citizens, in much the same way as banks would structure economic activity and courts and police produce "security".⁵⁷

It makes sense to interrupt myself here, for a moment, to consider what can be learned from an interview (see appendix "Interview 24.8.2015") with a veterans' council officer, recorded there, in her office. In the following excerpt, one finds her answer (A) to the question (Q), as to how the reduction in numbers of working people within the district affected the council's activity:

A: Well, I am going to tell you, how it could express itself. Materially not at all, because there are no enterprises. [...] We do not receive anything from enterprises. They just do not exist.

[...]

Q: Well at some point there were more workers here, right? So how did the diminution in numbers in the district...

A: Not in any way.

[...]

There are no working people here. They all work on the territory of the central district. And have housing here. So, as there were sixty-thousand people in the Kirovskij district, so there still are. They are not fewer. They still live here. Only they come over to work from the Kirovskij. They go to the Zavodskij district. There they work.

[...]

55 There were no men. Already on our meeting of the 14th of August, Mrs. Kranzeeva had made the point that one was likely to meet women, rather than men, when visiting the libraries (diary entry). For one, this should be due to facts of life expectancy (men die significantly earlier, in the post-soviet republics); but women are also much more likely, she claimed, to involve themselves in club life and cultural activity, a hypothesis unambiguously corroborated by most of our observations.

56 "služba zanjatosti" (Служба Занятости), the organisation's name, translates precisely as "employment agency/service".

57 The analogy makes sense, insofar as banks, courts and executive or security agencies quite often have at their disposal facilities, the representative function of which is all too obvious.

Pensioners and inhabitants, they still live here. They did not become fewer.

[...]

Q: I received information regarding factories. That not all enterprises closed. There is “Polimer”. Polimer still...

A: Polimer is here. It didn’t close down. [...] It is enlarging itself.

Two observations of relevance could be made here. The obvious one is the explicit contradiction of my interlocutor’s claims, namely that: all enterprises were closed, first; that this particular enterprise (Polimer) is in fact growing, afterwards. Carrying on the questioning, one finds that even more examples arise, of cases in which there was no closing down. The other observation of importance is that if the population did not increase, this means (by implication) that either the number of job opportunities in the other districts increased sufficiently to absorb the reduction in employment in the Kirovskij, or that the numbers of unemployed and pensioners have risen. There is, however, no more than an allusion to this in the officer’s words, so how far the number of veterans represented by her council has increased remains entirely unclear. The following lines may give a hint as to the reason, why the increase in retirees may not be registered with certainty by the veterans’ council:

A: We have veterans from all enterprises, which used to be in the Kirovskij district.

[...]

Other Council Officer: There was the bread factory...

A: The bread factory is not with us. It is either with the town/municipality [municipal council]...

[...]

Q: From constructions industry you do not have veterans, so far?

[...]

A: There is [a factory]. There is the factory of iron-concrete constructions. But they are the same. Their council of veterans is in the municipality [council]. It unites all construction organisations.

Q: For all of the town?

A: For all of the town. In this case it goes by professional status. They are not with us, here. They go with the municipal council of veterans-constructors.

It emerges as rather obvious that the interlocutor in this case not only tended to make bold statements, regarding the closing of enterprises, but also felt insecure about the situation with veterans in her district, because relevant information did not go to her. Little wonder that if some enterprises’ veterans were not being represented by her structure, she would not count them as part of the retired population in the district altogether! If, as one sees, some enterprises’ councils are attributed to professional entities, rather than territorial ones, they remain beyond the responsibility of the Kirovskij district veterans’ council. And the fact that, according to my information, the construction firm mentioned last is a recent result of post-soviet restructuring certainly makes achieving an overview rather more difficult.⁵⁸

What one learns here, besides the fact that officers themselves occasionally have difficulties with the field they are working in, is that the character of life in the district must have changed, though in ways rather difficult to apprehend. The transformation of the economy, after 1991, did certainly lead to enterprises closing, while most had to make workers redundant. If the number of inhabitants has not significantly changed, in this particular district, similar difficulties experienced in neighbouring territories may simply mean that the numbers of retirees (who may claim “veteran” status), as well as unemployment will have increased, the latter category’s number at least

⁵⁸ What is, after all, rather unsurprising in the context of Russian top-down governance is the fact that pencil pushers at central levels of the hierarchy of councils did not bother to provide those at the local level with complete information they might, or might not, find useful to perform their tasks.

periodically. The economic well-being of the citizens concerned is unlikely to have improved, as a result, which conspicuously corroborates the observations one could make, regarding the environment, in terms of the surrounding buildings. Indeed, under these circumstances, the importance of the veterans' council, as well as of the employment agency are likely to have increased, so their physical manifestation within the neighbourhood seems, if nothing else, to manifest that enhanced role.

The interview ends with the officer standing up from her seat to introduce the author to her collaborator on the veteran clubs. The latter, organised at district level by the council's rank-and-file members, consist of thirty two associations for sports, arts, games and thus a diversity of cultural activities, each with a membership of mostly up to forty. According to a list of these groups, printed for me by the officer, it is a phenomenon in flux, since out of the thirty two clubs, three have no known, or a widely varying number of participants.⁵⁹ Though the table they used does not indicate how many of the currently registered participants in any of these clubs is actually active, or may be a member of more than one club, there is one observation to be made: Taking into account the dates of their creation, clubs have been formed steadily over the years, the last one in 2014, the year preceding fieldwork. The oldest one – "Good Hearts" – does however only date back to the year 2000 meaning that the organisation has included such activities only in fairly recent times (sic), roughly a decade after the collapse of socialism. If the veterans' council in this district has existed for fifty years, as its officer points out right at the beginning of the interview, its operations in previous decades must have been either considerably different, or, if it did offer comparable activities, must have been doing so within a considerably different structure. In either case, if one risks stretching interpretation beyond the boundaries of what data allow, there is a likelihood that, like any other organisation approved by the authorities, the veterans' councils must have had a more explicitly political purpose in socialism. Whether or not this is indeed overinterpretation, the reader shall see that, notwithstanding the collapse of one-party-rule, explicitly political functions have not entirely disappeared.

The occasion however, on which the peculiar relationship between veterans' councils, veterans and the municipality (public authority) became manifest at its highest degree, may well have been during a ceremony on the day preceding the festivities for Miner's Day, which is itself a day of rest. For that day, Friday, 28th August, the author had been invited to participate by the Zavodskij district's veterans, affording the opportunity to visit the locality's *Dvorec Kul'tury* (Palace of Culture) – somewhat remote, but easily reached by reliably operating busses. A number of pensioners had already arrived, but there seemed to be very few young people, of whom those present turned out to be somehow involved in the show. This allows me to infer that those miners, who were to be distinguished with a decoration, had their workmates to accompany them, rather than coming with their families. If from the latter some may have attended the show, this at least was not recognisable among those who slowly gathered upstairs.

Upon reading that day's memory note, one can perceive a sense of the gloominess the author felt at some point during the event. Certainly, some aspects appeared pitiful, such as the fact that by the time he walked up the staircase, the photographic exhibition, meant to portray those being honoured, was only then being set up. This was after the author had engaged in a conversation, in the entrance hall, with one known and very friendly member of the Zavodskij district's veterans' council.⁶⁰ If this had provided a good start, what was to follow did not come up to expectation. The

59 S. Appendix "Clubs in Kirovskij district".

60 She confirmed the fact, previously only suspected, that a sense of suspicion was prevailing at the "Koks" factory, whose veterans' council president had declined to take responsibility for inviting the author to their offices herself. The president appeared afraid, I was told, and asked for a permit of the organisation supposedly in charge of the fieldworker, expecting he would be accompanied during his visit. My contact from the district council had learned this from her colleague personally, since "Koks" is located in the Zavodskij.

foreseen “exhibition” is worth a description in detail, to allow the reader an idea of the apparent haste and even neglect with which everything seemed to be done. Paying no attention to the buffet, which was prepared next to it, I spent some time studying the photographs and their composition, essentially consisting of a number of portraits of workers, as well as pictures from the “šachty” (deep mines) placed rather haphazardly, with green labels indicating the subject’s names, with a few explanations occasionally added. There were a few women setting it all up, none of whom appeared very interested in making contact – another indication of haste, which did nothing to diminish the perception that this was really a sideshow. And, indeed, this is what it turned out to be. One of the photographs had been printed twice, once in colour, the other time in black and white. Having placed the pictures at different spots, the organisers may have had something in mind, but in this situation it contributed to strengthening a perception of chaotic production and lack of reflection. The table nearby, on which books from the public library were arranged, appeared more orderly and the lady attending to it was much friendlier. Still, the insignificant amount of people showing any interest in either the photographs or the books left a profound impression: It makes sense to think that the whole of it had been organised as a formality; a formality in procedure which may betray indifference.

A show with music was on the programme and so, after the buffet was finished, everybody started entering the theater, located in an adjacent hall, on the same floor. Confusingly, a lady at the entrance addressed the fieldworker, complimenting him for his visible interest for the exhibition... She took the care of guiding him to one seat, then another one, to sit between several women, probably all of whom were of pension age. None of them had worked in the mines, but, like the author, had been invited to come; this may explain why none of them were at all irritated by the intruder and his mission. Soon, the main show began and caused inspiring new thoughts.

An emotive low-quality performance, with shallow, patriotic pop music at the beginning and between sections of programme, should apparently have produced the desired mood among the public. Whether this was a success is impossible to assess, though, after the end, the librarian declared this sort of performance to be not bad for the pensioners, who would be getting used to such “concerts” (her term).⁶¹

Sections of the show included two episodes, during which the miners to be honoured would be invited to come up to the stage to receive their decorations. Besides this, speeches were being held, as an integral part of the ongoing electoral campaign in favour of governor Tuleev. The music, the quality of which was such that it might as well have been played by a jukebox, accompanied dances by groups of girls and young women, with the occasional live singer whose microphone was unfortunately not correctly adjusted. The only thing to compensate for this was the sustained patriotic content of the songs. I note that at no point were the honoured guests of the event given the opportunity to address the public themselves and in their own terms.

The first episode was introduced by a forcefully smiling woman, reading poetry of not always convincing lyricism, after which all participants stood up to listen to the anthems of the Federation and Kemerovo Territory. Few people spoke, while the music was playing, but an old, ranting man, two rows in front of the author, could be heard, just as the state anthem ended: “So what country do we love?”

One official from the regional administration was allowed to say a few words, in which – it can be said – he made an effort to reach the mostly female listeners’ hearts and minds. In the following time, however, a second woman came to the stage, with the task to call upon those who were to be honoured. This happened in two episodes, between which music and dances were

61 The author’s suggestion that this might not be attuned to the old generation’s tastes, which had been used to something different (artistic production in Soviet times is said to have often surpassed the present in many respects), or different music in any case, obviously did not resonate with her.

offered. The inevitable campaigning followed, distinguished by the speeches of two women, each of whom covered different topics. The first, another official, explained the evils of “America”, also attacking domestic figures, such as “Rosnano” head Čubajs, and was clearly in charge of patriotism in the narrow sense of the term.⁶² She also got somewhat (unwittingly?) confused in her choice of words, as for instance when using the term “sojuz” (union), instead of “strana” (country). The second person, a pensioner, was required to remind veterans of the blessing of having socialism (sic) in the Kuzbass, according to what miners from other regions had told her, with ten percent of the budget being spent on social duties. This language, taken as such, did not seem to indicate that Soviet Russia and communism, as a system, had come to an end.

The whole event, in other words, was at least as much about politics, as about the miners, whose achievements it was supposedly celebrating. Since all of this appeared like an instance of outright political campaigning and little care was extended to the show itself, I may draw a conclusion of my own. Superficially, it seemed the past was going to be revitalised; but, when going below the surface, the distribution of priorities at the event clearly reveals what everybody was meant to understand: What they ought to gratefully do, if “social” spending was to remain the same, was to vote for governor Tuleev and his achievements.

Besides this, a few added observations should be mentioned. To begin with, it was noticeable that the Palace of Culture stood out in the landscape as a neoclassical building, while surrounding blocks had only humbly, if at all, decorated façades, many close to falling apart. The corner, next to which stood the bus stop, was in this sense exceptional. There were large paintings, depicting different spacecrafts and references to cosmonauts.⁶³ On the playground in front, there was a construction reminiscent of a spacecraft, with a larger-than-life bust standing close to it, representing Jurij Gagarin. This is highly interesting in retrospect, as it suggests a collision of worlds very unlike the narrative of the speeches: On the one side, there are the playground and the works of art – reminders of a history of progress and enlightenment; fitting uneasily with it, on the other side, but just next to it, one observes an event marked by its defensive character, in how challenges of the present and the political remedies offered to deal with it are portrayed. Whether one can infer from this that Kuzbass politics and society are not up to the task of defining aims, means and identities for the present, or will be so, after all, must remain an open question, but one vividly posed by the observations of that day.

Additionally, it was interesting to see that among the honoured retired workers of that event was also Nikolaevič, from Rudničnyj district. His incitement to talk to the other veterans and his general friendliness were very welcome in that moment, even though the event was coming to an end and any attempts would have to be postponed to the future.⁶⁴ His presence there corroborates the finding that district boundaries among veterans’ councils do not quite play a determining role within the hierarchy of these bodies.⁶⁵ Seeing him was important in the sense that he encouraged the author to join the major public ceremony on the next day, intended to take place on the Red Hill.⁶⁶ Had this not happened, it seems unclear what could or should have been done on the 29th, as celebrations were taking place all day long, to commemorate the labour and hardship of miners’ lives.

62 This observation is interesting, because Anatolij Čubajs, unloved for his engineering role in the big privatisation deals of the early post-socialist period, is also known to be a major support to president Putin in economic relations.

63 It should be noted that one of Russia’s most famous space travellers, Aleksej Leonov, is a child of Kemerovo Territory.

64 The fact that Nikolaevič addressed the author with the second person singular can be understood as an expression of interest of an older man (of higher status) towards a younger one; the more distanced form would be the polite second person plural.

65 Levels formally go like this: regional – municipal – district – enterprise

66 “Krasnaja Gorka”; near to the museum stands a statue by the famous artist Ernst Neizvestnyj (in New York), a Russian citizen by birth.

The following section, devoted to experiences gained with other partners than the veterans' councils, should complement the picture gained here.

Meetings over tea

On two occasions the author met groups of pensioners without any immediate connection to veterans' councils. These were gatherings not unlike the one in the central municipal library of Novokuzneck, mentioned above. This involved having tea and snacks, sitting in a circle, with often more than one person speaking at a time. In other words, lively conversations could be had and, what is most important, for some pensioners this constituted an occasion to shed the reservations they would usually have displayed, upon meeting a stranger for the first time. There were therefore good opportunities for straightforward interaction, but it still remains a problem, at this point in my study, to draw from them conclusions, which would go beyond the immediate situation.

When the author met Lena at the tea shop for the first time, this proved to become a positive relation straight away. Part of this may be the genuine interest displayed by the author in her business (that is to say: in tea), but also the fact that a foreign student had made his way into Siberia to study the Russian mores of the past. Lena made her invitation to join in a tea tasting, which was held on 20th August, on this first occasion and proved to be an excellent host at others. It is beyond doubt that the retirees participating in the food cooperative found the gathering an entertaining one.⁶⁷ This I deduce from their questions, of which there were a lot, from different participants, usually concerning the author and his experiences. Learning about these and about the author's background, the memory notes suggest, was a way for them to satisfy, by way of hearing a foreigners' views, their interest in a rather specific question: How are Russians, for instance as tourists, being perceived abroad? Although it must remain unclear, to what extent the author was able to satisfy that interest, it definitely created an easy access to individuals here, due to partners with authentic curiosity. Interestingly, the officer of the Kirovskij district veterans' council, with whom there was later an interview (s. above), also contributes to the cooperative; this by the way indicates that she is not among those pensioners with a very meagre income, as this would probably preclude her membership in the cooperative. Although coming late, this was for her the opportunity to offer an invitation to the celebration that was to take place one day later, for the beginning of the school year. The relevance of this tea tasting and chat in the room of the food cooperative, in which tea played a very minor role, is that it retrospectively reveals how research interest was already focussed on the veterans of labour, a process that was only gathering strength. Although there would ultimately be two recorded interviews with veterans, on 31st August, one of which involved an acquaintance from this teatime occasion, this in no way relativises the preponderance of data production related to the councils. The interview with that acquaintance from the cooperative did not produce findings which I could make particular use of, while the long and difficult interview with a veteran miner from Rudničnyj district gave me enough new insights to study it more in depth. This latter interview was then an outcome of the author's visit to the Zavodskij veterans, including the curious celebration at their Palace of Culture, because it was there that Nikolaevič invited him to join the celebration in the Rudničnyj district (on the Red Hill; s. above), which in turn led to the acquaintance with the interview partner.

We see that the author had, by 20th August, already narrowed his interest and found it partially satisfied through the invitation to the above-mentioned event, made to him by the lady from Kirovskij district. In fact, a close reading shows that this interest in the veterans' councils already dominated his mind while taking notes, that day. Only interlocutors' professions and careers are highlighted and only those individuals are named, who had something to say that bore relevance

⁶⁷ All I know, regarding functioning, is that in such cooperatives, members pay a standard monthly or annual sum, in return for which they may buy agricultural products of guaranteed quality, at moderate prices.

for contact with veterans' councils. The prioritisation of "labour" and "veterans of labour" is obvious in this.

The second case, about which I have detailed memory notes, was the visit to the local municipal library "Vstreča" on 25th August, which offered the possibility of meeting a larger number of pensioners, without going through the device of mediation by veterans' councils. This was fortunately possible, since in many districts such activities would simply cease during the summer, as Mrs. Kranzeeva had already mentioned. The fact that no similar opportunity could be arranged by the central municipal library of the town speaks to this fact, one may assume. Retired citizens, during the warmest period of the year, are very likely to spend most, if not all, days in their cottages ("dača"), outside of town. In the case of Vstreča's circle, however, a significant number of women (the group was exclusively constituted of women) had returned, or perhaps not left town at all.

This community was very welcoming, in particular as it not only interrupted its handicraft activities to properly receive the author and have a lengthy conversation with him, but thereafter invited him to stay for tea, on this occasion, as well as to come back for a second time.⁶⁸ The experience of two visits here is both valuable, as it indicates intriguing aspects of identity conception, and also difficult to assess. The author did, to begin with, explain the enquiry's object to his hosts. This unexpectedly triggered quite a lively discussion among them. At times, the memory note indicates, this could make mutual understanding difficult; the solution to this appeared to lie in having a round of introductions, during which the pensioners, each in their turn, could say a few words about themselves. Interestingly, as the inquiry should give particular attention to the relationship of leisure to work, which had been emphasised by the author, at some points one of his interlocutors reminded another one to also tell something regarding the aspect of leisure, which not everybody appeared to consider interesting. Thus one may think that some of them, in certain way, assumed the role of presentation, thereby actively structuring the conversation in this instance of fieldwork, which could, with some justification, be called a "collective interview". It was during this first meeting that one old lady proposed to bring him a book, on the next occasion, whose content he would definitely find interesting; this was an offer one could not refuse.⁶⁹

The lively discussions seems to be explainable in terms of diverging experiences, forming individually contrasting characters, following distinct trajectories in their lives. This was remarkable, in so far as a sense of common fate also bound these women together, which can be explained, if only to a degree, by the common locality of residence. Tension, in any case, did play out and even a need for open debate could be perceived, in particular because of statements with clearly political implications: So for instance, when one of the participants in the conversation confronted another one, questioning the benefits of a communist past, in which one body – the party – went as far as imposing even the specific ways in which demonstrations were held.

There is reason to assume that my interlocutors in this round could and would take positions with even more controversy, if they were given space to do so. Certainly, this experience gives me reason to think that conformism, otherwise felt to be such an important aspect of Soviet identities, is not in fact universally binding. But to explore this more carefully, an approach adapted to the individuals might be necessary, which would at the time have stood in marked contrast to the actual one, focussing, as it was, on organisations and their relatively formalised ways. Regarding

68 On 1st September; this was actually due in a large part to the fact that one member of the circle had expressed her desire to bring a book for the foreign visitor. It must be emphasised that the snacks were by far and away the best of the entire fieldwork stay; to compensate for this, the author thought it wise to bring with him a large bag of quality black tea on his second visit.

69 This is Suslova/Petrova (1984): The coal of Kuzbass.

Since the owner insisted she had no use for it, this charming and useful gift now constitutes for the author one of his most valuable "souvenirs" from his stay in Kemerovo.

consciousness in the socialist society, in particular with regard to the difficult relationship of individuality to conformism, the interview with the author's host Galja (August 22nd) may help to reflect on possible discontinuities. It also sheds light on the preeminent role of collective forms, as unavoidable institutions of Soviet life.⁷⁰

Galja: So for this reason... the fact that people had to live in the present in one way did not keep them from speaking about that civic consciousness, with a civic pathos, you understand. [...] No one in fact reflected on this dual thinking. When perestrojka happened [...] I would have readily crushed [my worldview]. We debated/contended with friends, as there was an insufficiency of information. [...] Meanwhile, people in general sincerely considered one should first think about the country and then about oneself. The communal/public is the personal. [...] This is why what I have told you, the factory conditions under which I worked, or the student dormitories of Soviet times, with two showers for five floors [...] This all was considered normal. Although in any case humans desire comfort, don't they? [...] And there you have some social communities: Work, studies, community organisations. There everywhere ideology is at the source. There it was. One particular ideology, right? in our times.

Author: In a very explicit form.

Galja: In our times yes. It was a concrete ideology. And there, you see, was this dual thinking. [...] Without social organisations one could not exist in Russia. In Soviet Russia, right? Because not to work, or to study, was simply forbidden. That was defined as freeloading. [...] So without that community structure one could go nowhere. In the community structure one subsisted according to those imperatives. And, when coming home, one existed according to one's own imperatives. Those of everyday life. Which diverged [from the others] rather strongly. So this, in general, is my feeling. My perception.

[...]

Galja: Because of this particular state of information, right? Those amounts of information powerfully changed attitudes generally, not just ours, but also the older generation's. I am an elderly person too...

Author: Well everybody's.

Galja: Attitudes changed. You understand, we came to be more, how to call it? greater cosmopolitans.

Here, obviously, Galja has her own concerns with how life had to be managed then, as opposed to now. Her depiction of imperatives necessitated by the community and imperatives of an individual kind as opposed to each other does however point at the high cost of conformism and the conflicting potential generated by it.

“Dual thinking” (двоемыслие) is a crucial concept here. In the Soviet normality, according to Galja, this was inescapable practice. It makes explicit in a fitting way the perception which I take from having tea at the library. The participants had, in their elaborations on life at work and leisure in life, to come to terms with the necessities related to this. One would rather not emphasise personal choices and give priority to desires that might relate to either work or leisure; the communal norm came first; the “norm” for private desire and practice was to be secondary, however remote this may have been from an individual's actual personal priorities. To comply with communities at all points in life, to express the priority of these over individuality was unavoidable, Galja told me. And, likewise, to pursue differing imperatives “at home” was the other, “dual” way to exist, unacknowledged and yet there. It must have been unavoidable to experience a conflict of imperatives here, as far as one can now see. Whether this is true for times preceding the lifespan of Galja and the other women and whether and how much it was a burden for women in particular, cannot be assessed on the grounds of available material. What can definitely be claimed: “Dual-

⁷⁰ See Appendix “Interview 22.8.2015”

thinking”, if not a cause in the consolidation or the disruption of socialist society, was a consequence of an incessant struggle within the individual, driven by the essentially incompatible opposition of the communitarian, public, and the individual imperatives, a distinction not to be confused with the complementary duality of leisure and work, but embedded in it.⁷¹

In an exploration of the intentionally developed urban area of the town of Kemerovo, one can try to distinguish the specific arrangement effective in it, the access to both leisure and work and, so to say, of the individual to its urban space. If this alone tells us little about the actual social standing of any individual, we may still hope to relate this “mind-map” of urban life to the dimension one – with due caution – can term as “class”.

A capital to celebrate

We had the sanitary zone, where I was deputat [representative at the district council]. It was called the “Sanitary zone of the coking and chemistry plant”. People had been building themselves. And it ought to have been, with time – with its over five-hundred small, old wooden houses, on the right bank side of the Kirovskij district – dismantled and [inhabitants] be resettled to better quality accomodation. And when the municipal assembly voted for closing the “Koksy”, there came the deputy minister of ferrous industries. [...] I, from my seat, tell him: “Ivan Nikolaevič, here I was told, at the municipal executive committee that for the dismantling of the sanitary zone there is no money.” “How is this, no money? We dedicated fourteen million.” [...] There stood a five-story house [...] those houses with several floors cost about one million and two-hundred thousand. [...]

From the municipal executive committee they said: “You only gave us four million.” He – the deputy minister – replies: “You have put to use two million only!” I from my place tell him: “To us, on the right bank, not a single flat was given.” After this they obliged me, so that I compile a list, which went on to be controlled for ages, as a result of which I managed to have forty flats assigned to people.

Interview with retired miner Nikolaj Nikolaevič (31.8.2015).⁷²

The space of the town, its divisions and its disposition respectively of rest areas, industrial areas and residential areas, enable the author to make observations on prevailing social relations. Theoretically under-elaborated, as resting on a slim empirical basis, my observations will necessarily be superficial, but this should not serve as a pretext for excluding them. The town being dependent for its historical development on the Tom’s waters, it is hardly surprising if the main road structuring its centre follows a course parallel to that of the river. Transportation on this *Prospekt* – the *Soveckij Prospekt* (Проспект Советский) – is largely one of individual traffic and public transportation, which, as will be shown, is the immediate consequence of its function as the main avenue to the largest factories, as well as to the government administration buildings. This particular arrangement both allows for a separation of functionally distinct areas and for

71 Whether and how an analysis of varieties of “dual-thinking” could take place, for instance through a diachronical comparison of Soviet records, is an intriguing question; to take this as an indicator of society undergoing changes would of course demand a high level of abstraction, but here sensitivity to gendered dimensions of collective and individual records could deliver valuable insights, in particular as regards the topic of inequality and privilege, largely silenced through nostalgic accounts of the past, as well as by the communitarian ethos permeating the post-socialist society of Kemerovo, prior to the elections in September 2015. Though there is little space for this in my study, one should note that the difficult living conditions of much of the Siberian population, often descending from deported and forcefully settled parents, probably made for different priorities and norms among most working class women, as opposed to those whose party membership offered them privileges, both in access to moral and to material reward.

72 Not the officer of the municipal veteran council Nikolaevič, mentioned above.
S. appendix “Interview 31st August 2015”

transcending that distinction. This is only relevant, however, for the population of the river's left bank, while the inhabitants of the Rudničnyj and the Kirovskij districts are placed in a different and somewhat peripheral position.

Observations were made on two occasions, the second on 27th August, with a memory note to sum up any findings. Its main concern is the description of the industrial area, which expands on both sides of the *Soveckij Prospekt*. This is relevant, in so far as the very same road leads directly towards the main building of the Territory of Kemerovo government.⁷³

Soveckij Prospekt follows the course of the Tom' up to a certain point, which is also where bus lines end. There, in the *Zavodskij* ("factory") district, production facilities are concentrated and this is also what research interest was about. Since the prestigious factories of present-day Kemerovo are located along this road, walking on the *Soveckij Prospekt* makes it possible to clarify how the town has been planned and built. It turns out that although the centre is only a few minutes away, by tram or bus, the difference between those areas is impressive. Upon leaving the bus, one first sees the Mechanical factory "Mechzavod", with an alley to celebrate its heroes of labour, in socialist fashion, right at the beginning of its territory. In the central direction, one finds next the oft-mentioned coking plant, occupying considerable space on both sides of the *Prospekt*. They possess elaborate communications to transport goods from one side to the other, with an option to interrupt traffic for letting their trains pass. Up to this point, along the two large factories, there exist sidewalks. Beyond Koks, however, where the tramway has its final station, including a depot, and then returns to the centre, sidewalks are found to be missing for long tracts of the road. This is in itself an important observation, as it indicates that there is little reason for citizens to come there, if not by the public transports, which take them to work, or else to drive through in their cars. Even in the summer, when there is no snow, walking along this road can be tiresome: If one wants to avoid walking next to cars, there is nothing left except a mud track, along the rails. Crossing the street is not always an option, as traffic during the day, in and out of town, is rather intense. What this affords is a possibility to see the numerous small enterprises, whose business consists in services, very frequently mechanical, to either the municipality or the industries. It is only after a walk of well over a quarter of an hour that the urban landscape begins to change radically, as one approaches the intersection with *Kuzneckij Prospekt* (Проспект Кузнецкий). The services being offered are different ones, at this point: One large commercial zone, then several shopping malls, placed along *Kuzneckij Prospekt*, are aimed at end consumers and can be related to this being the limit to the industrial area: Across *Kuzneckij Prospekt* begins the central living area, with large, multi-story houses. This is where the two, industry and housing suddenly face each other. The road is again suited for pedestrians on both sides and the character of a central urban space thus begins to be visible. If one keeps in mind that only three, at most five stops away (for *Mechzavod*) the scene is a completely different one, this situation leads me now to an understanding of the town's construction as a deliberate act of placing the core industrial facilities separately, but also in as central a position as one could, so that the town's residents would be able to reach and service them in the shortest possible time. The whole combination is certainly geared towards promoting production, much as socialist society was intended to be. The presence of shopping zones at the intersection of the *Soveckij* (the connection) with the *Kuzneckij* (the separation) *Prospekt*, at the point where the two areas are directly connected, indicates that new priorities have been on the rise. How far this has contributed to relativising the affinity of workers to the enterprises employing them is one question of interest arising here, in particular as earlier research suggests that these bonds within labour collectives may indeed have been eroded, resonating with similar ideas made by some partners during fieldwork.⁷⁴

At this stage, it must be noted that everything just described is immediately relevant only for

73 S. appendix "Map of central Kemerovo" for an overview of the area described here.

74 For further detail see Zdravomyslov/Jadov (2003).

inhabitants of districts on the left bank of the river Tom', more specifically of the Central'nyj and Zavodskij. The inhabitants of the Kirovskij and Rudničnyj districts have not only seen several factories closed, for the former, as well as deep mines in the case of the latter. They, it appears, have been in a position to the urban centre similar to that of the Russian Federation to the world economy: The role of providers of fuel for economic activities of their neighbours.

The lives of "other ordinary people", as one may call them, could be particularly well grasped as a result of visiting the Rudničnyj district during the festivities and in making the acquaintance of a veteran miner. However limited my understanding of the matters of coal mining, it remains still possible to read into his words a reflection of the difficulties that came with a mineworker's identity, out of which the authorities appeared so busy to make heroes.

Nikolaj Nikolaevič, a pensioner since the 1990s, was met for the first time on the day preceding the Miner's Day, at the Rudničnyj district's Cultural Palace. Introduced to the author by a local civil servant, he quickly displayed the desire to share his thoughts and memories about a long career in mining. The interview excerpts which follow were recorded two days later, after the great holiday. A number of ideas, which otherwise would remain either purely speculative or not even occur to me, can be based on a reading of his statements. Hierarchy and achievement, although not necessarily in correspondance, permeate his discourse:

Nikolaj Nikolaevič: At the mine, in accordance with the waiting list, they made a 'Žiguli', number eleven, available to me. [...] And there the boss [of his shop?] said: "Nikolaj Nikolaevič, give it to Vasja Volkov!" That was a brigadier, who later became an explosives specialist. "He will retire on his birthday. Give him yours!" I gave him my turn for this car. He got it and literally three months later I was assigned that car again. I went and got it in Prokop'evsk. [...] When I had become a representative, I turned to the director general, Kucharenko [...] in the association of mines, our "Northern Kuzbass". He lived better, Evgenij Ivanovič Kucharenko. I made an application for a Volga.⁷⁵

[When it had arrived] I went to the association, where Kucharenko said: "Nikolaevič! Excuse us, please! We need spare parts for the combine [mining machine]. If you can't give, you can't get!"⁷⁶ You cannot receive. Such a spare part, an expensive one, for the firm, a complex one. "Your 'Volga' let's give it away! Yours. I promise to..."

The obvious implication here is that the director general's intervention had an undesired, however inevitable, consequence for Nikolaj Nikolaevič. That manager (who "lived better") was in a position to engage in barter deals at the expense of an employee, although clearly there was no connection between the latter's order of a car and the mines' need for equipment.

In more than one respect, this suggests that an examination of socialist society ought to happen with the awareness that one is not, or not necessarily, having to analyse institutions substantially different from those known to "Western" societies. The earlier interview extract, at the beginning of this section, emphasises that even the planned economy, intended to give equality to the society emerging from Russia's revolution of 1917, managed to produce remarkable inequalities, at least in protagonists minds, where, it seems, no organisational hierarchy seemed to exist. Whether the difference between the left and the right banks of the Tom', with the administrative facilities on the one and the majority of miners on the other side, implied such

75 "Volga" and "Žiguli" were automobiles of Soviet production.

This excerpt from the interview relates an episode of my interlocutors life, in which he gave away his place on the waiting list for acquisition of a vehicle to a colleague. The next episode is one in which collective priorities, as defined by the director general, prevail over individual claims. Both illustrate the peculiarities of the socialist economy in the acquisition of consumer goods, such as private vehicles, which could become objects in collective barter deals even after having been assigned to individuals.

76 This is an approximate translation of the idiomatic expression.

hierarchical relations, would constitute a speculation one cannot engage in here. It is enough to indicate, on the grounds of available data, that a distinction along these lines could be made by citizens, if they wanted to. Nikolaj Nikolaevič himself did not go as far as to depict any explicit causalities, but the allusions one can quote speak for themselves.

In fact, this veteran of labour is pretty outspoken anyway, even without pushing his words towards any politicisation:

Nikolaj Nikolaevič: [my acquaintance's son] was clumsy, didn't work at the mines. Over there [at the factory] they burst something, or so, the metalworkers [caused the accident]. Burnt his face with acid. Our factories.... it's not a secret, those factories are all closed now. We had many armament factories here.

Author: Yes

Nikolaj Nikolaevič: A lot. Later they went on building factories underground. All of the Kirovskij district was a military factory. There were explosions, sometimes, frequently. People died.

This is somewhat different from the depiction of that district's past that one finds in the data concerning the visit to its veterans' council, on 24th August (s. above). There is little in the way of an idealised past, here and in the rest of this interview. The difficult circumstances, under which all workers, but miners in particular, were often forced to exist, are just simply aspects of an acknowledged reality. And whatever may have been troubling or even upsetting about the socialist period, my partner was to find out that the future had yet worse in store. To explain the apparent political hegemony and the often uncritically assumed stability of present-day Russia, it is sufficient to lend an ear to representations such as the following:

Nikolaj Nikolaevič: Then things slowly, slowly went their way. Unemployment at the mines, they started to close down. It was a difficult time. Until Tuleev, we had a strike wave, but that was artificial... El'cin, I think, was not right in his mind. Putin behaves normally. El'cin... There they campaigned among miners, so that they would start striking. They stopped paying people. [...] That was it, in 1990-1997 [at which time Tuleev became governor]. Teachers were owed a lot [of unpaid wages]. Generally speaking, it was a hard time. And he succeeded.

Author: When Tuleev got...

Nikolaj Nikolaevič: Now they pay on time. I get the pension... but I get a miner's one. For an honoured miner, they pay an additional nine-hundred [the council's?]. I get seven tons of coal, free of cost. Seven point eight. Coal, as fuel [for heating].

Unsurprisingly, political leaders reap the benefit of improving conditions, but it must be added that Tuleev, in particular, had advocated a different policy from the one carried out in the 1990s for a long time before, as anybody in the region will confirm. This however only could prove to make a difference after his electoral defeat of governor Kisljuk. This goes a long way to explain the regional patriotism's obsession with the figure of governor Tuleev. In local people's terms, this politician has enforced a kind of social agreement, with at least minimum standards of economic security for the working population, although this may not warrant a brilliant future either, as scholars have not failed to point out.⁷⁷ From the point of view of miners, recent years had definitely brought a degree of relief.

One should be wary to interpret such a tendency to idealise, at least on the individual level, as self-delusion. There is undeniable realism, at least in this man's account:

Nikolaj Nikolaevič: And I say about the gratitude to me... there were many presents, they gave me... but no decorations.

⁷⁷ See for further reading the monograph of Ol'ga Urban (2013): The social Mechanism of institutional economic Transformation in a monoproduktive Region.

Author: Why not?

Nikolaj Nikolaevič: Well I don't know. I didn't make the move, didn't go. I don't know. Here i was noted in a book [...] regarding "Jubilejnaja" mine.

Author: You have to make a move to get decorations?

Nikolaj Nikolaevič: Well... I don't know, I don't know. Few explosives specialists [such as Nikolaj Nikolaevič himself] have been distinguished, somehow...

Author: Why? The explosives specialist's work is, after all, no less dangerous or important, than are other.

Nikolaj Nikolaevič: Well... I, it could be, possibly... as I was not a party man. Not a party member. I was being set up. And I said: "As long as there will be people like that [among party members] I declare: I [will not be] a party member." And the place's boss [of the party section?] got angry at me.

It would be an error to see in this man an opponent of communist power; rather, one may suspect him to be one of those citizens, thanks to whose efforts communist rule could function at all for some time. Without any (artificial) modesty, Nikolaj Nikolaevič describes in detail how he succeeded in getting the town hall to place an autobus stop at a spot in his sub-district, where there should have been one, according to existing norms, even emptying an additional tank of petrol during various proceedings, while driving by car to local administrations. This endeavour at getting necessary steps taken got him elected into a position, in the late 1980s, where his energy was being claimed even more:

Author: Right, you got elected to that position.

Nikolaj Nikolaevič: First to "senior" in our street. Then president of the sub-district, a small one. About ten streets, there were. They changed that, unified a few sub-districts, five sub-districts. And [there] I became president, unanimously elected. President of the Community Council, that is to say, to work with the community public. Lots of duties there. I went to fasten/fix something somewhere, make some order in the streets [...] clarify things. [...] I went, petitioned at the town hall. [...] If they show me gratitude, they need a bucket, a whole bucket, of course. [...] Of the community's gratitude, the town's, of Tuleev. Here I have a distinction from Tuleev, of the Oblast' [Territory].

What finds an expression in these words, above all, is a political pragmatism, which supports the existing order (communist or not), as far as it is seen to take necessary decisions. An approach of this kind is understandable, for if an ordinary citizen will neither choose perfect opportunism, nor look for confrontation with the powers that be, their only choice must involve a constructive element in their relation to the governing "class" (it is difficult to imagine a more appropriate term). Not living in areas favoured by administrative attention, frequently dependent on the good will of managers within hierarchies, which they can hardly affect, the majority of citizens can only rely on their own ideas and the modest means put at their disposal by state agencies. The lack of adequate feedback mechanisms within the political establishment does nothing to alleviate this condition, but rather makes it even more imperative that individuals rely on themselves and on friends, relations and kin with whom they keep a relation of trust for adapting, in particular at moments of economic shocks and uncertainty.

Some preliminary conclusions

The description of my own experience and questioning of the resulting data leads me to a number of thoughts, which may well help in overcoming the inherently shallow nature of the research presented here.

Network-building has produced one unambiguous finding, at the very least. One comes to understand that trying to work according to an approach with multiple accesses, with an increasing number of different partners (and more potential ones) is an exceedingly time-consuming operation. For exploring a field, this may be a reasonable approach; for the production of data, which would allow the sensible analysis of one or more social institutions, it nevertheless turns out to be unworkable for the single fieldworker. The multitude of options and the necessity of pondering, whether to turn towards one or another partner, means that a lot of time has been lost to introduction and furthermore to convincing them to participate in the enquiry. In the individual approach, without a team to divide tasks, network-building would require narrowing down options to as few as possible, to allow the fieldworker to establish interpersonal bonds and carry on with relations of an informal kind.

If normative hurdles have rendered some of the work described here more difficult, they do not keep one from trying to define, within the researched field, certain types of institutions. Even if such definitions may ultimately not stand the test, they appear useful on this occasion. There remains for me, it must be said, lack of clarity with regard to institutional functioning, which may affect this kind of distinction dramatically: One does not understand, to be sure, why the veterans' councils agreed readily to work with the author, when they could have flatly rejected any cooperation (or done it more politely, as did some potential partners). Cooperation certainly has no apparent advantage for them. Another intriguing fact remains that almost every head of any organisation was male, regardless of the fact that offices were mostly populated by women. This includes, as a most prominent example, the veterans' councils, where the president at the municipal level is a man, whereas almost all other officers of some importance appear to have been women. Although the opportunity for investigating this aspect did not present itself, it could not have escaped even a casual observer's attention.

The relevance of the question is clear: As experience suggests, the veterans' councils do not simply offer pensioners opportunities to solve problems they may have with changing forms of social life (as suggested by the fact that in the Kirovskij district, for instance, so many new clubs of pensioners have been created since the year 2000); beyond this, they are bodies of political representation, which goes two ways: On one side, they represent pensioners to a wider public, thereby giving a voice to those whose working careers have been shaped by socialist norms and the subsequent breakup of socialism; the councils do, besides this, also represent the wider public's (and their own) supreme political authority, the territorial government, to their own constituency, as several instances of outright campaigning for the acting governor make abundantly clear. But this works well only as far as it goes. Why the constituency itself, or the wider public accept this performance and legitimise it (to what degree remains unclear), cannot be explained at this point. Much the same could probably be claimed about education and in particular the work of defining what kind of knowledge is required for education, a task which heavily involves the museums. Why would the citizens in Kuzbass accept certain notions of education, or lend themselves to performances of representation by the responsible bodies, including the regional and federal governments? These institutions (representation, education, government), in a sense, are superficial, which does not mean they should be considered unimportant. Nevertheless, if this were to be true, one would have to ask on what they rest.

Other institutions, the data suggest, effectively support those that lie at the surface. In particular in the case of the Kuzbass, with its personality cult of Aman Tuleev, loyalty is obviously of enormous importance. For either representation or education, at least of the officially tolerated kind, to function, those who participate in it and those to whom it is directed need to fundamentally agree that a display of loyalty is indispensable to their lives. Numerous unrecorded instances of generally subtle signalling, rather than explicit statement, suggested to the author that loyalty to individuals, as well as to the institutional functions they fulfill, remains at the core of the way that

life works. This obviously demands a degree of trust, however abstract it may appear. If trust were simply absent, how could the institutional transmission between superficial institutions and other institutions function?

The latter include a number of practices closely related to loyalty: Collegiality is very likely among these, even if its fate under conditions of a less stable labour market may seem unclear.⁷⁸

Gratitude, especially expressed as solidarity and directed in particular, during my stay, at distinguished miners, is yet another example, which would go a long way in explaining the priority accorded it in the region's political performances; it also cannot surprise anyone who keeps in mind the trauma of the drawn-out depression during the 1990s, in particular, and the fact that those who are now retired certainly had to contribute a lot in sustaining their communities and making conditions at least somehow acceptable again. The fact that such a disastrous course of events could have been avoided, even if only to a degree, not only in regional residents' views, brings back this point even more forcefully.⁷⁹

Safety also qualifies as an institution, in so far as there is not just the value of safety, as expressed in people's desires, but a whole range of formal (public) and informal (mostly private) practices, which can contribute to make a person's situation appear safe. So, for instance, the interaction between the food cooperative and the tea shop means that these two businesses, although they might profit from each other only marginally, can to a degree exchange their experiences with customers, while the latter's experience is that they are being cared for, for instance when invited to an occasional tasting. The networks which sustain individuals through exchange of goods and knowledge, as well as the political support shown for paternalistic policies, all speak for the idea that safety is a highly valued good and, at the same time, the object of a complex practice and relating values, of which economic performance, mineworkers' most of all, appears to have been only the most obvious. It is the reality of such institutions, which are difficult to perceive, that makes those of a more superficial, more visible kind operational at all.

The downside of the particular approach of network-building has been also to water-down engagement with the historical depth of the matter. Sustained participant observation – a more focussed kind of engagement with my work's object – would have, had it succeeded, possibly allowed access through the dimension of personal memory, of individuals' biographies, rather than through official accounts. The latter, interesting as they may be for a critical analysis of ideology, could not, even in the best of cases, offer the kind of wealth of facts, of which the interview with an old miner gave me a glimpse: How else would one have learned, without specialised knowledge of communist party practices, that refusal of party candidate status would mean that certain decorations (and probably much else I do not know of) were ruled out, in the career of the individual concerned? Reflection on such episodes' historiographic significance carries in itself a possible enrichment of theoretical work on the matter of social distinction and (frequently blurred) class identities. This leads me to a closing reflection for this chapter.

In her contribution to the introduction of the anthology "Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia", Katherine Verdery depicts a possible new setup of research fields in the socio-cultural disciplines (Verdery 2002 : 15-21). Rather than having the Cold War as a separate historical topic, she would see it as the common and unifying context for post-socialist and post-colonial studies. The spread and then decay of socialism are indeed hard to think of in abstraction

78 This is the case in particular, if one takes into account findings from the team of Ashwin (2006), which has examined the labour market in different locations of the Russian Federation at times, when unemployment was still quite widespread. One should not forget that, according to journalistic reports readily available to anybody interested, unemployment has again been rising since 2015.

79 Note that this has been the position taken by the former World Bank economist Joseph Stiglitz in his bestselling "Globalization and its discontents."

from imperial issues, both in the metropolises and the colonies; on the other side of the duality, the collapse of colonial conditions falls into the period known as the Cold War. For researchers interested in understanding post-socialist conditions, the adoption of concepts elaborated in post-colonial studies could be valuable. What about, for the present purpose, the term of subalternity? It is tempting to try to think of the workers in the Kuzbass, at least the relatively unprivileged groups, those who do not even get “a miner’s pension”, as the subaltern, developing their specific political strategies, where mobilisation on a class base is hardly conceivable.⁸⁰

80 The world was carved up during the Cold War and Verdery suggests studying the implications, rather than “postsocialism” only on its own, as a particular topic. This would require looking at post-socialist societies through the lens of post-colonial studies, she suggests, but in effect means merging the two fields of investigation, as recognising the origin of post-colonial studies in the Cold War transforms their object, making it valuable to analyse both socialist and imperial legacies as expressions of the development of capitalism in the twentieth century.

Chapter IV

An assessment of earlier studies

The fruits of fieldwork were not easily won, but they inspired me to carry on my studies of the post-socialist literature that I found to be available and interesting for my purpose. This (in some cases second) reading of key works has resulted in devoting to it an entire chapter.

In the following two sections, superficially similar yet complementary tasks are accomplished. The first section is constituted of summaries of six books, or of the central contributions those contain. This should allow the reader to follow my elaborations about the relevant theses in the second section, wherein I single out those ideas, which appear most valuable in view of future research, whether one may call them definitions, propositions, or findings. My assumption is that, in the light of the findings made during fieldwork in the Kuzneck Basin and of my preliminary conclusions, the benefits deriving from insights and suggestions contained in earlier publications on topics close to mine can be better grasped.

1. Publications in overview

A fine example for a study involving sociological interviewing in an almost ethnographic setting, where a number of people's life trajectories are being followed over the course of more than a year, is the collective monograph "Adapting to Russia's new Labour Market: Gender and Employment Behaviour.", edited by Sarah Ashwin and published in 2006. The interviewing of a number of men and women, chosen both because of their gender and geographic location in several of the Russian Federation's cities, allowed the researching team to assess the significance of established values for personal fortune under the conditions posed by the new labour market.

The study problematises the existing gender relations as explanative of the differential outcomes of economic restructuring, which have occurred in Russia after 1991. The effect of reforms towards a market economy is portrayed as largely unacceptable or unsatisfactory, while a point is made that poverty has struck a significant part of the population, though in very different ways according to education, age and professional specialization, as well as territorial location, gender being but one factor among others. Every chapter has different (all women) authors, each exploring another problem or set of problems related to finding one's place within the labour market in Samara, Syktyvkar, Uljanovsk and Moskva.

One could sum the outcome up as follows: a part of the male population has been in the position to secure its place in the labour market, often even improving their situation through networking, thereby being able to control most of the better, or the well-paid, jobs, men's networks often providing precisely the kind of information needed for getting there; at the same time, a larger part of men in Russia have failed to secure significant advantages, or to even fulfill successfully the socially recognised duty of the main breadwinner of their respective household, a development often accompanied by degradation of their living standard, as well as their well-being. Advantages, relating to acquaintances, are multiplied for those who dispose of them: "As highlighted in Chapter 6, over two-thirds of jobs in Russia are now secured through connections, and those with the most effective contacts will therefore be likely to obtain the best jobs." (Ashwin 2006 : 217). Women then, for the most part, have lost competitiveness, often by their own compliance with gender status beliefs, as Ashwin terms it, often sinking into poverty as a result and experiencing a loss of esteem and in any case of living standard. However, women do mostly dispose of a common benefit, which

is the quality of their relations outside of work – a situation quite unlike that of most men, the author finds: “This can mean that men’s networks are rendered vulnerable at precisely those moments, when they are most needed.” (Ashwin 2006 : 218).

The research findings, in fact, show that women have been able to handle their increasingly restricted opportunities much better than those men, whose situation has not seen success in gaining (relative) material comfort or status, even in the case of women who have been forced to live in poverty. There clearly are important (advantageous) implications to complying with gender status beliefs, as “Men, by contrast, display less flexibility with regard to pay and status.” (Ashwin 2006 : 214).

This is the result of a gender division of duties in the realm of the household: the belief that the female gender is more suited to domestic tasks than to professionalism, profoundly rooted, even when relativized by official hiring policies in the socialist society, has provided women with the skills necessary to overcome the most difficult situations, their networks being centered on the household and providing therefore both moral support and support in material goods, through friends mostly, even in times of extreme hardship. Men, on the other hand, tend to be made entirely redundant within the household if they fail to secure significant monetary assets.

In brief, the hardships of structural adjustment have highlighted the importance of existing norms. Women do not necessarily fare worse than men, who are in positions of greater opportunities, but of greater risks as well, for even though they are mostly poorer, women are much more likely to survive through economic troubles, quite literally. This provides a background before which to interpret how working people, as well as pensioners, in the Kuzneck Basin and elsewhere, perceive the relevance of established values, even as new norms for decent living may gain traction, in an environment now dominated by market transactions.

In the editor’s conclusion one is led to understand the common import of the different insights previously elaborated. Although employment outcomes vary by gender (favouring men), this cannot be simply related to gender differences of behaviour. Men continue to play an important role for their households, which is indicated by the fact that they are very likely to be involved in secondary employment and to do whatever they can to augment the available income, a result of the lasting male breadwinner norm, which spurs them into economic activity. It also increases their stress. Some experience it while restlessly searching for new opportunities, while others display low job mobility, clinging to jobs they perceive as stable. Women tend to supplement household income rather by drawing on state resources, in which they already have experience from Soviet times. Job mobility is also high among them, so a thesis of greater mobility is ill-suited to explain men’s superior achievements in income.

Actually, it is women’s readiness to accept poor pay, which may well explain why unemployment is not a particularly gendered phenomenon. Since men are less flexible with regard to pay and status, employers offering low wages mostly accept having only women as applicants. Just as important as men’s and women’s reactions to change are the structural constraints they face: beliefs about their competence, status and worth pervasively influence interaction, with wage setting, hiring and promotion all shaped by them. The social structure appears as constituted through cultural rules, or schemas, and resulting distributions of resources, which is how institutions are put into practice. One important aspect, through which this can be apprehended, is the ongoing decisive influence of women’s domestic role, which was not questioned in the course of their integration into the labour force, continuously shaping beliefs about gender difference in communist Russia. They were seen as workers not primarily focused on work and therefore of lesser value. Their maternal role was stressed in ways which made them be perceived in relation to the assumed characteristics of mothers, even though their duties would partly be taken over by the state. Men had the role of main breadwinners, which explains the perception that they are entitled to

higher wages. Thus a self-sorting of workers into perceived gender-appropriate work is set in motion, ensuring, along with discrimination in hiring and wage setting, the better pay of men in either primary or secondary employment. The sample of the present study clearly shows that higher education is much more of an advantage for women, than it is for men, who have a broader range of opportunities for securing decent incomes through secondary employment, independently of formal qualification. This is because women are forced to prove their competence and, at the same time, in unskilled “professions”, men are better paid than female equivalents. In short, labour market (dis-) advantages by gender can by and large be explained by social factors, while the behavioural differences result from these.

The fragility of their networks helps explain why men tend to react to times of distress by increasing abuse of alcohol. Women, on the contrary, are not only less vulnerable to isolation, but also rather protected against the temptation of drink by a cultural norm, which proscribes heavy drinking in women. Such a culture of alcohol contributes a lethal element to the risks attending men’s marginality within the Russian household.

Just as importantly, one should devote attention to Sarah Ashwin’s early dissertation (Ashwin 1999), written in the form of an ethnographic monograph based on her fieldwork in Siberia. In her ethnography, she explores the approaches adopted by the workers of a coal mining “collective” in the Kuzneck Basin to the effects of privatisation and of their mine’s dependence on state subsidies. The author draws attention to what being a mineworker means, in terms of defending one’s rights, as well as of their identity as subordinate members of an enterprise. The fragmentation of the workers’ community, driven by the search for individual solutions to their problems, leads to a weakening of their bargaining power in conflicts with the mine’s top management, even as the latter should be legally accountable to them, under privatisation to the labour collective, which was adopted in the studied mine’s case. Intensifying household production, one learns, is nothing but a part of a survival strategy and does not indicate any adaptation, with the aim of increasing opportunities, to market relations.

One key term, with regard to miners’ position in the enterprise, as a functional unit, is that of “alienated collectivism”. They do not consider self-organisation in opposition to management as an option, instead seeing it as the management’s duty to work in favour of the collective. Alienated collectivism is the result of the specific way in which Russian workers adopted communist ideology, in which the collective of workers and the enterprise, including managers, should form but one entity with a common interest in prosperity. Under conditions of economic crisis, as the mine needs to make cuts to its spendings, this attitude leaves no space for thinking of the enterprise as a place of conflict, in which confronting interests struggle with each other, distinguishing its interests, as defined by managers, from those of the workforce. Paternalism dominates, as the mine’s workers struggle to get by, failing to support, or even to start, initiatives which would lead to a confrontation with management, if they were carried through, instead waiting for a *chozjain* to take over the mine and provide protection to them from an unsafe economic environment. The following summary follows the structure of the book

In the first chapter, Ashwin introduces readers to her approach to the concept of “class”. The question of how Soviet workers have been integrated, so as to keep (class) relations of domination working, has so far not been answered satisfactorily. Both the theses of atomisation and of incorporation – which Ashwin explains at some length – have their weaknesses in that both the benefits of close integration in a collective and the lack of options for self-organisation are no more given, after the fall of the socialist centralised economy, because of economic crisis, combined with a lack of pressure towards outward, formal political uniformity. The contradictory character of integration into the work collective has to be unraveled: It appears obvious that while the collective was opposed to the state and outside world in its interests for self-provision, it was also riddled with internal conflicts, in which workers could not but resort to personal ties for solving certain

problems, including ties with managers, a function of which the trade unions effectively became dependent.

In the second chapter, the visible consequences of economic transformation for the local way of life are explored, including their emotional implications, such as how safe people perceive their life to be. Safety has a great many dimensions, among which protection from violence, like social provision, comes only as one among others. It means that one can rely on support from others in case of need, but it is quite unlikely that institutions have been created, in the course of reform, to replace the former bonds. The cigarette one can ask for from a passer-by represents a favour, which one cannot be certain anymore to be able to return. Safety and success have come to depend increasingly on origins, into which one was born. Accountability is felt to be lacking. And it has become even more difficult to dispose of free time in a meaningful way, as economic opportunities for doing so are diminishing and time is saved for domestic production, whose previously important role has been even enhanced.

Reading the third chapter on “privatisation and its discontents”, one may, on the one hand, conclude that the mine is not the place of intense power struggles: indeed, the miners have come to understand that, closed privatisation notwithstanding, thanks to which they have become the enterprise’s shareholders, they are unable to actually control the running of the mine. On the other hand, the position of management is unstable because of its constant incapacity to run the mine in ways that might satisfy worker-shareholders. As a result, there is a degree of confusion in workers’ minds as to who is really in control: the shareholders (they themselves), the director, or the state, on whose subsidies the mine depends? This, however, needs to be related to the integration of the mine into the whole economy, in which prices for coal cannot grow beyond a certain level, and to the fact that it is working at a loss, like the overwhelming majority of deep coal mines.

The fourth chapter is devoted to the main trade union’s situation: since in this particular locality, the trade union president is a radical, this offers an ideal site to study, “how far the constraints on union reform are structural, and how far they are the product of ingrained behaviour and perceptions” (Ashwin 1999 : 84) among protagonists. The relationship between the federal government and trade unions, for that matter, appears to be one of mutual reliance: The latter still depend on the former for control over the material benefits which bound their constituencies to them and therefore do nothing to alienate a government, whose policies they publicly claim to oppose. And the expulsion of the Communist Party, which worked as disciplining authority, from enterprises has in fact made unions more dependent on management, on which they now depend for the means to provide social welfare services and benefits – their main activity having been the provision of those services, so far. Since the state has stopped funding welfare services, these have come to be entirely a matter for the director’s discretion. And as the mine constitutes a supplicatory unit in the face of the government, the priority of its trade union president has shifted to preserving the labour collective in a common struggle with management. The diminution of funds for welfare provision however means that the union has an incentive to carve out a new position as an independent defender of workers’ rights, if it is not to be left entirely deprived of any power and meaning in the future. Its policy therefore is contradictory: It is caught between the past, in which its task lay with promoting production and avoiding undesired collective action on the part of workers, while its future lies in redefining the relationship with workers. This is not rendered easier by the fact that nobody, in the Russian context, expected them to take a principled stance regarding the violation of laws and regulations, which would be an important aspect of a new role. The union’s equivocal stance to management and workers also means that it cannot promote worker mobilisation, without the risk of alienating management. This is as much a result of objective constraints, as of subjective, internalised conceptions on the part of union officers and workers, but the equivocal stance cannot be maintained forever, in the face of ever new cuts to subsidies.

This delicate situation becomes clearer in the fifth chapter, where Ashwin shows that the

union committee is keen to avoid mobilisation on the shop floor level, by calling shift, instead of shop, trade union meetings. Shift meetings are seen as way to calm workers, by giving them an opportunity to voice concerns, without having prepared themselves for opposing decisions which the committee and management may want to announce and carry through. The monthly meetings of shop trade union presidents with the mine union committee can be seen in the same light: that is as opportunities for informing them about the president's activities and for containing conflict. Consequently, workers do not see shop trade union committees as bodies to which they can address their concerns and grievances.

The sixth chapter argues that the Soviet regime of production, resulting in the labour collective constituting a supplicatory unit, and the system of state paternalism prevented the definition of workers' specific interests. One may note that in the face of lacking opportunities for articulation of actual concerns at the collective level, or of the channeling of such attempts precisely because of ineffective fora such as the shift meetings, the inadequacy of workers' attempts to put some pressure on the administration leaves little to wonder about. It appears inevitable that the latter, always anticipating rising tides, does its best to deflect criticism by administering aid, including payment, through a discretionary system – *blat* – on the basis of personal acquaintance. In the future (as seen from 1999), the threat of licensing workers when the workforce needs to be shed anyway, together with the knowledge about people's infractions against the rules (a kind of *kompromat*) may provide management with an additional tool, should indeed personalised relations gradually become devalued, as money relations may come to replace them. But, so far, personalised relations are on people's minds as the only efficient way of getting something done, when they need to.

The seventh chapter is devoted to the nature of collectivism within the enterprise. It seems fairly safe to assume the paternalistic mindset of all the involved – the workers as well as the highest-ranking management – to preclude the possibility of unequivocal (and vocal) representation of workers' interests in any near future. The degradation of their economic situation being a result of the deficit in which the coal industry finds itself, as well as of the government decision to shed weight by reducing subsidies, means that they are increasingly going to find themselves in a situation where those supposed to represent them in the old way – line managers and, ultimately, the director – are increasingly going to press workers into new organisational forms and even dismiss them. Wage arrears of several months are but the vivid illustration of the fact that the mine is running at a loss, not even being able to make investments to sustain its production. A vicious circle thus makes workers' political standing ever more hopeless, in particular as they, so far, have never seen self-organisation with the purpose of defending their interests as something that could be opposed to the interest of the larger *kollektiv*. They would still try to exchange a bad "matriarch" or "patriarch" for a decent one, slowly only realizing that this leaves them entirely dependent on the will of superordinate individuals. The Soviet approach of equalizing the firm's interest with those of its workers, effectively subordinating the latter to the collective interest defined by managers, leaves everybody without a concept of what the mine would look like if management had to give up its dualistic role.

In the eighth chapter it is shown that survival strategies, individual and collective, adopted by workers are in essence complementary to their attitudes towards an enterprise which provides ever less assistance. As they see their means of existence squeezed – not least, but not only, because of wage arrears – they increasingly develop rural (agricultural and service) or urban (service) approaches, generally related to trade, which help them make ends meet. They thus remain within the monetary economy, however much they may still be relying on the mine, first of all, for monetary income, as well as on their home-grown food for nutrition. Their desire for a strong paternalist (occasionally a matriarch) being left structurally unsatisfied, workers resort to individualised strategies of survival, which fosters the conservation of authoritarian management

approaches, the later now increasingly freed, however involuntarily, from obligations of social provision.

The conclusion follows in the ninth chapter, which explores the foreseeable consequences (in 1999) of alienated collectivism and unchallenged paternalism. Paternalism is very prominent in recently privatised Soviet firms: the collective is always looking out for a decent leader, who will defend everybody's interests against an outside world, which is uninterested in the welfare of an enterprise's workers. The question for managers and (potential) private owners is how to gear the attitudes of dependency on the part of workers to the goal of strict labour discipline, without further straining of management structures, which so far still act as workers' channels of representation. Ashwin sees in the tendency towards a fragmentation of the labour force (according to profession and other aspects) one that is weakening labour's potential for organisation. However, there are clear differences with flexibilisation in capitalism, as in the case of Russia household production is not an adaptation to market relations, but rather a means to make up for wage arrears, such as when up to six months of wages are not being paid at the mine.

It is appropriate to devote a few lines as well to the summary of Stephen Kotkin's "Steeltown, USSR: Soviet Society in the Gorbachev Era." (Kotkin 1991). This study, of undeniably ethnographic character, constitutes an account of what happened to the structure of Russia's society, when the Communist Party leadership attempted to open up political space for the changes they perceived to impose themselves. It turned out that if this was possible, it did not only produce the expected outcomes, but, much like Stalinist modernisation before, a whole range of others as well: things did not go according to plan, as needs to be shown, to which end the following summary will deal with important points in Kotkin's book in the order of its chapters.

In the first chapter, the topic of which is the economic restructuring in a town, whose entire existence is due to the ironworks it was built to operate, politics are explicitly articulated. By the time of Kotkin's arrival there, it is noticeable that Magnitogorsk's inhabitants have learnt to distrust forthcoming changes, although few individuals appear so outspoken as to express, for example, frustration resulting from the experience of repression.

The policy of the "Magnitogorsk Worker", the main newspaper in town, is an object of the second chapter. Its support for the set of policies termed "*Perestrojka*" and its critical examination of the achievements of socialism receive attention. The situation in medical services is one of the topics of reporting, serious deficiencies being exposed, at which the author himself gets a glimpse during a hospital visit. Another locus of critical thought is the local theater, although it appears to be declining. It is portrayed as a place where citizens' awareness of their own situation has been crystallising, in particular as censorship was being lifted, step by step.

Reform of the Communist Party, the object of the third chapter, is depicted as exhibiting much potential for conflict, not least because it is being carried out together with reform by the party, as mentioned above. The chapter begins with a portrait of local party structure, moving on to more political matters as the author argues that privileges constitute the main motivation for many party members, if not for every single one, to join it at all. As a result, new policies directed against privileges in general are perceived as a threat to the party itself. Party officials feel ill at ease, given the increase of public scrutiny (the previous chapter's topic), which they fear will deprive the party of its means of control. Its troubles are significant anyway, as Kotkin finds that contempt for the youth organisation – the *Komsomol* – is widespread among young people, complicating the matter of recruitment. Internal disagreement, which triggers struggles at party meetings, is visible at the level of its primary organisations and beyond: new political movements emerge, which the party manages to co-opt or control easily, but which also drive its reform-minded fraction to create one of its own.

The lives and troubles of ordinary people, so to say, are also being examined. Problems with

the distribution of already produced consumer goods are a prominent topic of the fourth chapter. Food production is shown to be very difficult in itself, the difficulties being traceable to different factors, but notably to the fact that production of any item is being concentrated and competition of producers obstructed in the economic reality (notwithstanding the slogans about socialist competition).

The general election of 1989, the first competitive one since 1918, is not only described in some detail, its difficulties receiving due attention. It is also shown how this process itself becomes a field of struggle, in which the town's party organisation appears to prevail, albeit not completely. Its own bosses do not manage to get popular support, but those candidates who end up being elected into the new congress are still ordinary, loyal servants of the party's rule, showing its significant ability to influence the process of selection during the election's several stages.

The crumbling strength of narratives inherited from the past is highlighted with the publication of a canonical account of the town's history, in chapter seven, which boils down to an account of the building and operation of its steelworks, vividly recalling the mythology that was pressed onto citizens' consciousness. An illustration of this appears to be the fact that, even though the terror of the past, including its annihilation of many fervent revolutionaries, has become a topic, some of its victims tend to justify the perpetrators. The official memorialisation of the past also causes new discrepancies, as veterans returning from Afghanistan do not feel as if they were treated by the state as sons who have fought for the country. With great detail, Kotkin describes the rituals taking place on the 1st and the 9th of May (Victory Day), respectively. The crisis of the centralised economy, which ultimately requires all those activities of identity construction, leaves the reader with a sense that Magnitogorsk's very existence might become redundant with the end of the communist project.

In his afterword, Kotkin uses a comparison of the steeltowns of Magnitogorsk and Gary (USA) to point out that the situation of the Russian town is not just another instance of the end of Fordism. The social structure of Stalinist socialism has come apart there, the communists unwittingly causing the collapse of their own rule. The specific history of Magnitogorsk allows conclusions about reasons for the failures of *Perestrojka* policies. The difficulties in devising and carrying out policies to make society fit for the age of computers can be better understood, the author argues, through his case-study. Reformers had to confront the resistance of parts of society, which, Kotkin thinks, did not formulate political interests of their own, rather fearing any change of the status quo. They inevitably came up against resistance in the party's own ranks, where few felt compelled to join the reform efforts out of genuine commitment. The problems were not limited to party ranks, because the technocracy's concept of society had turned out to be wrong. Guiding it along a certain path turned out to be as unrealistic as ever, for society, in particular the masses of politically passivated workers, failed to respond according to expectations. What seems to illustrate that reform cannot be carried out only according to a centralised plan is the collapse of the planned economy itself, with constituent elements of the country and even firms proclaiming their sovereign policies. The Soviet state has been opened to new forms of government and for new political projects, competing with each other. The way ahead seems to lie in a new political structure, including the congress elected in 1989, which is not shadowed by the Communist Party's organisation. Severe political constraints on this path derive not only from differences over principles, but also from the uncertainty over the behaviour of the population, in particular of workers, whose interests could be addressed by *Perestrojka* policies: it remains unclear to which degree this would be possible, if the passivated multitude did not succeed in developing a sense of common interest. The local leadership's efforts at channelling restructuring in ways profitable to itself did nothing to reduce tensions. All of this would lead to calls for a new model growing only louder. It also turned out that many aspects of life, in particular economic welfare and nationhood, were accessible to politicisation. Most importantly, the purpose of building the town – the building

of socialism – has been lost and this is illustrated in the condition of Magnitogorsk. Political alternatives to the reference point of ultimately achieving communism are found to be missing, thus the author concludes that the move to once more “imitating” the capitalist world poses a new problem: that of establishing identity.

The study of Ol’ga Urban⁸¹ (2013) is a published dissertation, written by a scholar of the Novokuzneck Branch at Kemerovo University. Before I go on to explain its content, a few remarks regarding my use of it should be in place.

This publication, a gift of one of the regional university’s scholars, represents a welcome addition to my literature from a perspective of economic sociology.⁸² Of particular importance is the fact that its topic concerns not just economic transformation as such, but does so with respect to the region of my fieldwork – the Kuzneck Basin. Its main concern being specifically economic processes, it ought to be underscored that not all of its insights are immediately relevant for my discussion of institutions in the urban-industrial milieu, or not equally so. For the sake of clarity, a short account of its structure will help to justify this view. Its first chapter, devoted as it is to the “Theoretical-methodological foundations of the study of institutional transformation of the economy in a monoproduktive region”, contains little in the way of actual insights, while the second chapter deals mostly with the constitution of property in the main industries, in the course of the 1990s and 2000s, as a factor of institutional transformation; although insights presented there are helpful for reading the following chapters, my concern, for the purpose of this summary, will be the content of these. The third chapter has immediate relevance for understanding the institutional changes, to which workers’ lives have been subjected: “Transformation of labour and occupational spheres under the conditions of restructuring of fundamental (*gradoobrazujuščie*) sectors of specialisation of a monoproduktive region.” Divided into four sections, it displays a diachronical, as well as a simultaneous, thematic approach to labour relations.

The first section of this third chapter examines, at a sectoral and a regional level, the foundations of labour and occupational regulation. It is found that a strengthening of legal tools has contributed to the emergence of a sort of welfare state, using established methods of state administrative monopolism, which in turn limits the formal character of regulatory institutions. This is effective with regard to the needs of an export-oriented economy, as production has been restored; industrial modernisation and innovation technologies are found wanting. The second section illustrates that these same methods, which have been effective in regulating labour conflicts, fail to keep in check illegal practices in production: as long as those do not arouse conflict, they go unnoticed. Institutional changes considered are said to be stricter punishment, legal amendments, long-term investments into a skilled workforce, as well as the improvement of social partnership. The latter is particularly interesting, as its success is considered to rest on realising two conditions: for collective agreements to be effective, both employers and workers would have to change attitudes; workers’ interests and rights should be accorded higher priority; at the same time, workers would have to display increased activism in bargaining processes. In the third section, the effects on employment and their different outcomes are considered: labour relations have been particularly influenced by new regulation, responding to the specific demands of mineworkers, whose numbers have however shrunk more than in any other category of employment. The limitations of the (regional and federal) authorities’ interventions are pointed out; the consolidation of their informal

81 “Социальный механизм институциональной трансформации хозяйства в монопродуктивном регионе.” (“The social mechanism of institutional economic transformation in a monoproduktive region.”)

The term “monoproduktive region” is directly borrowed from Russian, where it designates those geographical areas which have been specialised around one production site, or on a locally available raw material, which determines the regional economy as highly dependent on the wider economy’s demand for one specific good and derived products and often vulnerable to fluctuations of prices for raw materials.

82 The author would like to thank Mrs. Anna Maljar for offering him this book as a present during his stay in Novokuzneck, as well as for her patient answers to and comments on his questions there.

relations with employers (as an avenue of regulation), increased reliance on such interventions, all merely confirm what is seen to be the incomplete character of institutional transformations in labour relations. What suffers from this is the potential for investment into the region's labour force. Finally, some observations on policies aimed at the fostering of small businesses end up concluding that the regional authorities' efforts would remain limited in success, as long as poor working conditions, themselves consolidated by the informal character of labour relations, made it unattractive for qualified workers to seek employment there.⁸³

The object of the fourth chapter of Urban's dissertation is the study of "the social mechanism of institutional transformation" per se. It consists of two sections, the first of which is devoted to the conceptual foundations of this approach to institutional change in the regional economy. It reveals what appear to be contradictory notions, regarding the effects of that alleged mechanism. On the one hand, the institutional transformation of the central economic activities at regional level is thought to inscribe a certain direction into the social mechanism; thereby, one might conclude, it is conscious human activity (of regional authorities and their partners in corporations) which predetermines that direction. The evolution of the social mechanism appears as predetermined by objective necessity (assumed by the author) towards modernisation and "innovative" development. On the other hand, the social mechanism, generating institutional transformations of specific scope (and limitations) is described as a result of "social groups' activities". Here, the study of such a mechanism is suggested as a method for understanding ongoing processes, whose outcome would not appear quite predetermined; to quote Urban:

"Using the SM [social mechanism] methodology allows to uncover the logic of institutional reform, to explain its temporary and its final outcomes, to prognosticate the tendencies of regional development."
(Urban 2013 : 283).⁸⁴

The possible contradiction between a predetermined process and an open-ended one – suggested in the quotation – is not resolved by Urban; it is not clear, whether the specific scope of transformations is all that is predetermined, or whether all activities displayed by social groups should equally be considered as predetermined.

The second section, devoted to actual practice in transformation, leads to the preliminary conclusion that the region's social mechanism has brought about an incomplete process of reform. Urban's confusing statements in the previous section can here be related to her following point: the local institutional environment (still) conserves barriers to a scenario of "innovative" economic development – as opposed to a crude-exports-scenario. Regional authorities are found to be tightly bound to their good relations (of socio-economic cooperation) with large corporations, thereby making an exit from this condition seem unlikely in the near future. This, after all, may reflect a compromise in the author's conception between determination (towards the scenario of present economic specialisation) and thinkable open ends. The social mechanism Urban portrays is seen as not entirely adequate for an alternative scenario and a change for the better (the "innovative" economy considered necessary by the author) is not a given and no "linear"⁸⁵ development is to be expected. A change of mentality is expected and would have to take place in different sectors (of society; not just among workers or in the business community) and will occur through new

83 This last remark reminds one of the points made regarding gender-differential outcomes on the labour market by Ashwin's research team (s. Ashwin 2006), where poorly educated men still fare better than their female equivalents, who are consequentially forced to accept the most unattractive positions to find any kind of employment.

84 "Применение методологии СМ позволяет раскрыть логику институциональных реформ, объяснить их промежуточные и конечные результаты, спрогнозировать тенденции регионального развития."

85 "[процесс] институциональной трансформации регионального хозяйства социальными субъектами [...] обуславливает нелинейный характер развития" (Urban 2013 : 315).

subjects⁸⁶ in the process of institutionalisation: “[one can expect] the forming of new subjects of influence, whose actions would have to be seen as a factor of institutional transformation.” (Urban 2013 : 317).⁸⁷

Recapitulating the findings of chapter three, one may say that social partnership is defined as the ultimate goal, whose functions are so far performed by the regional government, forcing corporations to honour obligations for financing welfare provisions they have contracted. Conflict is contained in this way, by means of frequently informal administrative practices, but the price is a similar degree of informal practices in labour relations, often illegal, for the institutionalisation of informal practices has effectively come to constitute a regional system of its own. In chapter four, the possible conditions for further change are discussed, with economic innovation as a corollary to social partnership in labour relations. What characterises the social mechanism that would achieve such institutional change remains rather blurred, but it arises clearly from her text that Urban expects mental change (in fact also generational), with the evolution of new social agents, to produce a remedy to the shortcomings of the existing social mechanism.⁸⁸

The anthology “Uncertain Transition: Ethnographies of Change in the Postsocialist World.”, edited by Michael Burawoy, together with Katherine Verdery, offers ethnographies as sources of insight into institutional changes in the first decade after the collapse of communist rule (Burawoy 1999). The argument in favour of ethnographic perspectives is familiar, but no less convincing for that matter: the ability to observe how processes take root at the level of communities of people, rather than far-ranging polities, should allow researchers to understand what otherwise can only be tracked through mediate documentation and understood through approximation. This the editors express through the opposition of micro and macro levels. The removal of macro structures, they write, results in adaptations at the micro level. These adaptations, a consequence of recent uncertainties, the claim goes, have not sufficiently been taken into account, which is seen as the common limitation of theories proposed so far (by 1999). It is this remark, together with the following one, which makes it particularly interesting for me to follow the editors’ thoughts: transition to the market and formal democracy result in manifold phenomena, pointing into more than one direction at the same time, so preoccupation with the emulation of one (liberal) model can be misleading. Importantly, Burawoy and Verdery state they prefer “transformation” as a term to “transition”, because of the latter’s teleological resonances.

One finding deserving attention is that innovative research of the communist world was rarely produced during the Cold War, although the shadow cast by the Soviet state onto western scholarship was important. There is also unambiguous critique directed against shock therapy. Particular reference is made to classics of social theory, Weber in the first place, whose account of the sources of “modern bourgeois capitalism” is seen as a starting point for comparing the post-socialist States’ transformations. The kind of capitalism to have arisen, in Russia most prominently, is described as one that might be called a “latter-day merchant capitalism”, which highlights that there is no replication of the ideal type of capitalism, while at the same time it is made clear that “Deficit models that cast Russia in darkness not only stigmatize but also fail to deliver any insight into the character and dynamics of contemporary Russian society.” (Burawoy 1999 : 304).

Reference is also made to Durkheim, Gramsci and Marx, the question being, from the editor’s perspective, how well their theories “travel East”. A recomposition of the moral order – a

86 Subjects of social organisation; movements.

87 “процесс должен сопровождаться [...] формированием новых субъектов влияния, действия которых следует рассматривать как фактор институциональной трансформации.”

88 In her conclusion, Urban defines as “social mechanism” a system of interactions of social subjects (the forces of groups) with a certain consistency, which is regionally specific and brings about institutional transformations (Urban 2013 : 320).

moral regeneration, leading to a new normality – is considered possible, but only through continual social conflict. Burawoy also appeals to what he calls “the Foucauldian move in social theory”, meaning to perceive power as it extends throughout society, rather than being confined to one of its realms. The difficulties of western feminism and Marxism in their reception in Eastern Europe are explained with reference to the specificities of power relations faced by intellectuals in socialist societies and the question is posed, how they might re-emerge in domestic forms, once disenchantment with liberal ideas about nationhood, the economy and the family will have spread in the concerning societies. What is more relevant, from my point of view, is the insight that operating with more than one ideal type, such as by opposing capitalism to socialism, may help to confront grand narratives of progress and decline, their teleologies and counterteleologies. Lastly, the editors point out that theory cannot do without reference to “socialism”, as either the negation of capitalism, or for comparison. This would be true, whether the intention were the celebration of liberal capitalism (in its idealised form), or a critique of it.

Having summarised the editors’ statements, mainly contained in the afterword, one should also take account of the book’s other chapters. Some of these certainly have immediate relevance for my topic: David Woodruff, for instance, shows how insecurity of firms in Russia over their financial situation and the freezing of their accounts for the deduction of taxes and other duties has led many of them to leave the money economy at some point in the early 1990s (Burawoy 1999 : 83-124). Sarah Ashwin contributes, in a condensed form, her findings from ethnographic research at the coal mine, which is also the object of her monograph (s. above Ashwin 1999). A most rewarding contribution to read is Caroline Humphrey’s, in the first chapter, which has been published again in her later collection of essays (cf. Humphrey 2002 a): “Traders, ‘Disorder’, and Citizenship Regimes in provincial Russia.”⁸⁹ In this fairly long text, the author draws the reader’s attention to the multitude of international and domestic trading practices that developed with the end of socialist planning, in the course of the 1990s. This has not, to be sure, been primarily caused by good opportunities for businesses, during the period of recession, as much as by necessities resulting from the degradation of the socialist system of distribution, which, as the author puts it, “limps along in a crippled version” (Humphrey 2002 a : 95). Though developments since 1999 have certainly overtaken this state of affairs in many regards, some of Humphrey’s observations remain valid: it is mostly large firms linked to government which have been able to control capital accumulation.

Humphrey finds that the addition of legislation, frequently regional, directed against persons not engaged in production – the traders – produces new citizenship regimes. This appears as an unsurprising development, responding to pre-existing conceptions about the worth of productive labour and the feeling of loss, resulting from the decay of enterprises and labour collectives’ disintegration, among the population. The authorities respond to the lack of safety experienced by citizens, by working to exclude from transactions both home-based traders and trading diasporas. The units of the Russian Federation are seen as striving to define themselves, while competing for equal status before Moscow, from which most hope to acquire subsidies; restrictive legislation regarding trade could be seen as one aspect of this. At the same time, the existence of traders, who are forced to make a profit from the differences in the states of affairs between the regions, because they infringe on the yet to be consolidated new political and economic regimes, arouses significant anxieties within the population. Both restrictive regulation and frequent aggression, directed at them by the general public, result from this. And the already mentioned policies leading to the substitution of barter for money transactions, although not a concern from today’s point of view

89 The differences between the two publications are slight in the text and mainly relate to the different dates. An example of this is that while in 1999, Humphrey writes that “The last few years in provincial Russia have seen an enormous burgeoning of petty trade”, the second publication simply mentions “the 1990s” as its time frame. References are made, for the sake of simplicity, to the second publication (of 2002).

anymore, only complicate the picture. Traders being the only ones in Humphrey's account, except for government agencies, who dispose of money, they may have been perceived as threatening precisely because of their ability to become active on different markets; administrations who relied on the control of money flows to remain in power could not do otherwise than to see in them a challenge. The final conclusion appears to be that freeing trade from restrictions, including negative images, might even counteract regionalisation and the separatisms threatening Russia.

To close this section, I shall introduce the anthology "Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia." (Hann 2002 a). Edited by Christopher Hann and like the previous one intended primarily for ethnographic fieldworkers and written by such, it constitutes an attempt to assess the results of over a decade of post-socialist research. If most of its chapters, taken as such, do not help me much in that they concern themselves with questions and objects very different from my own, I must nevertheless take account of the book as an interim assessment of the condition of its field. To draw from that broad field, if set against my own findings from fieldwork, valuable ideas for further research, whether post-socialist or labeled otherwise, I shall include into my reflection what scholars working in it have thought with regard to the field.

In Hann's perspective, ethnography still plays the key role, its methods allowing, much as Burawoy thinks (s. above Burawoy 1999), what other disciplines often fail to produce. At the same time, it is quite apparent, the editor of this volume would also welcome historically sensitive research.⁹⁰ At least, engagement with history appears as one of his priorities in the section he contributes, under the title: "Farewell to the socialist 'other'". In this, his prioritising of history makes perfect sense, because that 'other' has indeed become history (by 2002), yet continues to shape events in the world seemingly conquered by free markets and democracies, via the consciousness of its contemporaries. Hann additionally gives an overview of the multitude of different kinds of contributions to the study of post-socialism.

To this, Caroline Humphrey adds, in her section titled "Does the category 'postsocialist' still make sense?", a reflection of a similar direction, but one which is looking forward in alerting the reader to the danger of drawing simplistic conclusions, based on an interpretation of recent practices as immediate reflections of the past (Humphrey 2002 b). This contribution gives particular attention to political contest in post-socialist Russia as a case in point, where one cannot just assume causation by Soviet practices in present political behaviour. Humphrey's proposal goes beyond studying history, as a way to improve ethnography, since it suggests that one should try to understand the diverse trajectories of post-socialism by comparing each of them with different ones. She insists one would gain from collaborations of insiders and outsiders, which ethnographers frequently happen to be, to interpret, without prejudging, the political situations they are confronted with. Eurasian perspectives, the reader is brought to understand, would help in understanding themselves better, as they engage in comparative work.⁹¹

Katherine Verdery challenges the reader to conceptualise the study of post-socialism and, by implication, the disciplines engaging in it in a new way; thus the title of her section: "Whither Postsocialism?" (Verdery 2002 : 15-21). Her preoccupation lies mainly with the Cold War – the context in which the world was carved up between socialist countries and their western opponents. Different fields of study can be thought of together here, as the conflict should be relevant to both

90 Curiously, neither of the works of Stephen Kotkin, who has worked as a historian with ethnographic inclination and approaches, is to be found in the bibliography. Burawoy's publications are there, whom Kotkin in turn did not mention to me, when meeting him after a conference he gave in Vienna in 2017. The dissertation of Ashwin, published under the title "Russian Workers. The Anatomy of patience.", may have been too recent to catch the attention of the publishers in 2002, although it is an outstanding case of ethnography in an industrial area; whatever the reason, it too is not referred to or even listed.

91 This of course rests on the assumption that "we", the readers of the anthology and its authors, share a background located in the "West", or in any case outside of formerly socialist countries.

post-colonial and post-socialist debates, allowing to look at the latter through the lens of the former. Verdery qualifies this approach as a priority of the near future. It would in effect mean to fuse the two fields of investigation, as the author points out. To achieve this, it would be necessary to think of post-colonial studies in a specific way as well: as a field of studies, whose origin lies in the Cold War and whose object would be transformed, as a result of this operation; studying imperial and socialist legacies as different, yet interrelated expressions of the development of capitalism in the twentieth century would thereby become a valuable endeavour.

In the afterword of the anthology, Don Kalb sketches what might be covered in research during what he terms “phase two” of the “transition”, following “phase one” in the early years after the demise of socialism (Kalb 2002 : 317-329). The reader is led to understand that however welcome the visions of a rising civil society may seem, under conditions of free markets and formal democracy, they nonetheless remain visions derived from a specific perception of the propertied bourgeoisie’s role in Europe’s past, according to Kalb. He terms this perception a “nostalgia”, derived from the works of Kant and de Tocqueville, which would ascribe to that (supposedly economically independent) particular class a cultural and moral role. The author identifies a grand narrative of globalism – an aggrandised version of monetarist doctrine – that promised a “portable toolkit” (Kalb 2002 : 321-322) to national and regional elites for bringing such civil societies into being. Subsequently, Kalb develops a vision, in which area studies would turn their attention more to the interaction of local and global histories, as an adequate reaction of socio-cultural anthropology to the “new portable global engineering” (ibid.). In his view, the “anthropology of postsocialism” would be particularly well equipped to adopt such a mission, primarily because it went beyond giving attention to institutional realities in specific geographical and historical settings, as institutional economists would do, by according importance to the notion of path-dependency:⁹² By taking this notion further and, like Burawoy (1999), recognising the shaping of ongoing and future action by prior formed “conditions, expectations and earlier divisions of assets” (Kalb 2002 : 323) and thus by way of improvisation. The call of Verdery (Verdery 2002 : 15-21) for increased attention to the Cold War as the context of socialism is complemented by suggestions for methodology that should enable her reader to analyse the globalist institutional re-engineering, which in Kalb’s view is no more or less than “a wholesale transfer of western institutions”, an immediate outgrowth of the Cold War (Kalb 2002 : 324-329). Above all, he insists that path-dependence theorists, whatever their background, are right in insisting on the necessity of institution-building, instead of “shock-therapy”, while recommending to not lose sight of the fact that space has played a crucial role in putting countries of the former Soviet Russia at a disadvantage in managing transition, as they are located much further from the capitalist heartlands than other formerly socialist States in Central Europe, which of course only emphasises his point that a different “therapeutic” policy would be necessary. To conclude, Kalb surmises that tracking the second phase of post-socialism would mean studying the ways of mobilising and responding to “openings” towards different policy paths, opportunities and the dilemmas involved, among persons, families and localities, as well as in communities and regions.

This author concerns himself with the consequences of a process of integration into global capital accumulation, but one which has failed to satisfy the expectations of the wider public in former socialist countries. This and the ideas articulated in the afterword constitutes, in my view, a faithful representation of the general intention of the book and its contributors.

92 Kalb proposes an approach he terms “dynamic path-dependency” (Kalb 2002).

2. Studies in comparison

Ethnography of Russian labour

In her publications of 1999 and 2006, Ashwin elaborates her understanding of relations on the Russian labour market and draws attention to the distressing kinds of challenges faced by workers in their respective fields of specialisation, their regions, as well as according to their age and gender. The collective monograph (Ashwin 2006) is in this regard the most important work, because, if it does not offer the knowledge of regionally specific kind to be found in the ethnography (Ashwin 1999), it gives insight into the dynamics of professional life to which individuals throughout the country have been subjected.

To start the examination of the later publication, I note that its chapters, in one form or another, touch upon all of the concepts which have been defined for my use in Chapter II. It should also be noted that identity is present mainly as gender, while institutional change concerns the institutions of the labour market and of the gender division of duties, comprising labour and work within the household; transition appears as a given and where transformations are explicitly addressed, they concern the institutional changes which result from post-socialist developments (of privatisation, liberalisation of trade, etc.); consequentially, post-socialism as such is not of particular concern for the authors; and leisure and work are given priority attention, although it must be noted that the focus is on personal and household arrangements, for the purpose of understanding how individuals and households manage to survive under the harsh conditions created by the transition to a market economy. The discussion of arrangements in households with regard to labour and income are therefore centered on issues of safety, meaning income security and mutual support between individuals and between households.

The fact that Ashwin and her team (Ashwin 2006) find the management of domestic life to be primarily in the sphere of female responsibility is not surprising and is confirmed by my own impressions of Russian life; one might note that in Western Europe, as far my experience goes, this is also a common state of affairs. What is remarkable about Russian conditions, as the authors manage to show, is that there are many households headed by women, because frequently men are perceived to fail, with regard to their one main duty, as defined by the Soviet model of gender: to earn the household's main income. Men are thought to make superior employees, as they are more generally thought to belong to the world of work, whereas women are considered to have an equally meaningful place in the domestic realm (Ashwin 2006 : 84), a rigidity with regard to roles which does not appear, from my point of view, to have been substantially weakened (since 2006, when the book was published).

The strength of this work results from the fact that its focus on an unstable and poorly regulated labour market allows the authors to illustrate the implications of processes in this institution for gender-informed perceptions of safety, under Russian post-socialist conditions. It is plausibly shown that this institutional failure (of the labour market) results in entrenched conceptions becoming even more so, their ongoing relevance being highlighted by the willingness to act according to traditional norms, regardless of their functionality, under changed conditions (Ashwin 2006 : 32).⁹³ A particularity of the book is the repeated highlighting of domestic life as an aspect allowing even impoverished women to find meaning and purpose in their sphere of traditional responsibility. This is most visible with regard to non-monetary exchange between households, which, in accordance with commonplace ideas endorsed by most men and women, remains a female task (Ashwin 2006 : 48; 53), but one which gives women a degree of safety, besides all its disadvantages, as they can rely on their networks in times of need.⁹⁴ Having spent

93 The book's 2nd chapter is replete with references to this paradoxical observation (Ashwin 2006 : 37; 50; 52).

94 Even women who display a strong professional orientation towards work, with commitment to their chosen profession, seem to have a marginal advantage here over men with the same attitude (Ashwin 2006 : 128-129). They

only minimal time within Russian households during my field trip, I could not corroborate this presentation with data of my own, but the strong emphasis on men's privileged role in the sphere of work, including the fact that they occupy the highest positions within labour hierarchies, speaks for an ongoing relevance of the mutually complementary findings of Ashwin's team.

The supporting (mostly informal) institutions, as I have called them in my findings for Chapter III of the present thesis, are dealt with only in a limited way, in the sense explained above: Institutional change in the labour market being at the heart of the study, it is issues related to (economic) safety which occupy the centre stage. Collegiality could be seen as playing a role as well, most of all for some women (not only for them), who display an orientation to work which the authors choose to call "social orientation". This means that the concerning women consider it as their right to work and see this as an escape, as one may call it, from the dreaded dullness of life within the household (Ashwin 2006 : 129). The significance of networks, the topic of the sixth chapter, highlights what I view as the ongoing relevance of values relating to collegiality. Networks are presented as strongly gendered and, although women's networks are considered to be less focused on work, they are nonetheless crucial in the search for work of both genders (Ashwin 2006 : 190). The dimension of safety is still crucial here, in the authors' account, but the importance of networks and the meaning many women find in labour nevertheless suggest that collegiality, both at the place of work and in leisure, plays a very significant role for their well-being.⁹⁵ This was vividly illustrated during fieldwork by the overwhelming majority of women in offices, wherever one went, as well as the mostly friendly atmospheres and constructive reactions encountered there.

The book's fifth chapter, dealing with employment behaviour in the labour market, turns the reader's attention to an aspect which could not be well explored in the field, due to the questions on which research was concentrated: secondary, often informal employment. Here, there is another significant explanation, which, together with the particular quality of male networks, helps to explain why men in general succeed better than women, with regard to income: Since it is seen as a male duty to earn enough money for the household to live and men frequently possess by far the better networks, it is only natural that this "male breadwinner norm" also induces them into more frequent and more successful secondary employment (Ashwin 2006 : 161). Women do engage in it, when they are left with no choice but to do so, but they will rather tend to apply for public benefits. One of the obvious (formal) institutions I have identified in Chapter III, education, also has a role to play here. Most women cannot earn a "comfortable" income, if they do not possess higher education. In terms of flexibility, they are on par with men, as "their appreciation of the challenges that face them makes them very open to gaining additional qualifications" (Ashwin 2006 : 161). Here as well, my own observation of dominant female presence in education leads me to conclude with the authors that this post-socialist institution's work, with all the visibility of its frequently female staff, cannot as such sufficiently explain actual relations of domination in the present Russian society.

The references here, mostly taken from the conclusions, which are found at the end of most of the collective monograph's chapters, point to the main finding which one gains from this study on the Russian post-socialist labour market: the essential norms regarding institutionalised gender relations are still in place, as they have been prior to socialism's collapse; women have to care for the family's members, in times of need more than ever, attending to the household's comfort and overall safety even while most often working, whereas men should, in the conventional view,

are still less exposed to the danger of demoralisation, for instance by the loss of a beloved job, than their male counterparts.

95 This is while Ashwin et al. note that men, if they fail to secure a stable income, are often seen as superfluous to the household, which erodes their well-being in several ways: their self-esteem as unperforming main breadwinners is disrupted and many end up being separated from their households, not infrequently leading to demoralisation, alcohol abuse and early death (Ashwin 2006). See also the summary of the same book, above.

provide most for its monetary needs.

For me, one crucial question ought to be, how these findings relate to the historical impact of transition, as a political project and social process. In other words: how were these conditions brought about? To answer this question, at least partly, one may turn to the results of Ashwin's research in the Kuzneck Basin during the period 1994-1996, published in her ethnography on "Russian Workers" (Ashwin 1999). This is a study of institutional change among mineworkers at one mine in the South of the Kuzneck Basin and therefore concerns a population which belonged to the most militant sector of the labour movement during the progressively accelerating collapse of communist party rule in 1989-1991. The radicalism of mineworkers, as distinguished from those in other sectors, is apparent when one reads Paul Christensen's account of movements for regionalism and democratisation in struggles with central authorities during the period from 1989 to 1993. There, whenever there is mention of the labour movement, it is dealt with as if virtually identical with the mineworkers, who went on strike in 1989 and 1991, although other types of workers got involved as well and not only in the Kuzneck Basin (Christensen 1995 : 211-214). One may be able to shed some light on the reasons for this outstanding role of the mineworkers, but for now I must wish to elucidate, how it came to be that where a powerful movement for collective action appeared to be emerging, the outcome ended up isolating individuals, putting the genders against one another and undermining solidarity among workers facing the labour market, as found by the study of 2006.

One reason for this must be the paradoxical finding that, for all their radicalism on the political stage, workers endorsed paternalism as the quasi-natural practice of management at the enterprise level (and at other levels subsequently). Ashwin explains the permeation of relations at the enterprise by paternalism and the attitude of dependency of workers in relation to managers through the concept of alienated collectivism, but she also sees that in the absence of pre-existing autonomous workers' organisations, even massive actions of protest may just lead to an emergence of new hierarchies and no challenge to the underlying domination within the enterprise (Ashwin 1999 : 180-181). This can be extended to general politics: the notion that one great paternalist (Governor Tuleev, for instance) will take care of their problems appeared well established among a considerable part of Kemerovo citizens, during my time there. And this kind of attitude, Ashwin shows, characterises relations between workers and managers to such a degree that the former would rather look for individual solutions within or without the enterprise, rather than seek to organise themselves and defend their interests together, quoting the Russian scholar Šlapentoch to the effect that probably nowhere did the influence of the notion of "roof" (*kryša*) have an impact on political and economic processes as much as in Russia, where it would even compete with the state (Ashwin 1999 : 185 fn.). Furthermore, a decay of the working class set in, as enterprises shed labour and took on only few young workers, thereby facilitating the decomposition of enterprises' labour collectives as objects of identification. The absence of workers' autonomous organisation is, it appears, perfectly complementary to this state of affairs, where individuals increasingly fend for themselves. The trade unions, being a part of the enterprise administrations, rather than organisations representing the exclusive interests of workers, are in no position to challenge it (Ashwin 1999 : 181; 182).

This is reminiscent of the situation I have encountered among the veterans' councils – not so coincidentally, the current representation of some of those workers, whose fate was hanging in the air at the time of Ashwin's fieldwork in the 1990s. Not least during the honouring ceremony at the Zavodskij Palace of Culture, it appeared a patent fact that those who received decorations were actually rather disempowered, mere receivers of a paternalistic government's expressions of gratitude, in return for which their (conditional) political support was being solicited.⁹⁶ This is not

⁹⁶ There is no reason, it should be added, to negate the authentic and complex identifications which underlie loyalty, especially among the older generation of workers: "Institutions such as the plan, the Party and medals certainly had their downside: workers often complain of the divisiveness of the old system. But at the same time they miss the

to say that workers' actions do not affect the political landscape and Ashwin too would probably refrain from seeing mere passivity in the "patience" of Russian workers.⁹⁷ What one does get from her work is the understanding that, unless some actual autonomy is achieved in the political representation of ordinary citizens, any challenge to authoritarian forms of politics will be extremely difficult to bring about. As long as administrations, of enterprises or beyond, can count on unions and other bodies as support, rather than as partners for negotiation, political representation will remain essentially determined by the ability of managers to satisfy needs and manage popular discontent in the same move.

This is vividly shown in an example from the site of Ashwin's research, where the local union joined forces with the administration to hold meetings during shifts, instead of gathering their constituency at shop level. This allows letting workers know what is being prepared for them, while giving them a semblance of participation, after which they could no more claim not to have been consulted, should the outcome dissatisfy them. If, instead, collectives were invited to gather as shops, which have a life of their own, workers might turn out better prepared for the event and make the implementation of already decided steps much more difficult. This collusion of the union at all levels has left the mineworkers, in the example, without illusions about their mutual relation, while at the same time it becomes apparent that, were it to change its stance and put itself at the centre of conflict, the union would lose its ability to work for the good of the enterprise (by containing conflict), without necessarily gaining anything in the bargain (Ashwin 1999 : 115; 116; 118).⁹⁸ To quote the author:

"The increasing tension within Russian enterprises does not exert pressure on the shop trade union committees to change, because workers do not address their concerns to these bodies [...] were an explosion of worker activism to occur at the mine it would leave the shop trade union committees untouched on the side-lines." (Ashwin 1999 : 119).

What the ethnography shows, in the light of Christensen's essay, is that existing conflicts were being fought, but at other levels (cf. Christensen 1995). However mutually contradicting the interests of workers, managers and regional government may have been (Christensen 1995 : 219-220), Christensen leaves no doubt that their opposition to president El'cin at the height of the constitutional crisis in 1993 and thereafter resulted from the same dissatisfaction which already had driven the mineworkers in particular into opposing the Communist government in 1989 and 1991, at which point the strike committees had even called for voting against the conservation of Soviet Russia at the national referendum (sic), behind which they perceived an attempt to delay the autonomy of mines, expected to bring economic improvements to them (Christensen 1995 : 216).⁹⁹ Christensen's merit is to contribute to his reader's understanding of the broader context, within which relations between unions, directors and ordinary workers evolved. Notwithstanding the tremendous shocks that were experienced, one can here easily relate to Ashwin's later publication

sense of common endeavour and belonging that was fostered in the past." (Ashwin 1999 : 171).

97 The full title of her monograph being "Russian Workers: The Anatomy of Patience".

98 It must be emphasised how difficult the union's situation really is; its officers, like the rest of the workers, want to see the mine preserved at any cost and it is in this light that their efforts must be understood: "Although in casual conversation identification with the labour collective as a whole does not arouse anything like [...] passion [...], 'our mine' does, as argued above, have a special place in their hearts. Managers appeal to this reserve of latent loyalty on a frequent basis. The example of the shift meetings on the eve of the Miners' Day celebrations in 1996 was discussed in the previous chapter. [...] The hostility between the trade union president and the mine director did not prevent them from working together in an effort to contain conflict at the mine." (Ashwin 1999 : 138).

99 It is difficult to determine which term should be used for the communist equivalent to the Russian Empire proper, the SSSR (Sojuz Socialističeskich Sovetskich Respublik). Since the continuity of its imperial character should be somehow reflected in the name, while reference to its political model is also necessary, I call it "Communist" or "Soviet Russia", instead of the more common, but vacuous "Soviet Union".

(Ashwin 2006) in that certain defining features of social relations appear to have outlived the so-called transition period very well. The search for salvation described by Christensen and the longing for a good paternalist in Ashwin's ethnography (Ashwin 1999) look very familiar to me, after having drawn my own preliminary conclusions from the analysis of data produced in 2015.

An attentive reading of Ashwin's ethnography of Siberian working-class life allows to value better some of the findings of my own enquiry in the region. So, for instance, some of the statements of the retired miner Nikolaj Nikolaevič perfectly confirm the conclusions Ashwin has drawn before me, thus validating her representation of the workings of power in the Russian industrial context:

“anyone with something to offer or with the right connections can become part of the blat system. Most people can participate in the system to at least some extent through their family and friends, but blat is in general a hierarchical system in which position and proximity to desirable resources are all.” (Ashwin 1999 : 126).

The observation, albeit subtle and unemotional, in my interview partner's elaboration is that the director general in the local association of mines, Evgenij Ivanovič, who tried to help in applying for a car, “lived better”. This is so, one may assume, because he was a “blatnoj” – a man disposing of *blat*.

In another instance, Nikolaj Nikolaevič reveals that he found the offer to join the Communist Party unattractive and rejected it, which I assume would not have done him much good, had he not reached the peak of his public involvement approximately at the time of *Perestrojka*. Party membership of good labourers was important to the authorities:

“In the Soviet enterprise, Party members [...] did not have to demonstrate a high level of political consciousness [...]. Instead, Party membership was a way of co-opting energetic, respected or charismatic members of the workforce and ensuring that their leadership qualities were exercised in favour of the authorities. [...] the Party sought to recruit good workers: it was considered important for the Party's authority that they were members.” (Ashwin 1999 : 131).

And Nikolaj Nikolaevič makes the laconic observation that this earned him anger from “the boss”. Fortunately, except for not receiving some medals, he apparently did not experience significant disadvantage from his decision.

The supremely insightful character of Ashwin's work, I hope, is well rendered here, so it should be possible to outline what her thesis' contributions are. Hierarchies could be formal, like that created by the Communist party-state, or informal, though no less visible to insiders, such as that of *blat*. They permeated relations at mines (and enterprises in general) in a way that was characteristic of the Soviet system. When *Perestrojka* unleashed a struggle among the communist elite for the ways in which expected modernisation should be administered, this fatally affected the administration of the entire economy. One aspect, which might therefore be further researched, both by ethnographers and through archival research, is that of the emergence of successful paternalists, such as Governor Tuleev in Kemerovo, and the problem of why they precisely succeeded, as opposed to failed public figures. More important insight might be gained from enquiring how well currently the economic and political managers of industrial hotspots are able to satisfy their constituencies' expectations. This should be complemented by questions evolving around the possibility of emerging autonomous political organisation among ordinary citizens¹⁰⁰, constituting a challenge for the inherently authoritarian, even if benevolent, post-socialist paternalists. The study

100 These as opposed to business communities, bureaucrats and like minorities.

of labour relations could additionally include the question, what has become of alienated collectivism, how it has been adapted and whether this constitutes a useful concept for the present day, under conditions where informal institutions still appear to play a determining role in the world of labour.

Using the regional context as a way to approach post-socialist questions

Economic sociology, which Urban (2013) understands her field to be, likely does not concern itself with questions of institutional change in the same, broad way as does ethnography. Occupational relations and the organisation of sectors of the economy would appear, by definition, the specific fields of its interest, but with regard to the urban-industrial milieu and possible research on it, the findings of Urban may contribute some enhancing ideas for the design of empirical enquiry. Without relying on the cumbersome notion of a mechanism of institutional transformation, with its possibly (in my view) contradictory teleological and methodological significations, I may still find that Urban (2013) has confirmed and complemented other authors' findings.

Urban's conclusions confirm that for collective agreements to be effective as means of formal and institutionalised regulation, workers and their representatives would need to increase their activism. Certainly, the existence of already institutionalised informal practices of relating to each other between regional authorities and employers, as well as between employers and workers (Urban 2013 : 325), does not facilitate this. It nonetheless appears as a desirable component for securing the future of an economy with high added-value-production, based on highly qualified labour. Urban's therefore confirm the findings of Ashwin (1999) in that post-socialist workers overwhelmingly appear as passive or at least unwilling to face employers collectively, as a way to replace existing informal relations:

“Meanwhile, the local institutional model of labour market regulation and labour rights defense, having proven its effectiveness, in particular in times of crisis, evidences the incomplete character of institutional transformations in the sphere of work and occupation. Informal agreements, informal means for the defense of employees' rights essentially constrain the activism of enterprises' employees for autonomous defense of their interests and rights within the frame of formal collective relations. This way, the conditions for unlawful labour practices and the policies of enterprises' spendings reduction at the expense of investments into people are upheld.” (Urban 2013 : 325).¹⁰¹

Put in other words, businesses are considered to be failing to invest in human capital (Urban 2013 : 323).

Urban's preoccupation is very much with the kind of social partnership currently characterising the Kuzneck Basin. From my own understanding, resulting from fieldwork in the region, I derive the view that some (visible) formal institutions appear to be functioning, although as a matter of fact this might be contingent on the existence of other, informal (and less visible) institutions, which however provide the safety, gratitude, collegiality and, above all perhaps, loyalty on which the former's success rests. This is broadly supported by Urban's findings, it seems.

101 “Вместе с тем, локальная институциональная модель регулирования рынка труда и защиты прав работников, доказав свою эффективность, особенно в периоды кризисов, свидетельствует о незавершённости институциональных преобразований в сфере труда и занятости. Неформальные соглашения, неформальные способы защиты прав работников по существу сдерживают развитие активности работников предприятий на самостоятельную защиту собственных интересов и прав в рамках формальных договорных отношений. Тем самым сохраняются условия неправовых трудовых практик и политики снижения затрат предприятий за счёт вложений в человека.”

Although her focus is specifically on the organisation of economic processes, she also finds these to depend, as one has seen, on the implementation of informal agreements. The public orientation towards progresses achieved in the past, evident in the Miner's Day celebration and during festivities prior to it, make me think that a very specific kind of political arrangement has been found in this particular region, which might not be reproducible elsewhere. To quote Urban again:

“The regulation of labour relations [at the beginning of the 2000s] moved towards collective agreement relations, on the principles of social partnership. [...] The institutionalisation of unlawful labour practices does not accord with the necessities of modernisation and innovative development, as such practices limit investments into people and [thereby] constrain the development of human capital.” (Urban 2013 : 323).¹⁰²

One idea, in short, which I keep from my engagement with the thoughts in Urban's work, is that “Kuzbass-politics”, if one may call it so, has produced an ambiguous outcome: in the present constellation, the social contract which allows not only for festivities in honour of workers of outstanding merit, but also provides the population at large with a degree of safety, as I have argued, implies an institutional arrangement essentially going against the idea of social partnership. Here, besides some explicit, formalised (collective) agreements, one is faced with political authorities safeguarding certain standards in economic rights for workers – a paternalism widely supported in the region, but leaving little in the way of perspectives for future adaptations. One may ask what would be done if, for example, the federal centre were to reduce transfers to the region, without in turn lowering taxation? It is difficult to see why employers would then continue even investments sufficient to keep production capacities at current levels, if more duties were imposed on them by the regional government. And the orientation towards new fields of productive activity, perhaps by new enterprises, outside of established corporations, still appears a remote perspective. This finding, at least, is Urban's, who warns against conserving this state of affairs and suggests orchestrated institutional change as the desirable way ahead. Future enquiries into labour relations, social and economic dynamics and the corresponding institutional developments should take account of the idea and try to sketch evolving options for a solution to the ambiguous status quo.¹⁰³ At least, it seems to me, research would have to concern itself with how decision makers, as well as other citizens at various stages of career and life, perceive the threat of a possible impasse and whether solutions are being suggested, or even tried; specific attention might also go to the attitude of authorities towards such suggestions. Whatever their approach, ethnographers and other students of the matter alike will in any case have to, in my view, explicitly address the cultural and economic implications of the “mono-productive” (in Urban's terms) regional setting and to elucidate what developments may, aside of the apparent stagnation, indicate a challenge to the contradictory co-existence of formal and informal practices.

“Ruling class” and visions for transformation?

Kotkin's monograph on Magnitogorsk during *Perestrojka* (Kotkin 1991) remains relevant to my

102 “Регулирование трудовых отношений переместилось в область коллективно-договорных отношений на принципах социального партнёрства. [...] Институционализация неправовых трудовых практик не соответствует требованиям модернизации и инновационного развития, так как подобные практики ограничивают инвестиции в человека и сдерживают развитие человеческого капитала.”

103 Additionally, it should be stressed that students of the urban-industrial milieu might want to study explicitly, whether a change of mentality can be distinguished and defined, as well as the “new subjects” who, in Urban's assumption (Urban 2013), would be driving it (s. above in the summary). Also of interest is the question of whether employers, or maybe the broader public, start to accord workers' interests and rights more respect and whether workers themselves show inclination to increase their involvement in bargaining processes.

purpose, twenty seven years after the latter ended, because of the fundamentally similar fate between this town's history and that of the Kuzneck Basin. Located in peripheries of the Russian Empire and (in the former's case) only marginally integrated into the national economy, those localities, parts of earlier, now defunct administrative entities, were to play an immense role in the communist design for modernisation. As in the Kuzneck case, in Magnitogorsk too mining (of iron ore, this time) was to deliver the necessary material base for building a large steel industry. The coordinated character of construction on both sites, between the late 20s and the late 30s, soon drew attention from outside Russia. For instance, a German scholar published a study on the complex which was then termed the "Ural-Kusnezsk-Kombinat" (UKK), meaning the combined industries of both locations, as early as 1938 (mentioned above, s. Chapter III). The author, Michael Rosenberg, has displayed remarkable engagement with the matter, by trying to give an overview of the project from its origins to the (then) present state of construction (Rosenberg 1938).¹⁰⁴ In other words: one complex project, stretching over, connecting and interrelating several regions, can therefore be said to have created the urban areas in question. To integrate Kotkin's findings (Kotkin 1991) regarding one of them – Magnitogorsk – would therefore seem straightforwardly justified.

In Rosenberg's representation, work on the construction of the production sites was bound to bring about a situation, in which the UKK would form one massive region, whose productive excess could only be tolerable to the economy as a whole if two conditions were fulfilled: a significant resettlement would have to bring into the region more consumers for the industry's and the agriculture's goods, their transportation over large distances otherwise posing most severe problems with regard to unaffordable railway fares; and there would have to be and remain, in the foreseeable future, ongoing trade with those products in neighbouring parts of the world, if Russia were to be able to make use of expectable overproduction (Rosenberg 1938 : 233-237).¹⁰⁵ It turns out, in the account of Kotkin on the political struggle engulfing Magnitogorsk as early as 1987, that the question of economic viability of the enormous industrial capacities in question continued to plague economic planning (Kotkin 1991). To understand why the efforts to create it were undertaken at all and what allowed to sustain them over one generation, that author, unlike the economist Rosenberg, offers his reader an interpretation involving more the nature of communist rule (it must be remembered, however, that Kotkin's conclusions were elaborated at a distance of five decades from the events).

For Kotkin, economic troubles and the political conflict inside the Communist Party appear as two mutually conditioning processes. Crucially, for my purpose, it becomes clear that the behaviour of the communists in the times of *Perestrojka* cannot be explained by mere reference to economic challenges facing Magnitogorsk, or Russia altogether. This is because the communists did not simply constitute a nationally specific form of rational government, but, in their supreme *Nomenklatura* form, the most important element of the social base (Kotkin 1991 : 156). Kotkin is right to emphasise this peculiarity of the Russian polity, because the course of reform and the reasons why it had such an unsettling effect on established (and apparently effective) institutions can hardly be understood in abstraction from it. The fracture opening up within party ranks can certainly be accounted for by reminding ourselves that there were simultaneous attempts to reform itself by the Communist Party, even while it was supposed to guide society in the course of wider,

104 His effort is all the more remarkable, as this author has identified several problematic instances of economic mismanagement and questionable planning, which were later recognised to have a crucial role in undermining the success of the socialist economy (s. below).

105 Troubles with the (political) necessity to export goods from the same areas, which are still remote from Russia's main harbours, and with questionable fares (in fact public transports subventions) for those products continue to be debated in currently:
<http://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/comments/dyavol-v-detalyakh-pochemu-ugolnaya-otrasl-v-rossii-ostalas-bez-obnadezhivayushchikh-perspektiv/>
 (visit on 22nd January 2018)

comprehensive reforms. If this did not trigger the kind of expanding bloodshed, which Stalinist policies had led to, it nevertheless exacerbated internal conflicts over the future direction. This escalation could be observed, during the late 1980s, on the occasion of primary party organisations' conferences (Kotkin 1991 : 104-106), thereby becoming visible for the broader public.

It appears that such a course of events only strengthened the irritation of citizens, who frequently felt irritated by living conditions anyway; this is well illustrated by Kotkin's elaborations in the first (Kotkin 1991 : 27-30) and the fourth chapters (Kotkin 1991 : 127) of his account. Those episodes curiously remind one of the findings in Rosenberg's study, who notes that the fulfillment of the (1933-1937) plan just did not go ahead as expected, in Magnitogorsk particularly, as waste of raw material and capital threatened economic achievements, while human productivity was diminished by miserable living conditions (s. Rosenberg 1938 : 171-176; 238-251). To conclude, the slow pace of heralded improvements and the very real insecurity caused by communist power struggles, one might say, drove the polity to a point where the implementation of a centrally devised agenda became virtually impossible (even if assuming it had ever been; s. Kotkin 1991 : 255).¹⁰⁶

If one turns back to Urban's analysis, one finds that one trouble for the Kuzneck Basin's future development is the close connection of corporations with civil servants, who together constitute the main agents of modernisation within the current, export-oriented economic model in the region (Urban 2013 : 316). It is not hard to see that the author, a Russian scholar herself, can draw on her experience of the *Perestrojka* to conclude that the construction of a new economic model for the future will only produce more precarious results, if forceful action will not be undertaken before unforeseeable pressures precipitate new conflicts among decision-makers. The widely reported anemic development of economic growth in the Russian Federation, in the period beginning in 2013 and drawn out under conditions of low prices for fossil fuels on their world markets, would appear to support Urban's concerns that, once again, Russian technocracy has dug in, in the face of new challenges, thereby rather consolidating the gravity of contradictions it has to face all the same.¹⁰⁷ In Urban's representation, at least, a vision for transformation in the Kuzneck Basin is found to be still largely amiss, if regional authorities' work is taken as the frame indicating such a possibility. Since one must take account of such considerations, which take place at least among the Russian academic community, it would be unwise to reject possible lessons from Kotkin's research, on the grounds that it reflects the irreproducible experience of *Perestrojka* (Kotkin 1991). Quite to the contrary, one can most certainly claim that any future enquiry into labour relations and other institutionalised realities in the urban-industrial milieu ought to devote attention not only to a supposed working-class-culture, as the (relatively) majoritarian one, but also to the specific political relations through which regional government, as well as regions and localities themselves, are constituted as parts of a national context.

If one adopted the notion of a "ruling class", one would still have to be cautious and aware of the problematic implications of the word "rule". The majority of citizens in the regions of Magnitogorsk or Kemerovo certainly do not rule there, while it is debatable whether they are being adequately represented at all, but Kotkin's study has shown that even the mighty Communist Party apparatus did, as much as it created pressure (for modernisation), also constitute a fearsome institutional impediment to reforms it was supposed to carry out, for the sake of strengthening its own system. Paradoxical as it is, this idea is perhaps the most important which one can conserve for future research, together with the proposal to study relations of domination (the politics, in other

106 It goes without saying that by the time Kotkin was first allowed to visit Magnitogorsk, the troubles with its place within the Russian economy and the nefarious consequences prognosticised earlier by Rosenberg had become undeniable: "A bizarre centralized economy [...] required and received their participation." (Kotkin 1991 : 240).

107 It has been a fortuitous, but also a fortunate circumstance that I carried out fieldwork in Kemerovo at the time when the regional electoral campaign went underway. This allowed me, retrospectively thinking, to develop a more acute awareness of the political context, within which the urban-industrial milieu of Kemerovo evolves.

words) as constituting a site, where the adequacy and harmony – and possibly the lack thereof – among existing institutions could ultimately be assessed.¹⁰⁸

In addition to this and in the light of my observations in the Kuzneck Basin, I should highlight that social constraints to reforms are likely to be multiple, rather than confined to the sphere of explicit politics. In 1991, Kotkin found that “perhaps the greatest social constraint on would-be reformers is the status of workers, a group thought to be developing a sharper sense of separate interests and an increased capacity to defend those interests collectively.” (Kotkin 1991 : 257). Although my findings regarding the current situation do not indicate anything remotely reminding of such a capacity and rather accord with the findings of Ashwin (1999), there is a general sense in which consideration of separate interests remains vital. This may also be what motivates research such as that of Urban (2013), as political wrangling over possible paths tends to look as if it were one over principles, while it is all the same structured by the social constraints that fieldwork may be best at uncovering.

This is also the point at which one may return to ideas articulated by Humphrey and Verdery in “Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia.” (s. Hann 2002 a : 12-21). If Hann’s contribution (Hann 2002 b) consists primarily in an overview of literature, together with an emphasis on the importance of both ethnography and historical sensitivity, he is joined in this by Humphrey, who additionally outlines why the category of post-socialism may be kept, in order to maintain a broad field for comparison, while conceding that its students need not cling to it forever. Most importantly, however, she draws up the picture of a two-fold challenge: For one, there emerges the question of how to interpret situations, where “rhetorically anti-rational authoritarianism” (or “irredentism”, in Humphrey’s words) dominates¹⁰⁹; and it becomes apparent that to master this, the collaboration of insiders, contributing Eurasian perspectives, with outsiders would have to gain strength and allow for common progress of interpretation. There is a particular concern here for attention to politics in the former Soviet Russia, of whose authoritarian tendencies the author has first-hand experience, inspiring her to caution against the easy conception of causalities relating to the socialist past:

“What grounds do we have for concluding that these electoral results have anything to do with the previous conduct of politics under socialism? Other explanations might start from an examination of local patronage systems or vote-rigging – we cannot know until we make on-the-spot historically informed studies and also look comparatively at why regions with more or less the same formation of ‘actually existing socialism’ have followed divergent paths in recent years.” (ibid.).

It may be helpful to consider that the Russian economist and political activist Vladislav Inozemcev makes the point that actual elections were much more free of manipulation in late Soviet Russia, than after the communists had ceded power in 1991 (Inozemcev 2017 : 78). His views could by and large be confirmed by Lilija Ševcova (cf. Ševcova 2017), who points to many Russian liberals’ willingness to support President El’cin’s authoritarian policies, before serving in governments and the presidential administration under President Putin. Stephen Kotkin observed a significant degree of very outspoken criticism in Magnitogorsk during the 1989 electoral campaign (Kotkin 1991). There appears to have been a strong oppositional, a politically alert spirit in those years and I am in a position to ask how it has vanished and whether indeed it has done so irretrievably.

In short, whoever wants to study political developments within the former Russian Empire

108 This latter proposal is derived from Kotkin’s work (Kotkin 1991), but it is my own.

109 Humphrey insists that such situations bear a connection to the communist style of government (“sovietism”), but “even so privatisation and the new electoral politics have made a decisive break with the past structures.” (Humphrey 2002 b : 15).

should arm themselves against drawing on supposed “legacies” for explanation and will do much better by involving colleagues from the concerning regions or countries.¹¹⁰

Next to these inspiring remarks (and, regarding authoritarianism, they appear most timely today), one finds exhortations directed at the community of students of post-socialism in Verdery’s contribution (Verdery 2002 : 15-21), which are so manifold that one must try to emphasise but those of importance here and draw on them for the conclusions.

In the first place, Verdery is challenging scholars to integrate two fields of investigation: since the Second and the Third (formerly colonial) Worlds were first conceived of in the context of the Cold War, in opposition to the (Western) First World, post-colonial and post-socialist studies could become integrated with one another. This is a fundamentally new idea one finds here and from it derive numerous proposals for the future of both fields. The overlap, for instance, between the Eastern Bloc of socialism and the former colonised world is significant, with the countries colonised by imperial Russia and others colonised by Western States falling into it. The new and much broader scholarly orientation in question might elaborate analogues in work on post-socialism for moves pioneered in post-colonial studies. This could lead to investigation, ethnographic and other, of how representations and knowledge were used during the Cold War and since the collapse of socialism, on both sides of the divide; one could include processes less driven by ideology, as much as those governed by it.

For instance, Verdery writes, one needs to understand, how reciprocal images of the West were made and propagated, as one agenda of the subaltern school of post-colonial studies would demand. This, again, constitutes an idea with some relevance today, as the second decade of the twenty-first century has witnessed an efflorescence of such images, not least in the former Soviet Russia, where they often seem to stand for conflicting political options. Verdery, in addition, would like to give an “alternative kind of coherence” to the field by adopting the rubric of “practices of domination” (ibid.), where debates used to revolve around the notion of “totalitarianism” and its rejection by many scholars. Considering that in the Kuzneck Basin, paternalist domination is an ongoing practice, however changing in its forms since Soviet Russia’s collapse, it would seem to me that at least something would be gained by the proposed adoption, even more so as it is out of question to discuss the recent past in Siberia, with its waxing and waning of the labour movement, simply in terms of the collapse of totalitarianism. As the referenced researches by Kotkin (1991 & 1997), Ashwin (1999 & 2006) and other authors have convincingly shown, whatever the totalitarian polity may have been, that which collapsed in 1991 was something different.¹¹¹

A third point one can distinguish, but by no means a lesser one, concerns the possibility to view “colonisation” in a diachronical perspective. Under this heading, a number of distinguishable phenomena would find place, such as the transfer of western institutions to formerly colonised countries, together with the similar attempts made during the period of transition in formerly socialist States, which were synchronical to their “colonisation” by the world-economy in the 1990s. Anyone knowing the language, having spent some time in a Russian-speaking environment, must have noticed indeed how “the 90s” are being recalled for various purposes, but generally with a sense of the unease and also hardship experienced by many during that short period in history; research done during that time would, in my view, tend to confirm the traumatic character of the processes.¹¹² Having noted this, there additionally stands the interesting idea that precisely the fact

110 During fieldwork, I have therefore been fortunate to find myself surrounded or being invited by local intellectuals and scholars, which certainly helped me in engaging with matters much in the way suggested by Humphrey, as I may claim with hindsight (cf. Humphrey 2002 b).

111 Kotkin’s concept of a social base created by Stalinism (s. above), whose culmination was visible in the rule and fate of the *Nomenklatura*, is much to the point here.

112 This means the contributions of Humphrey (2002), Burawoy et al. (1993), Burawoy et al. (1999), Burawoy et al. (2000 a & b), Hann (2002 a), to name but a few.

that socialist societies were not accessible for capital accumulation, generally speaking, meant that the crisis of the 70s in the western world might not have arisen during that time, had the concerning populations been in a position to purchase western goods (Verdery 2002 : 19). “Flexible specialisation” in the Western sphere of influence, as the proposed solution to that crisis, could partially be accounted for as a result of the Second World’s relatively self-sufficient character. One could therefore, in Verdery’s reasoning, speak of flexible specialisation as an outgrowth of the Cold War, which appears as one further reason to emphasise why the integration of post-colonial studies with post-socialist studies into a new field might yield substantial gains.

The new frame of reference proposed by Verdery brings along a list of subsequent proposals, firstly by offering a new mandate for historical anthropology; secondly, by demanding multidisciplinary cooperation on the topic of the Cold War by scholars from basically all countries in the world; and thirdly, by compelling (Western) scholars to let their work be informed by critiques of socialism from within socialist societies (and not only those coming from prominent intellectuals).¹¹³

One can take from Humphrey’s and Verdery’s (s. Hann 2002 a : 12-21) considerations several thoughts: for instance the one that post-socialism, as a category, makes sense as far as it allows the researcher to apprehend the reality of countries which have experienced socialism as a political model.¹¹⁴ I also keep in mind that the best safeguard against overhasty conclusions, referring to socialism as a handy explanation for all sorts of phenomena, consists in research sensitive to the help and corrections which local scholars can provide. Going beyond this, one can imagine that the best possible way for mobilising such socio-cultural resource lies in expanding the field one is dealing with. By inviting specialists from diverse disciplinary and geographic backgrounds, effectively perhaps integrating so far separate fields of enquiry, one might be able to achieve the historical depth, which engagement with the Cold War demands, and, by the same token, overcome possible limitations resulting from one’s (assumed) experience as “outsiders” to the former Second and Third Worlds. The addition of Don Kalb’s sobering summary of the many transitions’ outcomes (Kalb 2002 : 317-329) should allow me to elaborate on the ideas presented in the anthology and lead me to further conclusions as to possible starting points for future research, as well as regarding the relevance of studying the Kuzneck Basin as a particular urban-industrial setting.

With his conclusion that research must, under post-socialist conditions (that is, following transition), increasingly turn to the mobilisations and responses produced by the diversity of policies followed in different countries, the focus of Kalb lies firmly on what area studies (and socio-cultural anthropology generally) might do, with regard to rectifying inappropriate and misleading ideas, which would have dominated the post-socialist transition. He appears to attribute the failure of what he terms “portable civil society” to the fact that the idea of a civil society, so prominent at the downfall of communist regimes, was essentially one that privileged the propertied – and therefore supposedly economically independent – bourgeoisie, because of the Enlightenment connotations of the term of civil society (Kalb 2002 : 318). If the idea meant that this class plays an enlightened cultural and moral role, the reality of transformation under post-socialist conditions essentially meant to privilege the young and well-educated, as well as existing elites in general, over nearly everybody else. The astounding rise in social inequality, from this perspective, is just complementary to the ideological legacy of the moment. Elites on the spot, not least the *Intelligencija*, could place hopes into the accompanying narrative of globalism, which Kalb defines as “monetarism writ large”, but the whole move has had a disempowering effect on the majority,

113 Unfortunately, works that would put into practice, be it even partially, what has been sketched by Verdery have not yet come to my attention.

114 This, I must hope, will allow me to leave aside the question of whether it is still adequate today to speak of post-socialism, as a field of enquiry.

not least on the masses of agricultural and industrial workers, who found their lives unsettled by the new policies. This echoes very well the observations made by Ashwin (1999), which end in pointing to the fragmentation of the Russian working class. This, as well as the following points Kalb makes (Kalb 2002 : 319-329), also makes perfect sense if one tries to think of a connection, which there might be, between the cult of working class heroes of old (institutional gratitude) and the paternalist cult of the governor, as an institutionalisation of loyalty, in Kemerovo's context.

Where Kalb suggests that area studies must "turn its ethnographic eye to the interaction of local and global histories", he essentially opens the way for his own, constructive reply to Verdery's ambitious ideas, in the introduction to the same volume (Verdery 2002), about future fields of research (Kalb 2002 : 322-324). He goes on to claim that what anthropologists of postsocialism do is to take the widely used notion of path-dependency a crucial step further, in comparison with most other scholars, and invokes insights of Burawoy (1999) to make his point: where macro-institutions fail, the prior conditions, expectations and earlier divisions of assets will instead shape the improvisations which people make to survive, or even gain advantage. This move is interesting, as it allows this author to call for an extension of methodology to take account of the dimension of space, as well as of time, to develop even more ambitious programmes of research, inside a framework aimed at commanding public attention.¹¹⁵ This is where he joins Verdery (Verdery 2002), not only because of the ambitious scope of the scholarship he is calling for, but because Kalb too sees the Cold War's lasting impact in the globalist institutional "re-engineering", which he characterises as an (neoliberal, rather than merely anticommunist) outgrowth of the Cold War (Kalb 2002 : 322-324). Should one agree with this vision, taking into account that the overriding concern would be to draw public interest to new insights, which proponents of globalism would fail to provide?

For one, Kalb's argumentation shows that a dynamic understanding of path-dependence should take the factor of space seriously. I am convinced, as he is, that institution-building is essential and cannot be achieved through the kind of quick fixes which were to some degree adopted in all formerly socialist countries of Eastern and Central Europe; this is precisely because a general prescription for managing transition fails to take into account the substantially differing circumstances in those countries. Anyone with a sense of the vastness of Siberia's spaces would furthermore agree that, for example in Kemerovo, there were and remain spatial impediments to high-technology-driven dynamism, even when capital flows are largely freed.¹¹⁶ And the insight is not new: in his conclusion, Rosenberg, without obvious doctrinaire views either in favour of markets, or of planning, simply points to the fact that constructing large industries in remote areas is a serious gamble, because there would necessarily be huge costs involved in transporting expectable production to the central areas of settlement in the country; this is because, in the absence of a sufficiently large population in Western Siberia itself, the new factories would simply find themselves without demand to make use of their excess productive capacities on a regional base (Rosenberg 1938).¹¹⁷ One can therefore largely agree with Kalb, as concerning his suggestions for the vision and the method of area-specific research (Kalb 2002). It is high time that "space" be accorded central importance in all attempts for understanding not only post-socialist contexts, but

115 Kalb states unambiguously the political implications of such a framework: "This requires 'encompassing' comparison [...] within one broad programme of multiple cases, not just within postsocialism but world-wide: reflecting, subverting and, perhaps, reshaping the globalist programme." (Kalb 2002 : 324).

116 Kalb thankfully points to the fact that, were Russia immediately bordering on Germany, the monopolistic practices characteristic of its economy would have been subverted by highly competitive German exports, which would have created, at the very least, entirely different conditions for institutional change and innovation (Kalb 2002 : 328).

117 The communist governments appear to have settled for a mixed strategy, intensifying the settlement of Siberia somewhat, but as one knows with hindsight, the outcome of its industrialisation policy, pursued over decades of the twentieth century, has yielded substantially ambiguous results.

the conflicting worlds left behind by the history of the Cold War in general; this sounds even more true as it appears to become fashionable to speak of a return of geopolitics. The ambition to understand how human collectivities respond to the challenges posed by the troubling legacy of transition, how and why they mobilise for one conceivable path of development, rather than another, would be well served by following such a course. This curiously still sounds true today, over a decade after the publication of the anthology examined here. It remains a question then, whether in the meantime Kalb's and Verdery's ideas (cf. Hann 2002 a) have seen at least partial execution. Although I cannot answer it at this stage of my studies, I shall elaborate on some problematic implications I am led to think of, when considering the time which has passed since the book was first published, in particular with regard to public interest, which so preoccupies Kalb. I should add that today I feel safe in my choice of the Kuzneck Basin as a region to be studied, because of the very obvious ways in which it exhibits features of post-socialist revivalism, together with a form of transitional authoritarianism¹¹⁸, which fortunately does not render fieldwork particularly difficult, as far as I could judge.

The analysis of the role of petty trade in the money economy in relation to barter, as well as to flows of goods across regions and national borders by Humphrey (2002 a) may give a valuable illustration of the ongoing relevance which even ethnographic insights from one specific period – the Russian transition from planned to market economy, in this case – can acquire over time.

In this case, the author's conclusion that an environment more favourable to trade might also counteract regionalising tendencies inside the Russian Federation (Humphrey 2002 a : 98) does not appear very relevant for the present moment, at first sight. If however one thinks of the importance that local regimes have acquired for consolidating the political situation overall (such as is the case with the Kuzneck Basin and its "social partnership", s. above), then it is clear that Humphrey's concern with emerging regional definitions of identity and the impact of distribution (of money and of goods more generally) on these appears much less specific of the post-socialist period (the 1990s) she analyses. Regional identity, as an institution in its own right, is both a relic of the Soviet past, in which the borders of present federal units were mostly drawn (Humphrey 2002 a : 97), and a product of recent developments, in which the quick evolution of markets and property relations has induced power-holders and citizens alike to redefine relations between centre and periphery. If one is to analyse matters of regional identity, one can neither avoid the latter, geographic dimension: where in Russia a region is located and how this relates it to regional centres of power and to the national political structure; nor can one entirely forget about the role associated with this in the administrative arrangement devised by the communists, without seriously distorting the analysis.

What is remarkable about the anthology, in which Humphrey first published the essay, is maybe the prominence of Russian topics: three out of nine contributions, dealing with different topics, are devoted to these. One cannot do otherwise but notice the particular interest, which Burawoy shows in the afterword for the Russian case of transition. This may not surprise anyone, taking into account his own research (cf. Burawoy 1997, Burawoy et al. 2000 a & b, Burawoy et al. 1993), with a focus on Russia, but important questions are asked here:

“Can Russia be put under the same microscope as its erstwhile satellites?
Do the heavy weight of Russia's past – its imperial role, its repeated
failure to catch up with the West, and the longevity of its communist
period – and its enormous size put it in a category of its own when we
consider transitions beyond socialism?” (Burawoy 1999 : 304).

118 This is in no way to say that one must expect authoritarian paternalism to meet its end in the near future, but rather that the specific form it has taken can only be accounted for as a result of transition, under conditions when late socialism left only severely constricted space of manoeuvre, both for formal institution-building and economic diversification in the region.

The author is not uncritical of this way of posing questions, contextualising it as resulting from ongoing comparison with a “Western norm” (ibid.), but it is still important that he formulates them at all. My own modest exercise at fieldwork has led me to similar reflections, even prior to departure to Siberia. Trying to discover facts about institutions characteristic of the urban-industrial milieu in Russia certainly resulted from an existing curiosity for the country’s history, but this kind of object, taken as such, could as well have been studied in any other country with a history of socialist modernisation. It may therefore well be the fact of Russia’s long period of socialism (“communism” here taken to mean “communist rule”), out of which a post-factual justification of my decision arises. After all, it is there that the project to build socialism arose as a specific political type, with characteristic forms of organising its power, and from Russia it spread abroad.

At the end of the contribution (Burawoy 1999 : 309-310), one finds the idea, which echoes Verdery’s (Verdery 2002), that intellectuals from Eastern Europe would start to engage in theorising, “to supplant or reconfigure Western imports”, turning to something more akin to post-colonial theory. In the Russian Federation of the present day, if I trust my insignificant observations, there is plenty of skepticism regarding markets and democracy. A forceful turn to thinking in alternatives for teleological ideas of Western origin, in Russian-speaking academia under post-socialist conditions, has somehow not yet come to my attention, but it would be most welcome. Also inspired by Verdery’s work appears to be the insight that intellectuals may, at certain times, find themselves in a position to go as far as forging a new political hegemony (Burawoy 1999 : 306).¹¹⁹ Whether and how this process could take place in accordance with a conscious strategy for institutional change is a fascinating question and, as I would like to suggest, one of high relevance for the near future of Russia. In the field of economic decisions, the failures of neoliberal “shock therapy” in this regard have led economists critical of such policies, as Burawoy notes, to “propose constructing the new within the framework of the old” (Burawoy 1999 : 303) and diverging outcomes of transition in different countries, having seen different policies implemented, appear to support this view. These conclusions, as to the possible roles of intellectuals and, by implication, of academic disciplines, constitute perhaps the most interesting I have reached for those socio-cultural anthropologists, who consider complementing their scholarship with political engagement.

Institutions are also an issue for Burawoy, as an aspect of his elaboration on numerous authors’ theories. It is difficult to imagine how one might assimilate the insights presented here, before the background of my yet quite incomplete understanding of institutional conditions in the Kuzneck Basin. One should note that the author means the anthology to pursue an

“understanding of the diversity and complexity of socialism toward
‘postsocialist pathways’ that *r e o r d e r , r e c o n s t i t u t e ,*
r e c o n f i g u r e and *r e c o m b i n e* [my emphasis]
institutions – such as property relations – inherited from the past.”
(Burawoy 1999 : 308).

Further research, in the Kuzneck Basin as well as elsewhere, might well attempt to clarify, whereto the “pathways” have led in the meantime and how those four operations have been involved in this. This would also, in my view, mean to join Kalb’s (s. above) call for tracking what he calls “phase two” of post-socialism with the propositions laid out by Burawoy, in the awareness that, since their publications, a lapse of time has passed, whose developments one now can track retrospectively.

119 This ought to be related to Steven Sampson’s critical thoughts on the determining role of (party) intellectuals in creating socialist regimes (Sampson 1991 : 18), to which I return below. It is enough to say, at this point, that they remind me of the fact that involvement by intellectuals would not necessarily have salutary effects.

Chapter V

The relevance of post-socialist scholarship

1. Theory and empiricism, general views and regional specificity

In what follows, I shall first explore how different studies have helped me in clarifying my understanding of key concepts and their uses; I shall try to summarise findings in fieldwork and the answer drawn from them for the first research question, before sketching more broadly the geographical and historical context, within which I have operated; a second part of this chapter will contain an answer to the second question that will hopefully reflect all the valuable elements outlined in Chapter IV; finally, an analysis of possible deficits in research will be reflected upon and proposals of my own shall be articulated, in view of furthering discussion of possible new enquiries.

A number of concepts, to which I briefly return here, have caught my attention and have therefore been expounded in Chapter II. Transition from one form of industrial society to another, but not from one social reality to another one, as reflected on by Hann (1994 b), has loomed large over nearly everything on the preceding pages. Institutional change and “postsocialism” have been dealt with at some length and it is obvious that none of my findings here could be understood without reference to both these concepts. Last, but not least, leisure and work as well as identity have, in one way or another, oriented my interest ever since the beginning of that journey to a fieldwork trip. The following sub-section is therefore devoted to how theoretical engagement with these concepts has been informed by readings.

Considerations when comparing socialist society and its successive post-socialist reality on the basis of the concept of transition.

More considerable effort than I originally intended has been expanded to a careful reading of other authors’ contributions, partly because the present work has evolved from an empirical design, thought to aim only at developing new hypotheses, to one concerned with theoretical improvement, as I began to understand that the kind of data produced did not support a strictly empirical work.

If I had to state any fundamental conviction, then it would be that political performance structures all practice of remembering that takes place, thereby also guiding institutionalisation as a process which demands continuity in time. There remains the fact – an anomaly perhaps – that neither fieldwork, nor my subsequent reflexion have taken place within a specific theoretical framework. Some early hypotheses, as far as I did explicitly formulate them, also used to function as guiding ideas during the period of fieldwork, rather than being subjected to test. It is therefore important to see that, rather than creating the empirical base for theoretical innovation, such fieldwork has led me to being enabled to read post-socialist literature and ethnography, as well as contributions on Soviet Russia more attentively. These readings have put me into a position, from which it became possible to provisionally define a number of concepts, increased attention to which has in its turn informed my reading of the same theses for a second, third (etc.) times. The selection of works – those which have attracted most attention – has put before me the challenge to reconceptualise the notions, by which I want to express an understanding of this thesis’ object. My use of “transition”, “post-socialism” and other, less contested ones has reflected as much advances in understanding, as it has been a tool in the process of analysis, proceeding from conceptualisation to ethnographic reflexion to theoretical synthesis to further insight.

It was an insight, albeit in an awkward sense, that empirical material collected in 2015 would not suffice to write a thesis in the way originally intended. Although a significant number of memory notes of differing length had been produced, a shallow character of analysis would result from the sometimes loose connections between them and the lack of a clear path in the process of making my way through the local environment. Whether or not opportunities have been lost, the fact remains that work which would tend towards critical engagement with research on the recent past now seemed a more realistic, more fruitful approach. The benefits from reading literature concerning socialism, post-socialism and the transition also became increasingly evident to me. I have come to a constructive critical reading of post-socialist socio-cultural anthropology by altering the present design to the point where it could be seen as a selective review of earlier research. Certainly, some authors' works have received more attention than other's, but it seems that those have been of particular relevance, which reflected a particular point on the time scale, namely that where socialism ceased being a reality, for which the conference review of Sampson (1991) would appear to be an example. In any case, this is the context one needs to relate to with the concept of transition.

To start with a conceptual overview, I may state the following: the much-criticised, loathed and famed concept of "transition" might be the container into which "institutional change" would fit as well. I distinguish between them, because the encompassing process of transition may indeed have been transitory, but to which degree specific institutions have changed would still, indeed should be, an object of debate. To put it in other words: Who and what has transited, supposedly from a socialist society without markets to a liberal society with a market economy? And when? This last question directly leads me to the point that transition as such defies definition: For it remains patently unclear, according to which standards one should mark its beginning and its end. No generally accepted definition has been found so far; just like the "building of socialism" was envisaged as a process lasting decades, so the making of its successor now looks like being a long one (one might consider here Alëna Ledeneva's work on the new Russian society; Ledeneva 1998 & 2013).¹²⁰ This requires to ask oneself, in how far one may still claim the notion of post-socialism for the kind of social realities one appears to be dealing with, a quarter of a century after the communists officially ceded power in most countries in Europe. The point is to ask, whether any society, even a reputedly transitional one, can ever be thought to be one "after" the event. The fact is that, of course, every past is bound to be made of projections, instead of facts, strictly speaking. To consider Russia after 1991, for instance, in terms of its supposed "post-soviet" or "post-socialist" character is to ascribe to an existing society a bond with previous realities, this in itself an object for academic scrutiny and questioning, even more so as with the passing of time that very bond would grow thinner, as people may forget about their past. However selective and ill-defined my understanding of such bonds may be, one can nevertheless concede the point that a significant sense of living after may probably have been alive at any given time in the first decades after socialism's collapse in the late eighties (Hann 1994 b : 229). If people refer to their past, or what they believe it to have been, they are certainly doing so with regard to the present. However, their individual

120 It is unfortunate, one might argue, that Stephen Kotkin's ethnographic historiography of the construction of Magnitogorsk ("Magnetic Mountain") was published in the year following the publication of Hann's article *"After Communism: reflections on East European anthropology and the «transition»"* (Hann 1994 b). The latter author makes an important observation on possible correspondance between the diachronical and ideologically opposed "transitions": "there is also much to be learned from looking back over the work carried out before the recent debacle as well as at current work on «the transition». This concept should be approached with particular suspicion by anthropologists. The intuitive defence for its use is presumably that some discontinuities are so profound and dramatic that we are justified in our indulging in our natural propensity to classify and periodise our history. For example, in South Africa the transition from Apartheid towards democratic politics would seem to have this stark quality. But so too, to many observers, did the alleged transition to socialism in many parts of the world in the recent past; and yet scholars now disagree, often quite radically, as to how these transitions proceeded, and whether indeed there always was a transition at all." (Hann 1994 b : 231).

practice of memory, as far as it is enacted in public, adopts thereby collective character, resonates with others' views and informs those of people too young to remember, in any case constituting a social fact of memory, a collective life "afterwards". I have attempted to highlight and illustrate this particular aspect of production and eventually of reproduction of a "post" reality with regard to institutions and identity in Chapter III.

To speak of post-socialism requires to make up one's mind on socialism as such. That is the reference point to which one is sent back when interrogating research dealing with the notion of transition. Research on socialism has obviously taken place both during its existence and after the demise of the late 1980s, but the latter created the opportunity for thinking of it in terms of a historical reality, rather than an ongoing process. This in turn means that research on socialism has to take place within post-socialist circumstances (for an elaboration on that new state of affairs, s. Sampson 1991 : 18-19), so that effectively all available statements of the present on socialist realities in fact originate in post-socialism. To research the former, one has to deal with the latter, underscoring just how the two – the study of socialism and of post-socialism – should go together. What Sampson identifies as the right moment for an anthropology of socialism is coincidentally also the beginning of post-socialist studies. But what does his phrase mean? What does it require to produce an anthropology of socialism; or, for that matter, a political science of socialism, or media studies of socialism?¹²¹ Does "anthropology" make sense at all? This is the question which might even be asked with respect to the meta-discipline of social sciences ("sociology"), if considered in the way it would be within the disciplinary division of labour envisaged by Durkheim (cf. Chevron 2001).¹²²

As seen by Hann (Hann 2002 b), ethnography and an engagement with history ought to be indispensable characteristics of research on post-socialism. This comes very close to what Sampson promotes as early as 1991, by cautioning scholars to critically examine the notions of "traditional legacies" and "survivals", both with regard to pre-socialist and socialist traditions.¹²³ In this precise understanding, engagement with history means to not simply inscribe into the past the causes of more recent and ongoing events, but to query why certain traditional elements of either period come to acquire renewed importance, to be resuscitated, or just go on having an effect, while others might not. The comparative study of socialism, called for by Sampson, is portrayed by him as entailing "the study of concrete socialist states as those whose political order is (was) founded upon a moral vision", including particular attention being given to the political professionals ("ideological specialists") who brought those regimes into being and sustained them (Sampson 1991 : 18). Needless to say that such an ambitious programme has immediate relevance for the understanding of that social order which has come into being more recently, though there has been considerable dispute over how orderly indeed it has so far been, not least with regard to the Russian case.

To transit from one state into another likely implies to give up some certainties. This, among

121 One could further diversify the list, as the given examples refer only to some classical disciplines located in the university of Vienna faculty of social sciences.

122 The nineteenth century concept of society as something bounded (within the state), yet structured from within, is in my view being called into question from so many sides by the social sciences, which tend to emphasize the interactions of localised conditions and categories with global, although not nearly homogenising, forces. Labeling the resultant complexes "a society" because of political-administrative borders, which not always are drawn to be pertinent to existing economic and other relations, seems a dubious starting point for the study of both the fundamental relations ("of production"; between local and larger communities) and corresponding institutions of management of human needs.

123 This is because he (Sampson 1991 : 19) is specifically suspicious of explanations which would rely on the strict opposition of "change" to "continuity" for the characterisation of present phenomena. I can concur that such a binary mode of explanation risks simplifying causation down to meaninglessness. Either concept may serve to characterise most, if not all, of present phenomena.

other findings, has been one of the conclusions drawn by Pahl and Thompson (Pahl & Thompson 1994 : 157-158), pertaining to the methodologies of ethnographers in former Soviet Russia. As the geopolitical boundaries have lost their sharpness, researchers there have shown increasing interest in methods devised by Western researchers; this window for cooperation seems to have been precluded however, at least for the authors, by a British sovietologists' establishment, eager to keep a tight lid on the field which it considered its turf. Whether the situation has changed much or not for Britain's scholars, one may accept Pahl's and Thompson's point that it is frequently easier for outsiders to a field to recognise how its practices may well influence the research carried out in it, such as that the intransparency characteristic of Soviet decision-making appeared to characterise British research funding in the end. Even as dramatic changes occur in the political structure, one can ascertain that at less visible levels, significant "traditions", which one may as well call institutional practices, are likely to have persisted long after transition was formally engaged in (and so even beyond the borders of the concerned countries). If "sovietologists" have found it difficult to relinquish some of the certainty, by which they controlled access to their field, how much resistance might one expect from power-holders at all levels of Russian society to see their institutional access, power and prestige shattered by the introduction of presumably individualistic and in any case less centralistic norms of economy and social organisation?

Another aspect of concern is how the institutional changes inherent in the transition, just like the identity conflicts created in the social engineering of industrial society, much as by its later demise, have had the opposite effect of invalidating previous perceptions of the self, such as those held by workers (s. Chapters III and IV on Ashwin's study of coal miners' lives in a mining village of the Kuzneck Basin). The latter, as they lived under the tutelage and protection of the communist party, were at the same time made into a surface for projection by the whole of socialist society, while being largely deprived of the effective means of control which would have validated the title, by which they were being referred to as the "leading class". Much of their frustration and shock might be explained, therefore, by juxtaposing a loss of social welfare (of safety), with the absence of further exaltation in society, a shift no less abrupt, it seems, than the one experienced during the equally traumatic forced industrialisation campaign of the inter-war period. It is in a technocratic study of the 30s (Rosenberg 1938) that one reads a vivid and well-argued critique of the attempt, by the communists, to transform Russia's economy with great haste. This fascinating analysis, if set next to the findings of more recent ethnographies in post-socialist Russia, gives a sense of the drama with which not only working class identities were shaped, valued, then reshaped by state-induced policies within in a matter of three generations' time. This is the point where one may ask oneself, where one is left regarding the concepts of identity (including class, as well as other expressions), or leisure and work.

Because there could not be "identity", if not as "identities", there remains significant unclarity as to the correct use of the concept. Class, professional, ethnic, gender identities, as well as moral identification (with certain communities and corresponding values) all must share space within the minds of the same individuals. There is no empirical evidence, certainly not in my data, to suggest that either and which of these has priority over the others. Rather than being carved in stone, identity therefore needs to be understood as it is enacted in human interaction. Consequently, any claimed identity is subject to the power of institutions, as they regulate interaction; and when institutions change, so does the performance of identity – its tangible expression in collective action. It comes as no surprise then that, due to its plural and malleable nature, identity remained elusive throughout the enquiry, both during fieldwork and during the subsequent analysis of it. It is not hard to see, why the theses presented and spoken on here hardly ever make use of anything resembling the concept, Ashwin's (1999) ethnography being the most visible exception.

But how does Sampson's programmatic text (Sampson 1991) help me here and how can one draw on it? It has played a valuable part, giving me incitement and argument for approaching the

literature written since and for situating myself. Its main purpose besides the reviewing – to draw from the ASA conference in 1991 inspiration for future research on socialism – was important and necessary, particularly in the light of his final statement, quoted at the beginning of his article by Hann (1994 b).¹²⁴ The question for me to ask is, in how far the task should be defined differently today, in comparison with the moment of socialism's demise in 1991. The idea that such research on socialism necessarily takes place under post-socialism is relevant here, implying, as it does, that whatever scholars find out about the former has to be discovered through engagement with (and w i t h i n) the latter. An ideal illustration of this is offered by Sampson, where he points to the distracting effect of a focus on conflict¹²⁵ (Sampson 1991 : 19), the identities adduced in the course of it leading the scholar to non-explanatory theories that overlook the fact that “[much] of the hierarchical us/them distinction has been transformed into straightforward ethnic/national/regional tensions”, which supports the view that “[we] must explain why certain traditions are reproduced in new conditions” (ibid.). One might therefore ask whether the ethnic and ethno-religious identities frequently put forward even today as explanations should be called traditional, to begin with. Does the fact that they have been reproduced, while other distinctions and former hierarchies have not, leave them the same as they used to be, or should one not rather consider them to be as much an outcome of “change”, as of “continuity”? In the present, scholars may have the disadvantage to find themselves more distant from socialism, but they can now see better how the diverse courses of events in different polities justify the caution with which one may desire to handle any notion of identity, as outlined above. Identifications which are proclaimed today will have to be related to the present situations of those who do so – the corollary of the well-known fact that any understanding of the past is by necessity determined by one's interest in the present. Post-socialist trajectories should reasonably be related to the experience of socialism, but they do of course constitute historical events in their own right, rather than a pastiche of modern history, as simplistic theories of causation might have it. In this view, Sampson's vision of an anthropology of socialism still has something to tell its reader.

The curious fact that leisure and work seemed much more relevant to me than to most researchers, whose works I have come to deal with, might be explained by the fact that economic relations (meaning, among other things, the economy of time) do not occupy centre stage in publications concerned with the transformation of politics, first and foremost; furthermore, where economic issues play a role, the economic activity of work is naturally given priority over practices which serve no immediate economic interest, so interest for the two would still remain asymmetrical. It may be entirely my mistake not to have found specialised works on the topic. As mentioned, Ashwin (2006) deals with secondary employment and Kotkin (1991) with the black market and entertainment (cinema, theatre etc.), but as an organising distinction, the relation of work to leisure has apparently not received much attention in post-socialism, although this, I must emphasise, remains a tentative conclusion. Furthermore, the theses referred to earlier are most frequently concerned with work in its economic significance, rather than as a space that contributes to institutionalisation (and identity construction in the process). An exception in this regard is, in a limited sense, constituted by Urban (2013), but the theoretical interest there has been quite different from that of authors who explored mainly the spaces of autonomous action, which opened up as a result of institutional insecurity, rather than cases of successful institutionalisation.

Fieldwork results

In this sub-section, it will be appropriate to recapitulate the fieldwork I have carried out and to

124 “We first begin to understand how social structures really work only after they have fallen apart. This may be the perfect moment to begin an anthropology of socialism.” (Sampson 1991 : 19)

125 “Our focus on conflict hides us from yet other enigmas.” (ibid.)

succinctly state the answer I have found for the first of two questions, asking about the kind of institutional changes affecting the definition of identity in the urban-industrial milieu of the Kuzneck Basin (s. above, Chapters I and III). For better understanding, I will then carry on with an elaboration on the characteristics of the region called the Kuzneck Basin.

During my stay in the field, in the towns of Novokuzneck, Kemerovo (and Tomsk), lasting from July, through August, and to the beginning of September 2015, there was the opportunity to interact with a number of different agencies and individuals, some of which accepted my presence and allowed for a degree of insight into their routines. It was not before late during my stay in Kemerovo that I came to understand the possible implications of a continued effort at network-building; material gathered in this way remained shallow and eclectic and, although something could be learnt from it, I came to understand that a second tour in the field would have been necessary for seriously studying specific institutions or institutional situations.

My definition of institutions, those which lie on the surface of public life, as well as those which, less visible, support the formers' operation, as a result remains sketchy. I could have returned to Novokuzneck, where the environment had been quite supportive to me, but from my notes nevertheless emerge certain reasonably well founded ideas. In particular, the fact of festivities, organised on behalf of mineworkers at the end of August, and the parallel campaigning in favour of governor Tuleev's reelection afforded me with an opportunity to relate my various and somewhat unsystematic observations to the political framework, within which the post-socialist institutions of urban-industrial life in the Kuzneck Basin are comprised. Notwithstanding the difficulties experienced with the regional administration and the resulting modification of the fieldwork design, the interactions afforded by the "Miners' Day" celebration allowed me vivid impressions of worker identities being displayed. Interaction with scholars of Kemerovo and Tomsk Universities additionally informed reflection of observations in the field and guided my decisions. Scholars' moral and intellectual (and technical) assistance in fact made my work possible, in the first place, shaping my sensibility for the peculiar industrial cultural environment, characteristic as it is of Kemerovo's location within the wider economy of post-socialist Russia. The fact that the enquiry was effectively kept out of professional education bodies and out of contact with their staffs, although regrettable, may in this sense have been alleviated by the rather facilitating circumstances I encountered otherwise.

Obviously, I did not observe institutional changes as they were happening; at least I did not do so in the conscious and reflexive way usually implied in the notion of observation. Nor was it possible to determine all of the details, or precise time-scales of the institutional changes that had occurred in recent decades. It was very clear, though, that significant institutional change was a recent experience and, if currently occurring less dramatically, seemed likely to resume in the near future. Change affecting the (most visible and formalised) "superficial" institutions – government, representation and education being cases in point – has itself not been visible, as the paternalism I have encountered in relevant ethnographic literature is still very present; but anyway, I have found that it would rather affect those through changes in the partly informal practices of what I choose to term "supporting" institutions. These might be tentatively accounted for as loyalty (to leaders); as collegiality (with individuals, the fate and/or profession of whom one shares); as gratitude (to the elderly and, more generally, the constructors of the present socio-economic structures); and as safety, provided as much through the discursive and symbolic practices of communities and the regional "social contract", as through the securing of economic rights through production and distribution. The identities of residents, I think, result, in their present shape, from the peculiar regional arrangement, which has allowed for a degree of perceived stability and social peace, after the turmoil of transitional years. If I cannot suggestively define a distinct "Kuzbass workers' identity", I can nevertheless propose that present identities, largely independently of profession,

gender, or status, have been shaped, as much as by production and “class”¹²⁶ in the conventional sense, by the defense of past achievements and the concern about damage, which the crisis-prone character of the total, global economy might yet visit upon this export-oriented region. Whether loyalty will survive the highly personalised image of the governor, once an ageing Aman Tuleev will have left the stage; whether collegiality will be able to survive, be it as an ideal, under conditions of the present labour market; whether gratitude towards the larger community may be hollowed out by generational change and the problematic credibility of its political instrumentalisation; whether safety can still be provided, if coal exports cannot be upheld in the future; all of these unclarities indicate that the change affecting institutions, if difficult to detect right now, is quietly gnawing on their substance and might, at an unexpected moment, through unforeseeable external shocks, force radical alteration on all of them and, by extension, the identifications of residents of the Kuzneck Basin. The vanished labour movement, of which one is told in accounts of mineworkers’ strikes, much like the subsequent arrangement with authoritarian paternalism, do not inspire confidence that a renewed, drawn-out crisis of the national economy would be tackled energetically; the defensive spirit permeating political performances during the time of my stay rather does not bode well for the faculty to see opportunities in challenges likely held in store by future evolution for this region, as much as for any other.

The institutional changes, in short, affecting identities in the region should be seen as elusive, quiet alterations that superficially do not challenge the status quo. Yet, in the stagnant environment of present Russian society, the absence of structural innovations also in economic production, which in many respects has far-reaching political implications (cf. Urban 2013), gives rise to the threat of tearing apart the institutional environment’s tissue and to project society into further disintegration and anomy, a concern I believe to be similar to those that scholars have voiced for a number of years (cf. Ashwin 1999).

The Kuzneck Basin as an environment for fieldwork – a case for further enquiry

Portraying the Kuzneck Basin (the environment of my fieldwork), I am in a sense contextualising the spatial context of this enquiry in a more comprehensive way. Because of the limited nature of the present thesis, the history and the geographical history in particular of the southern Siberian lands appear to have played but a minute role in my engagement with the topic. This section should therefore serve also to illustrate that an understanding of the Basin’s rise, indeed its becoming as a distinct entity of the Russian space, has been becoming more important for my thinking as I studied it. If upon arriving to Siberia my knowledge of its integration into the Russian Empire, the communist state, as well as into their respective industrial designs and broader policies was still vague, I have since been able to determine the spatial and temporal elements that have shaped the region and thereby its population.

A distinction may be in place here: As one goes through the literature, one realises that there are two overlapping terms for the description of the space I am here concerned with: There is the notion of Western Siberia, which Russians would use to speak of lands west of the Enisej river, in administrative terms; there also exists the notion of Southern Siberia, to which the Kuzneck Basin equally belongs, meaning lands characterised by the steppe, which stretches from Central Asia to the western confines of the former empire. To keep it short, I mostly choose here to speak of Southern Siberia and emphasise the latter aspect, which is decisive for the region’s relatively mild climate and furthermore for its accessibility to colonisation from the seventeenth century on, but I also emphasise one need not accord this greater significance. For various reasons, the diverse parts

126 Generally speaking, I mean here the role a person occupies in the productive processes of its society, in terms of their capabilities (education, knowledge, training) and effective contribution, as much as in terms of property (of productive capital or other goods).

of Siberia have been the object of colonialising policies throughout the twentieth century, which is why the one I concern myself with is not exceptionally interesting in this sense. What is important is the relatively early age at which Russians, first pushing eastwards along a northern route, towards the Pacific, soon found it necessary to put themselves in firm possession of the lands in the South, stretching as far as the Altaj mountain range. This move, determined by security considerations, first of all, has permitted the early exploration and economic valuation of the region, much before communist modernisation projects were even sketched. This fact has in turn had decisive influence for the relation of the Kuzneck Basin, its society and economy, to the state at large. Turning to geographic accounts from the late communist period, such as the one by Gary Hausladen (1987), one finds there that the Kuzneck Basin's pioneering role had by then created problematic conditions, from which one can trace a continuity right up to the present day. His article as well as an earlier one, both published in the journal "Soviet Geography", allow for insights rarely offered by the strictly historical literature, glimpses at a certain moment in Siberia's development, as far as they could be uncovered with the Soviet data then published.

Hausladen's analysis, although characterised by the author merely as "an initial step", provides the reader indeed with some indication that problems resulting from the Kuzneck Basin's specialisation are by no means entirely new. They were certainly known to the foreign geographers, who tried to understand the direction and magnitude of urban growth in Siberia, at a time when the Cold War was only beginning to thaw. "Integrated development" is here contrasted with resource exploitation in "company towns" (Hausladen 1987 : 72), in a way that already seems familiar to me, if applied to specific cases.¹²⁷ Although my own perceptions could not support the classification of Novokuzneck, with its artistic and educational facilities, as a mere company town, the article highlights accurately the fundamental similarity, as well as increasing difference between this regional centre and the actual territorial capital, Kemerovo (Hausladen 1987 : 83). Both of them indeed used to be coal-dependent agglomerations, which grew strongly due to the processing industries located there. Kemerovo's specialisation in the (petro-) chemical industry is pointed out as a factor of sustained growth (ibid.). If this contrasts with the lasting specialisation of Novokuzneck in metallurgy, steel first of all, another difference receives much more attention here: Kemerovo's growth is found to have been facilitated by its nature as an administrative centre, where "service establishments, higher educational and research institutes, and government and economic institutions have been concentrated, adding to [its] attractiveness for future investment and development" (Hausladen 1987 : 81-82). It therefore turns out that the regional capital, in my view, somehow fits into both categories, as defined by Hausladen: There appears to be integrated development, resulting from the integration into one urban web of the abovenamed facilities and their functions, while, on the other hand, Kemerovo still bears the marks of a company town, whose growth additionally profits from technology transfer in the sphere of petrochemical industries.¹²⁸ Kemerovo, therefore, appears to have served both functions continuously ever since (Hausladen 1987 : 72).

Yet notwithstanding the apparent success, there is also, in Hausladen's text, mention of a feature which at first sight does not fit well with the growth of the Kuzneck Basin's major towns. Kemerovo Territory, as a whole, is found to be afflicted by "adverse effects of a stagnant coal

127 On the distinction between the two the author writes that "If, in fact, there is a threshold for self-contained growth and development, then at least certain regions of Siberia may have crossed it and are already on the road to integrated development. These areas will be less affected by the cyclical nature of resource development. In other words, at a certain point [...], the necessary auxiliary functions and infrastructure exist for the city that, at one time, was a one-industry town [or mono-productive, as Urban (2013) would have it] to develop on its own. Once this level is attained, the city is able to survive even after the resource is exhausted. The question, in the case of Siberia, is at what point does this occur, if it occurs at all, and what does it suggest about the future course of Siberian development." (Hausladen 1987 : 74).

128 Hausladen addresses the advances made through joint ventures with Japanese firms, taking place after 1959.

industry”, because of which it was one out of only two regions of Siberia, there having been eighteen, whose urban population increased by less than 50 percent, between 1959 and 1985 (Hausladen 1987 : 79-81). This is clearly reminiscent of the scene I found myself confronted with, almost three decades later, in which stagnation could perhaps be said to have moved on from the economy and the demography to colonise other areas of cultural reality.¹²⁹

An intermediate observation might be that, in the long term, the settling of Siberia would tend to create opposite trends between administrative centres and other towns, in their respective regions; certainly, this is the case in the Kuzneck Basin, where Novokuzneck also has a history as an imperial administrative centre, long before the communist modernisation programme was launched.

It is noticeable that the american term of the “frontier” is found to have been used rather frequently, with regard to the region here studied. It is used by David Collins, as well as by David Shearer in their respective contributions to an anthology edited by Eva-Maria Stolberg (2005). It is also employed in a citation in Leslie Dienes’ article about the development of Siberia’s regions (Dienes 1982 : 237), where it is connected to the richness in natural resources characteristic of many of them. Among these works, Collins’ stands out for elaborating on the early history of Siberian colonisation and the reasons driving Russia’s expansion there.

The Kuzneck fortress is now a historical monument, but once formed part of the defence of the Russian Empire’s Central Asian border with China, which was not difficult to recognise for me during my visit, even though I lacked profound knowledge of local history. What Collins shows is the (pre-) history of that border, which only came into existence over a century after Russia had taken possession of the lands north of the Altaj, or rather had tried to do so. It was only the total Chinese victory over the last of the Mongol States in 1756 which suddenly changed the situation along the Altaj mountain range, making the latter the new border between the two empires (Collins 2005 : 39), which Russia rushed to fortify further during that same period. It’s eastern end was the fortification of Kuzneck, after the construction of which, in 1618, the town today known as Novokuzneck had been slowly growing (Collins 2005 : 32-33). The development leading to this had been a slow one generally, as the author makes clear: “Seventeenth century Russian advances were tentative [...] hampered much by recruitment and supply difficulties and by crises in European Russia.” (Collins 2005 : 30). The construction of a fortification on the river Tom’, which subsequently led to the development of the town of Tomsk, was a first and important step undertaken on the orders of the then Russian Monarch, Tsar Boris, in 1604. This certainly did facilitate Russia’s acquisition of the Altaj lands, but it would succeed only in the course of several generations. Following efforts of colonisation were directed towards the South, where nomadic populations represented an almost constant threat to Western Siberia and were to be brought into submission. Besides this, Collins also advances economic reasons – the desire to extract tribute and the possibility of shorter trade routes to Mongolia and China – as the main motivations for that policy (ibid.). Once acquisition and economic exploration had taken place, the region, of which the Kuzneck Basin is but a part, became a supplier of a multitude of precious minerals, including silver for Russia’s Mint. This lasted only until serf emancipation in the 1860s, as the industrial labour force in the mines and factories consisted largely of serfs. Significant investments were already being made, with competent engineers having been sent there, introducing modern technologies for

129 A tricky theoretical question here remains whether stagnation, in just any sphere, should be interpreted as resulting from decades-long communist rule, or whether it ought to be understood as a result of its crisis and collapse. The question is far from banal, since in countries such as Vietnam and China, formal communist rule as such recently did not inhibit impressive growth rates over more than two decades, yet it is clear that fundamental differences in certain parameters, such as regarding wealth in natural resources, or population density, are so great as to make any comparison with Russia look questionable, if at all possible. It seems to me, it should be said, that any interpretation operating within the opposition of liberal to “illiberal”, or socialist, orders would be therefore inappropriate to improve an understanding of either country’s fate.

mining and metal-processing (Collins 2005 : 41-42). These facts suggest that indeed, even before the coking plant in Kemerovo was built and the steelworks erected in Kuzneck, the steppes upstream from Tomsk and on the Ob´ had, rather than a wilderness, or an utter periphery, been the locus of industrial processing under a kind of capitalist regime, with the state acting as the main investor and client simultaneously. How far this goes to explain the course of settling and urbanisation in the twentieth century remains unclear, but it is evident that by the time the communist party found itself firmly in power, the new rulers did not have to invent plans for industrialising Siberia all on their own. This point also emerges from Rosenberg´s work (Rosenberg 1938), to which I shall return below.

What may be said, following Collins´ account, is that prior to the construction of the Trans-Siberian railway, to which the settlement of Kemerovo, located between Kuzneck and Tomsk and on the same river, came to be connected on a sideline, an autonomous administration existed in Kuzneck (cf. Collins 2005). This must have been the case since at least the 1640s, after it having been subordinated to Tomsk in its early years. The pacification of the Northern Altaj having been entrusted to a distinct administrative entity, it is not difficult to see how subsequently the idea could emerge to build there new industrial facilities, after the discovery of rich hard-coal deposits. The decision to do so, finally made at the beginning of the twentieth century, only needed to be taken up by the communist government, following the First World War and the Civil War. This meant, among other things, that Siberia would receive its own “city of steel” (to use a term coined by Kotkin for the case of Magnitogorsk; Kotkin 1991 & 1997) and partly serve as a source of investment capital goods, rather than only for raw materials. The fact that Kuzneck, with its new factories and steelworks and its long-lasting administrative role, was not made the capital of the territorial entity then being carved out for the Kuzneck Basin, can therefore plausibly be accounted for by the successful construction of the coking plant of Kemerovo and the already mentioned early railway connection there (s. Chapter III).¹³⁰

The somewhat exciting “frontier” character ascribed to the region of the Kuzneck Basin in pre-socialist times should not distract attention from the fact that already by the late years of the communist era, industry there had, if not turned outdated, ceased to occupy a leading position in the modernisation of the Russian economy. This may partly be due to the fact that coal, iron and steel were assigned low prices in the Soviet price system (Dienes 1982 : 231). This must have contributed to the financial dependence on government subsidies, which Ashwin (1999) finds to be perhaps the most severe problem of coal mines during the transition years. It may also explain why Dienes finds that greater labour input is required for the iron and steel, the nonferrous metals industry, as well as the chemicals and petrochemicals in Siberia, as compared to the European provinces (Dienes 1982 : 227), although he assumes their output to be “biased toward less finely processed products”. This would seem to make sense: With the crucial raw material (hard coal) kept at a low price, at least in Siberia, managements could allow themselves a labour-intensive mode of operation, regardless of what was being done elsewhere, rather than seeking to make expensive investments. Such a policy came at a price, to be sure: The central authorities came to regard modernisation of that existing infrastructure as being of secondary importance to the national economy. As Dienes finds:

“Similarly, the reconstruction of the old Kuznetsk iron and steel plant, ” a

130 For my representation of the matter, I base myself on casual remarks made to me by inhabitants of the Kuzneck Basin. It is interesting to note how the case of Kuzneck parallels that of Tomsk, if for different reasons. Tomsk having been a Western Siberian centre for many decades and even endowed with a university, the fact that it did not become the major agglomeration also of the twentieth century, rather than Novosibirsk, can be accounted for by the history of the railway. More precisely, it is commonly related that local elites did not grasp the significance of the railway´s construction and therefore at first encouraged it to bypass Tomsk, which is why the mainline indeed runs to the South of it, near Kemerovo.

keystone to the industrialisation of Siberia”, is said to be obstructed by the Ministry of Iron and Steel while the huge, high-priority Tomsk petrochemical plant, badly behind schedule, “has just become another construction site”. The appropriate ministries are said to lack interest in these projects and resist being “pushed” to Siberia.” (Dienes 1982 : 234).¹³¹

A few lines below, this author asserts what would be expected, namely that capital productivity in the Siberian economy was being depressed by the combination of its industrial mix with the Soviet practice of underpricing basic materials. Even more interesting, he finds that the one-sided structure of Siberian industry had tended to contribute to its labour force’s instability, meaning the high mobility of workers, as suitable employment for women would have been limited (ibid.). In other words: couples would frequently find life at many a Siberian production site unattractive and would try to move on.

What I find to be particularly intriguing is the correspondance one sees between the findings of Dienes (1982) and those of Rosenberg (1938), made nearly half a century earlier. Certainly, the perspectives are different, as the former author is, among other things, trying to assess the outcome of a process the latter could only analyse in its beginnings: This is why in Dienes’ account, Siberia appears rather afflicted than blessed by its natural wealth, because its energy and mineral riches allowed for “an unsophisticated least-production-cost measure” to be used to reinforce a location principle, according to which it was sought to “[bring] industry closer to sources of raw material” (Dienes 1982 : 233). One should note the implications of Russian policies highlighted by both authors, regardless of the timespan lying between their publications, for the described policy has had foreseeable consequences: While the Kuzneck Basin has become a centre of coal extraction with a superb primary industry, the “processing activities and the industrial market in general remained concentrated in the European USSR” (ibid.). The potential for a course of events leading to such a problematic situation is present in Rosenberg’s critical assessment of industrialisation efforts during the 30s (Rosenberg 1938), as I would like to show. Hence, I shall first look at the structural developments in industry Dienes (1982) identifies as affecting Siberian regions, to further emphasise the lasting impact of regional specialisation.

More than once, Dienes points out the imbalance of freight flows between Siberia and the western parts of Russia, as they tend to go westwards, a situation obviously not improved by further resource exploration. Freight densities on some of the railway lines in West Siberia and Kazakhstan are found to be several times the national average. The intensification at the origin of this situation would be traceable to the period of accelerated industrialisation, apparently without improvement since: “Since the days of Ural-Kuznetsk Combine of the 1930s, the rail lines leading to the Urals from the East have been the most overworked in the USSR.” (Dienes 1982 : 235). And although the author mentions the “feverish pace” at which pipelines were being constructed (Dienes 1982 : 234) and the fact that increment in fuel transport could be handled thanks to those, one is left in no doubt that there was little reason to hope for an alleviation of the strain put on the railways. It is noteworthy that Dienes here refers to the infrastructural concept studied by Rosenberg (known to him in German as “Ural-Kusnezker-Kombinat”; Rosenberg 1938), although he does not cite that

131 Such an attitude on the part of the authorities can probably be explained by the developmental strategy employed by them, which Dienes concludes is a “northern and Pacific strategy” (Dienes 1982 : 238-239) and which finds expression in the fact that the lion’s share of the subsidy to Siberia – eighty-four percent in 1975 – went to regions east of the Kuzneck Basin and the Enisej river, with the Far East heavily privileged. These details, one might claim, have no bearing on an ethnographic research on life in the urban-industrial areas of Siberia. Critics of including such representations into my account will however have to concede that fieldnotes of interaction with workers are unlikely to hold the kind of insight gained here, which exposes the historical becoming of the present-day Kuzneck Basin as a social environment in the context of the transformation of Russia’s extractive industries as a whole.

author, thereby tracing the fate of Russia's industrial progress to its very foundations, as they were laid in the early socialist period.

Not unlike Rosenberg, Dienes also draws a connection in his conclusion between the tremendous efforts expanded in the Far East, in particular, and the military interest of Russia's leadership in that region (Dienes 1982 : 238). In much the same way, Rosenberg finds that the leadership of the 30s devised plans for the industrialisation of West Siberia in view of the strategic priorities for controlling Russia's access to the Pacific Ocean (Rosenberg 1938 : 249). This underlines once more that the industries located in the western part of Siberia cannot be understood, without considering the function they were supposed to fulfill at the national level.

What seems most interesting to me is that Dienes finds impediments to the intended development not unlike those which had been causing problems during modernisation efforts half a century earlier: The already mentioned instability or high mobility of the labour force is seen as a critical problem: "For nonagricultural employment this has resulted in [...] poor acquisition of experience and skill" (Dienes 1982 : 238), while increases in labour productivity did not progress as fast as did the capitalisation of the labour force in Siberia, particularly when compared to the European provinces. Since, as one has seen, the larger part of that capitalisation concerned territories further East, while some important investments, such as the modernisation of the first steel plant, were being withheld from Kuzneck and other regions, one could however assume that the latter disproportion did not affect the older industrial centres to the same degree as Siberia as a whole.

It transpires that the new, Pacific priorities foreseeable for Rosenberg (1938) and which had become a reality by the time of the publication of Dienes' article left Soviet Russia with provinces specialised in specific industrial fields, such as coal-processing, which increasingly suffered from under-investment and under-pricing of their output (Dienes 1982). A lack of new production goods and of economic diversification therefore set the Kuzneck Basin and a few other regions on a path that would ultimately lead them towards the kind of short-lived radicalisation breaking out in 1989. The fact that the communist leadership prioritised ever new strategic projects over the needs of populations in already settled regions was not new, but the facts of diminished repression and passing of generations, which certainly were under way by the 1980s, contribute significantly to understanding the turbulences which ultimately put an end to *Perestrojka* policies and to communist rule itself. In Rosenberg's far-sighted analysis, none of this is yet imaginable: "An attitude [more respectful of the human factor] is simply not possible for the Bol'sheviki, because it would mean that the Soviet power would give up itself – a development, of which there is no indication." (Rosenberg 1938 : 251).¹³² The author hereby indicates that under present (1938) conditions, these offered no perspective of relaxation with regard to social control and oppression, which he views, at the same time, as the crucial factor working against the acquisition of technological skill. I end this section by showing how, in the view of a foreign scholar mildly sympathetic to Russia and its people, the very nature of communist rule worked to exacerbate existing tensions within its policies. It should be added that, contrary to what one might expect, there is, in Rosenberg's text, no indication whatsoever of a national-socialist or racist, social-darwinian thought, which the following citations should serve to further illustrate. He identifies the over-estimation of technology and the under-estimation of time as key to the threat of failure in economic modernisation; the reality of hardship is here viewed as more than just an indicator of political deficits (Rosenberg 1938 : 250):

"What threatens construction most of all, is exceedingly poor skill. The power of technology was overestimated and the moment of time, the crux of all economic problems was misconceived. We do not believe the

132 "Eine derartige Einstellung ist für die Bolschewiken einfach nicht möglich, weil sie bedeuten würde, daß die Sowjetmacht sich selbst aufgeben wolle – eine Entwicklung, für die keine Anzeichen sichtbar sind."

Russian population to be fundamentally unsuitable for the tasks of industrialisation. The Russian worker is definitely educable. But the time-span necessary for education cannot be simply ‘run through’, as has been proudly declared; and most of all one must see in the worker the *h u m a n b e i n g* [emphasis in the original text], must let him, as the head of *Gosplan* [the state planning agency] has once elaborated, ‘somehow live, somehow dress and eat something during industrialisation’; we add to this: meet that person with due attention.”¹³³

The point is that the appropriation of skill requires a certain amount of time, because the interaction of humans with technology is a difficult process, which could not be arbitrarily accelerated without adverse effects on the process’ outcomes. If communist leaders and ideologues of the past may have brushed aside such claims, one can now with hindsight recognise their lasting relevance for the predicaments of Russia’s industrial giants.

133 “Was den Aufbau vor allem gefährdet ist das überaus mangelhafte Können. Man hat die Macht der Technik überschätzt und das Moment der Zeit, die crux aller wirtschaftlichen Probleme verkannt. Wir glauben nicht, daß die russische Bevölkerung für Aufgaben der Industrialisierung grundsätzlich nicht geeignet sei. Entschieden ist russische Arbeiter erziehbar. Aber man kann nicht die zur Erziehung notwendige Entwicklungsspanne ‘durchlaufen’, wie das stolz verkündet wurde; und vor allem muß man in dem Arbeiter zunächst den

M e n s c h e n als solchen sehen, ihn, wie einmal der stellvertretende Präsident des Gosplan ausgeführt hat ‘während der Industrialisierung irgendwie leben lassen, irgendwie sich kleiden lassen und irgendetwas essen lassen’; wir fügen noch hinzu: diesem Menschen eine gebührende Achtung entgegenbringen.”

2. Ideas in the light of fieldwork

The character of institutions, I am convinced to have learned, often has dual implications for the relations involved. Powerful organisations, such as the communist party was, can both have an enabling and an impeding effect on the institution of rule and affect its functionality in contradictory ways, all at one and the same time. This important observation by Stephen Kotkin (1991) can be complemented with the view that the distinction (and the articulations) between formal and informal institutions appears to be of crucial importance in the institutional arrangements of the socialist society of Communist Russia, as well as in its post-socialist successor. This is supported by research as different as that of Sarah Ashwin (2006 & 1999) and Ol'ga Urban (2013).

Formal hierarchies, such as the communist party's, function alongside informal others, like that of *blat*, all the while they condition each other. The communists may be gone, but there remain enterprises, public administrations and affiliated bodies, wherein the same kind of relations may be replicated.¹³⁴ And although Ashwin (1999) has suggested that monetary relations may come to replace the system of *blat*, it is still quite common to hear that individuals have solved their questions *po blatu*. To understand precisely the relation between informal and formal institutions in their local context appears thus more or less a necessity for understanding enabling, as well as impeding effects of organisations and hierarchies on the spot for the policies which are being designed by frequently distant authorities, as well as for the reactions to them by the wider public.¹³⁵

The case of the Kuzneck Basin, as a region with predominant urban-industrial environments and a culture assumably strongly influenced by political paternalism, might be interesting with regard to its ambiguous success: The specific set of informal and formal institutions there appears to guarantee a certain degree of safety, but it does so at the price of officially sanctioned stagnation, or, as Urban (2013) would likely say, by keeping social partnership from evolving, as a result of informal governmental intervention. This means that the region might be an adequate site for observing, whether institutional change for a more formalised, efficient mode of agreement between workers and employers can be achieved in conjunction with administrative contributions, or whether this political arrangement in effect is more impeding than enabling. The question for the Kuzneck Basin, after all, is whether it, as an industrial region, will be able to attract investments in the long term and evolve into an economy going beyond the conservation of inherited Soviet methods, structures and economic functions at the national level, in short: Whether regional industries will be able to develop the production of new goods, with higher added value. It goes without saying that this in itself should not be sufficient to improve the lives of most workers, the way they would see it; but it is difficult to see, where else any dynamism might come from, in particular as coal from inside Siberia would not, in the longer perspective, offer the kind of economic gains which would allow for a sustained flow of investment into the region.

Further research should want to develop and relate to one another the thoughts present in Ashwin's (1999 & 2006) and Urban's (2013) works, to orient them towards future challenges. It should surely be possible, in this region as much as any other, to develop hypotheses regarding the ability of regional and federal authorities to launch successful initiatives in the indicated direction. Above all, it should be possible to test these by assessing how the population, or rather its diverse sections and communities react to and implement the desired policies in praxis. Although these are

134 It should be stressed that the communists did not just constitute the ruling association, but also functioned as the central element of the social base, itself a creation of the communist policy of modernisation. This idea about creation of a social base of its own is one of the most important gained from reading Kotkin (1991).

135 By starting abstraction from an informed view of the local constellation, rather than starting from abstractions, one may be able to reach conclusions regarding governance at the level of the state, as suggested by Kotkin (2009) in his critique of politology's obsession with surveys. Studying the activities and impacts of organisations or hierarchies at a local level seems a possible starting point to proceed in such a way.

rather my own ideas, than those of the authors to whom reference is made, this line of thought is to be continued in the next section of this chapter.

In connection with this, one must take seriously the idea that new subjects (again, to use Urban's terms for groups and forces of political order; cf. Urban 2013) might enter the scene and thus testify to the fact that "change in mentality" is taking place, with citizens becoming more apt at taking an active part in their own representation, thereby slowly relegating alienated collectivism (s. above, Chapter IV), as defined by Ashwin (1999), to the past. This would also mean that one give continued attention to the social constraints to policy, which is another most important idea to keep from Kotkin (1991): what the so-called new subjects do by themselves cannot but affect how fast and in which ways actual institutional changes take place.

Such change is by no means likely to proceed without causing new conflicts. One of the main findings of research by Ashwin (2006), which fieldwork results have tended to confirm, is the ongoing reproduction of the established gender division of duties, with a tendency towards even greater traditionalism, if compared with the situation in late socialism, with regard to the norms of the industrial society (the man as responsible for the main income). Men tend to be at the top of hierarchies, while women, even when highly competent, occupy subordinate positions and may be excluded from certain spheres of activity altogether. Whatever new subjects will come to play a role, their challenge to existing hierarchies will hardly avoid affecting the relations between genders. Within the framework of existing institutions, including bodies of representation, the space for adapting to broader economic conditions and political interventions would remain highly circumscribed. One would not want to underestimate the potential for disruptive effects on that framework, should the challenges by new subjects materialise indeed.

What about other impediments, such as space? This is an element, which I find to have influenced decisively the planning of industrialisation during socialism and because of which one needs to take account of the ways in which it continues to shape specific conditions in different countries, defining regionally relevant circumstances of which much will depend for future attempts at institutional reform, even if those should likely come with less grandiose assumptions about their benefits than was the case with "the transition" from socialism to liberalism.

The conviction that adequate consideration of space will require better understanding, provided by scholars from inside the concerning countries and disposing of an "eurasian" perspectives, which Western Europeans might lack, is another idea which one can take from a reading of Hann's anthology on post-socialism (Hann 2002 a). This idea, developed in the same volume by Don Kalb, as well as by Katherine Verdery and especially by Caroline Humphrey, is complemented by the view that any quick solutions, like those envisaged by Cold War ideologues at the collapse of socialism for the reform of its economies, should, if not discarded outright, be considered with utmost skepticism.

Here, the principal mistake lay not only in a deficit in regional expertise, but in the assumption that the kind of general definitions, like those used by me here, applied to the case of socialism, would allow to establish a general procedure, according to which regions as tremendously different as Burjatija (in Siberia, studied by Humphrey; cf. Humphrey 2002 a) and Moravia could be refashioned to fit themselves into the world market, essentially according to one and the same plan. The problem was not only due to the speed of the proposed movement, but also the fact that "socialism" was seen as being one, which would also allow for handy understandings of the widest range of possible social realities. The idea is therefore that to acknowledge that there could be significantly different socialisms, as outlined by Hann (1994 b), today means to recognise a possibly wide variety of different "democratic" forms of representation and diverging market "economic" arrangements, possibly even within one political frame, such as the Russian Federation. One may furthermore agree with the view that speaking about those present realities as post-

socialism would not appear adequate, if their protagonists rejected the term, which in itself however remains useful, where it allows to better apprehend the present in relation to its socialist past.

Finally, I can accept the view these authors have formulated with regard to expanding the field of enquiry, merging the frames of different studies concerned with consequences of the Cold War, not least because this sort of endeavour might give new legitimacy, besides other benefits, to the study of colonialisms, socialisms, as well as their respective aftermaths. Building a framework anchored in the concept of the Cold War and using this to study the ongoing turbulences within, say, both the former British and Russian empires could still yield results, for instance with regard to decomposing or reshaping national aspirations, growing where political vacuums have appeared.

In any case, the views developed among populations outside of the former imperial centres would receive attention in a way that highlights the common background – the context of their historical experiences. This relates to yet another important suggestion I have come across, namely the question of how images of “the West” were fashioned in the so-called Second and Third Worlds, confronting those representations of itself coming from the First World. This would, in particular with regard to Russian identities of today, allow to interrogate how existing representations of the West have been refashioned to fit with the geopolitical and socio-cultural outcomes of post-socialist transformations, in East or West.

Yet another reason for merging the fields of post-colonial and post-socialist studies may furthermore be found in the approach to colonisation, as the mentioned authors view it. They would seem to welcome comparative approaches, which study the transfer of western institutions to countries of the Third World in comparison with similar processes having taken place in the post-socialist Second World.

These views appear essentially similar to those exhibited by Burawoy and Verdery (1999). There is, to begin with, the understanding that institutions need to be built out of what there is, instead of breaking it down, meaning a principled rejection of globalist plans for and interpretations of transition, one which I can by and large agree with. Furthermore, the assumption that intellectuals have played an important role in reshaping socialism into post-socialism, as others had done, one or two generations earlier, in promoting socialism during the Russian Revolution, serves as a reminder that ideological activity is a dimension of transformations to be studied in its own right. Whether or not intellectuals succeeded in building new hegemonies in post-socialism, once the Cold War had come to an end, there remains here an important indication that what should be studied carefully are perhaps not so much their ideas, as the role they, as producers of ideology, play in promoting or opposing ongoing processes. One might well want to understand, what their contribution is in legitimating current arrangements (the fossil-fuel-financed stability of the Russian Federation comes to mind immediately), as well as in subverting them and offering perhaps alternative views on the future perspectives of their respective countries, now that these have achieved joining the world economy.¹³⁶

136 This of course holds for large states, such as the Russian Federation, as well as for specific regions, such as the Territory of Kemerovo, in as far as they can be said have to have a political life of their own.

3. Questions for the future: Taking stock of potentials for research

With regard to possible shortcomings of earlier research and the conclusions drawn from it by its authors, one ought to be very cautious. A master thesis, being inherently limited in scope, would indeed not seem the best place to dwell on a negative critique of other, accepted research. If I try to point at shortcomings one might have perceived, this is only with the intention of proposing what would seem less a cure and rather suggestions for the formulation of useful questions.

Two instances may in my view be identified, where absence of engagement with certain problems may prove a burden, while reference to Thelen (2011) will be made in the following lines to illustrate the comments. One “absence”, if one may call it so, consists in the disciplinary boundaries to debate, which in my perception have been kept up to some degree, making for little direct discussion between scholars of different disciplines. The other concerns the relatively modest attention devoted to the mutual relation of leisure and work, as already pointed out.

In her critique of post-socialist scholarship, written two decades after the dismantling of the Eastern Bloc, Thelen shows that significant inspiration has been drawn from ideas of neo-institutionalist economics, more particularly from the work of the economist Kornai (Thelen 2011 : 45-48), who described socialist economies as being endowed with institutions which, in his analysis, are found to be deficient. This is probably rightly seen as problematic, as the author points out that, rather than embracing accepted ideas, socio-cultural anthropology has done well by questioning them through comparison of different contexts. To accept an explanation of socialist economies based on the notion that efficient institutions would need to be based on private property and the rational choices of actors is indeed to accept a framework based on assumptions widely contested otherwise (*ibid.*). Attention is also drawn to the fact that the Western scholars who adopted this approach were prone to endorsing path dependency as an explanation for the post-socialist development of the societies they studied (Thelen 2011 : 51). To cut it short, one may state that Thelen’s solution to the problem would mainly consist in suggesting that genuinely anthropological concepts need to be developed. However, the author goes further in identifying what she terms blind spots, in particular regarding socialist and post-socialist work relations, in the works of research she refers to.¹³⁷ Due to the conceptual deficiencies she has identified, the author is able to show that relations at the workplace have not been adequately apprehended, or rather, more to the point, only by conceiving of protagonists as a socialist “other”, whose traditional behaviour would prevent the new institutions of post-socialism from working as intended.

By and large, the critique of post-socialist socio-cultural anthropology proposed by Thelen should be welcome. Although I find it difficult to see, why “new theoretical horizons will emerge only [my emphasis] if we take otherness seriously” (Thelen 2011 : 54), rather than seeing in socialism a variant of modernity, implying perhaps not otherness, but certainly difference, I find that her contribution is helpful in formulating my own. In particular the concept of path-dependency, whether dynamic¹³⁸ or not, has left me wondering whether it would truly help to understand processes of institutional change. For there is a similar problem here to the one raised with regard to Urban’s concept, mentioned above, in chapter IV, of a social mechanism of institutional change (Urban 2013).¹³⁹ Indeed, as far as one could see, it is not clear how dependency should be thought of: Do once established features create a path, with subsequent acquisitions – or should one say: institutional changes – dependent on them, or is a path a product of an endless

137 The reader may note that there is no reference to the research on gender and work (labour) relations done by Ashwin, as well as the team directed by her in Russia (Ashwin 2006).

138 cf. Kalb (2002)

139 For this the questions would be: Do we have before us a model to represent change resulting from purposes inscribed into it by those, who set it into motion? Or is this a model to think of an open-ended process, resulting from interaction of different subjects?

succession of innovations, which get articulated with each other and of which individual behaviour depends in the present moment?

The fact is that debates on socialism and post-socialism have tended to take place within disciplines, rather than involving the direct confrontation of ideas from scholars of various backgrounds. Among the publications presented here, the two anthologies by Burawoy (1999) and Hann (2002 a) illustrate this clearly, with contributions coming (almost) exclusively from ethnographers. Regarding this fact, much the same remark applies as has been made by Sampson, who points out that at the ASA conference he reviews, there was not even a researcher from the immediately relevant discipline of Comparative Communist Studies (Sampson 1991 : 18), although the theme of the conference was nothing else than socialism in its global diversity. Thelen (2011) is not wrong in demanding that “genuinely anthropological” conceptualisation be accorded more importance, but it seems equally recommendable that coming anthologies and even conferences, maybe even research programmes, should include the discussion between scholars from various disciplines, but with overlapping research fields, so that the entry “through the back door” of ideas from economics and of other origins might give way to acknowledged theoretical inspiration and consciously critical engagement. It also appears very difficult to see why the works of Kotkin (1991, 1995, 1997 & 2009) and other historians, to mention something else, apart from economics, would appear less relevant than Verdery’s (Verdery 2002) for understanding how socialism functioned; or how economists, for that matter, could achieve much in explaining the thriving and the decay of regions and countries, if not by paying attention to the insights delivered by geographers, such as those presented above.

Finally, one should want to emphasise that work (or labour) relations under socialism and, consequently, their further evolution, ought to be studied even more in the light of how the practices of work and those of leisure, as well as the corresponding division of time, relate to each other to bring about not only economic results, but also the diversity of cultural goods which goes beyond satisfying the most fundamental needs of clothing and nutrition – the broad wealth of social life. If work/labour relations may be considered to constitute a blind spot, then it seems to me that the relation between leisure and work, in the light of their great importance for all kinds of conceivable career paths in socialism, appears seriously underexposed.¹⁴⁰

There is more however to the vision of Kalb (2002) than an oath of allegiance to neo-institutionalist economics and path-dependency. There is also the idea, equally proposed by Verdery in the same volume, to redefine the fields of research and to broaden thereby the object available to students of post-socialism (Verdery 2002). This, I would argue, is the idea I would lend my support to, notwithstanding the fact that this vision may have yielded modest results so far. In fact, it would seem appropriate to investigate further why this is so. One thought coming to mind is that, for all the urgency accorded by Kalb, for instance, to public interest (Kalb 2002), it now appears pretty obvious that not much has been achieved to that end.¹⁴¹ I would think that “integration” into the EU and global markets, as well as the accompanying “liberalisation” of all areas of socio-cultural interaction, have sustained a dynamic, whereby the pressing questions of the exact content and direction of these particular and other concepts have been sidelined. I think that public representation of related questions is being twisted in ways that allow to set aside the most unpleasant ones, for instance regarding possible undesirable effects of institutional transfer in post-

140 Thelen points to what seems to be essentially the same problem, albeit with a different emphasis: “Unlike in the West and as a result of the association of redistribution with the workplace [...], socialist work relations are frequently characterized by multiplexity and by a large amount of time spent together outside the workplace.” (Thelen 2011 : 52).

141 One should not exclude the possibility that relatively recent studies merging the fields of post-colonialism and post-socialism would have escaped attention, but the reflexion I am trying to expose here is a more sweeping one, less concerned with the sum of scholarly work and more with the “public interest”, invoked as an aim in its own right by some scholars.

colonial and post-socialist contexts.

To me at least, it is not apparent that “civil society” and (economic, political etc.) “freedom”, as key notions in the globalist repertoire, would have been re-evaluated and seen the kind of redefinition that might give public room to the sort of critical thought which scholars referenced to here have been proposing. Altogether, this kind of effort (s. Hann 2002 a : 1-21; 317-329) appears not muted, but diminished by powerful interests ranged against such moves.

The latter is in this view connected with the fact that the potential for heightened public representation of and attention for studies, whether regionally specific or not, does not mainly lie with the scholars engaged in them; much more than this, it is politically directed demand for scholarship which plays the main role, as scholarship itself obviously does not take place on a “market”.¹⁴² One might furthermore consider that a project such as the fusion of the fields of post-colonialism and post-socialism would not be suited to arouse the enthusiasm of those dominant classes (let me call them so, for lack of a better concept) which are in a position to exert influence over party-politics, as well as thereby on the promotion and financing of scholarship, because of the policy priorities this would critically have to involve. All of this would seem to indicate that the ideas advanced by Verdery and by Kalb in the same volume (cf. Hann 2002 a) never commanded the kind of traction which one would deem necessary to achieve their intended effects. It is much plainer to recognise that the social conflicts, found by Sampson (1991) to pervade post-socialist conditions, are to be characterised as outgrowths of the political recompositions taking place, having been made inevitable by the dissolution of the old opposition of “us” and “them” of socialist times. Indeed and much like Hann (1994 b), he clearly does not want to further the perception that the visions of (intellectual) opponents’ of communist rule, or democratic ideologies in general, should be credited with possessing overwhelming transformative power.

Beyond this, I find myself confronted with yet one problematic condition, this time pertaining more specifically to the region which has been at the centre of my attention. Particular confrontation with the disaggregation of the Russian (Communist) Empire and debate of its consequences appear ever more urgently desirable. In the post-socialist literature available to me, there is seldom a hint at possible issues due to those facts. The so far common lexical practices and expressions in this regard would tend to suggest that between (imperial) Russia and Russia (of today), there were little but continuity.¹⁴³ One should, to go yet further than this, realise that the signification of the notion of a “Soviet Union” in the latter’s relation to the Empire is an obstacle to comprehension which should be problematised for the attention of readers newly coming to the field.¹⁴⁴

With regard to the interest of this enquiry, one should want to try and write on the issue of future lines of research. If there is much to build on, as I have found too, this should offer a base for

142 It has been an effect of what one might consider the propagation of globalist ideology to suggest that all areas of social life ought to be organised as markets; the reality however is that for research, the hierarchical relation constituted by the academic community on one side and the state (or even corporations), as the (by far) most important investor and consumer of their work on the other side is so different from relations on an ideal-typical market that it would simply make no sense to think of them in this way.

143 Looking at discussions and elaborations on the topic in recent press publications in connection with what is often superficially viewed as revived Russian (Great Russian) nationalism, even those coming from scholars, one might sometimes think that not much had changed between, say, 1905 and 1991.

The relevance of this note is particularly clear to the traveller to Siberia, whose numerous urban landscapes often give most conspicuous evidence to the transformative effects of the socialist project.

144 There is indeed little literature, which I would have come across, treating the issue of the transformation undergone both by the communists, as a political force, and by the Empire in the course of the revolution, as one of significance for students of socio-cultural fields, but these exceptions are important to raise awareness of the alterations associated with Russian political transformations, in the explicit content as well as in the connotation of a name such as “Russia” (cf. Riga 2012).

questioning foreign findings, as well as my own use of those. To begin with, being central to my design, there has been the concept of an urban-industrial milieu. What about its usefulness? Describing urban areas as part or constitutive of an urban-industrial milieu remains in fact vague. One is not dealing with the working class *strictu sensu*, because in the same urban/suburban neighbourhoods one might find small retail traders, other self-employed (business people), low-ranking civil servants, or public services' employees, next to settled industrial workers and even, depending on the local industrial structure, itinerant workers, who spend most of their time journeying from and back to their employ and at work proper. This would result from the creation of a private housing market as much as of occupations previously not existing, or not officially declared. So would those people, with roughly similar incomes, as one may assume, and likely similar aspirations constitute one working class, or should one perhaps range them (rather arbitrarily) into different categories? So as to escape the expectable methodical problems of this choice, one may want to speak of a milieu, rather than defined classes, of different occupations co-existing and even overlapping within (one and) the same environments, themselves characterised by the existence of industrial production sites or of other large plants (airports, harbours, power plants...), drawing on a part of the local labour force.

One is hereby led to a similar problem of distinction on the level one may call "structural": it appears now that even within the (supposedly) mono-productive region of the Kuzneck Basin different local production sites lead to substantially varying specialisations of the regional economy, whereby some towns may grow because they simply have a greater diversity of employment possibilities and infrastructural servicing (cf. Hausladen 1987). So, at the trans-regional and federal levels, but going even beyond to localities, one might be dealing with a *p l u r a l i t y* of *d i s t i n c t* *m i l i e u s*. Distinction could follow the status of age, income, education, or employment, combined for instance to the gender structure of the local labour force; or at least must these factors be taken into account, the aim being to categorise distinct environments. A further step in research, one moving away from the simplistic notion of the urban-industrial milieu, might start with an attempt to systematise such a distinction and list as many types of quasi-industrial areas and corresponding milieus one might want to distinguish as would appear useful.

One suggestion for a further research question (to be refined) might therefore be to ask, what could be done to reach a concise definition of "social milieu". One would have to ask whom one means, when for instance claiming to be studying workers. And what are the theoretical (and perhaps methodical) problems involved, if one tries instead to define a variety of social milieus?

The above factors, but also the sort of industry and relating forms of employment in an area should serve as the base of such a systematics. Additionally and not least one must ask oneself, as scholars, most of whom can be expected to possess a rather "bourgeois" education, what the categories one would commonly refer to in the characterisation of a social milieu actually mean to us, if for example the notion of the "middle class" were used, as is frequently done in everyday conversation. This task, disturbing as its effect may be for scholars themselves, is therefore also one of the most important in the exercise of determining how one intends to write about social differentiation. One may want to ask, what it means for my research if I range myself in the "middle classes"; and, conversely, if I reject such a qualification. Given in particular the hierarchies that could be implied, both in the cases of foreign and domestic scholars, in the relation to the people and communities at the centre of attention, this question has as much relevance as the one about whom one means when writing about workers.

Further questions impose themselves on the scholar, deriving from recent research, but also from the conceptual instruments used here: What does the formation of labour relations mean to the involved, the poor first of all? This question has ongoing relevance, even more so as lifestyles have certainly tended to be drawn apart with the notable rise in economic inequality within the post-socialist society. As fortunes have tended to diverge dramatically since the early days of socialism's

demise, what is the implication, for professional (and other) hierarchies affecting labour relations, of the fact that leisure activities will have become differentiated, with some of the new and the old options just closed for the less fortunate?¹⁴⁵ The underlying question is obviously what happens to the relations between people, who share the same socio-cultural reality, if their options for making use of that reality diverge to become mutually exclusive. As the crass ways in which Russian nouveaux-riches exhibit their privilege would indicate even to superficial observers, while large segments of the population have been dispossessed through the degradation of public services, these facts of the interrelation between work and leisure ought to take centre stage in scholars' attention to relations of domination (and to power more generally) in a Russian context.¹⁴⁶

Lastly, one might also think of the contributions some disciplines would be better placed to make, which others (socio-cultural anthropology for instance) could not perform, but well make use of. Linguistics is a case in point.¹⁴⁷ To continue in the same line as in the previous paragraph, one question could be whether the ways in which new rich elements of society are represented have already been thoroughly analysed, for example to finally do away with a term like "oligarchs", which is simply meaningless in my view. The classical political sciences concept of oligarchy, certainly amenable to the analysis of city States such as Genoa and Venice, would not be much help for understanding the Russian polity formed between 1991 and 1996, the later date marking the reelection of then president El'cin and the consolidation of presidential rule. So why use the term of oligarchs, if there is no oligarchy? The important question here would of course concern what is being elicited by its use, what it dissimulates, perhaps even is intended to contribute in dissimulating. If it did already exist, a thorough study of the question would be helpful in grasping how, in popular discourse unfolding in the press, in internet blogs, or just anywhere on the streets, mental constructions of power take hold of minds, but may also become diluted at a given moment. The example I give here aims at merely one of a multitude of terms and possible fields of enquiry.¹⁴⁸ As long as an understanding of the realities of transformation after "socialism" (in the Soviet Russian sense of the word) is sought, this kind of endeavour remains relevant.

145 This might include both entertainment, for instance if related to trips abroad, but also sensitive issues such as access to treatment in sanatoriums.

146 This is useful to think of, as in the socialist context egalitarian access to public goods, although not truly universal and equal, was proclaimed as an aim and constituted a kind of rule.

147 This would concern socio-linguistics probably, rather than linguistics in the narrow sense of the term.

148 One possible example for the kind of research I have in mind could be Susan Gal's and Gail Kligman's study of post-socialist politics and the role of gender and human reproduction, highlighting the latter's prominence in the controversies characterising the 1990s (Gal & Kligman 2000).

Appendices

1. Appendices related to Novokuzneck

1. 1. "Predpriyatija" (firms)

List of industrial enterprises (energy producers excluded) in Novokuzneck and respective contact data, as established in July 2015. The town hall's websites is found to be listing exactly these production facilities as of 6th June 2018.

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ОАО "НЗРМК им. Н.Е.Крюкова"

ОАО "Новокузнецкий металлургический комбинат"

ООО "Кузнецкие металлоконструкции"

+7 384 346-57-56

ОАО "Новокузнецкий вагоностроительный завод"

+7 384 379-24-21

ООО "Сибирские товары"

+7 (3843) 792196

+7 384 379-25-08

ФЛ ООО "Русская инжиниринговая компания"

ЗАО "Кузбасский пищекомбинат"

+7 384 370-34-00

ОАО "Органика"

+7 384 337-05-75

ООО "ХЛЕБ"

+7 (3843) 72-99-77

+7 (3843) 72-34-77

+7 (3843) 72-34-54

ОАО "Новокузнецкий хлебокомбинат"

http://www.aboutcompany.ru/company/novokuznetskiy_hlebokombinat_oao.html

ООО "СГМК-Вторресурс"

http://www.oxycom.biz/ru/sgmk_vtorresurs/861269

ООО "ПК "Кузнецкий цементный завод"

<http://www.unicementgroup.com/factory/show/id/10.html>

ряд других организаций.

1. 2. "Образование" (education)

Organisations of professional education and main municipal library in Novokuzneck, considered suitable as potential partners for cooperation during fieldwork (list of contact data established by the author through research on the town hall's and on the Education and Science Department's websites, as of 30th July 2015).

Департамент образования и науки Кемеровской области

Ответственный за работу с обращениями граждан, организацию и проведение личного приема граждан и прямой линии 8 (384)2 36-59-43

Полное наименование Департамент образования и науки Кемеровской области

Адрес 650064, г. Кемерово, Советский пр-т, 58

Телефон 36-43-66

Факс 36-43-21

e-mail recep@ruobr.ru

ГОУ СПО "Кузнецкий индустриальный техникум"

Tel. (3843)53-57-34

Anschrift:

654040, Россия, Кемеровская область, г.Новокузнецк, ул.Климасенко, д.17

Учредитель:

Россия, Кемеровская область,
г. Кемерово, пр. Советский, 58,
тел.: 8(3842)36-43-66

Руководитель:

Корнеев Евгений Павлович

Site:

<http://novokik.ning.com/>

ГКПОУ Новокузнецкий горнотранспортный колледж

<http://gtk-nk.ru/>

Государственное образовательное учреждение среднего профессионального образования

Профессиональный колледж г.Новокузнецка

<http://www.pkgn.ru/>

Муниципальное бюджетное учреждение «Муниципальная информационно-библиотечная система г.Новокузнецка» (МБУ "МИБС")

Наш адрес:

654007 Кемеровская область, Новокузнецк, ул.Спартака, 11

Телефоны:

(3843) 77-44-24 (приёмная)

(3843) 70-08-61 (отдел записи читателей)

(3843) 74-67-85 (зал каталогов)

Факс (3843) 77-44-24 (приёмная)

E-mail: priemnaya@libnvkz.ru

<http://www.libnvkz.ru/chitatelyam/o-novokuznetske>

2. Interview excerpts¹⁴⁹

2. 1. 22nd August 2015

Interview with Galja

ГЛ: Вот и поэтому им... Вот это что людям приходилось жить на бытовом миге жить одним образом им совершенно не мешало говорить вот об этой гражданственности об этом пафосе гражданственным понимаешь? И он вот. Никто на самом деле и не задумался об этом двоемыслии. Я сама когда перестройка произошла мне было очень сложно менять своё мировоззрение. Я его бы вот так вполне ломала. Мы спорили. Мы со знакомыми спорили потому-что существовала очень скудость большая информации. Вот. Очень большая скудость информации и очень большая идеологическая составляющая была. Становление жизни. И вот это всё оно формировало определённые установки. При этом... при этом в общем-то люди с одной стороны искренне считали что сначала думай о родине и потом о себе. Что общественное - это лично. Лично - вторично. И поэтому то что я тебе рассказывала условия заводские в которых я работала или студенческие общежития советского времени где на пять этажей приходит есть два душа. Один мужской душ. Другой женский. Как хотите так и моетесь. Это всё воспринималось вполне себе нормально. Хотя всё равно человеку хочется комфорта. Да? Всегда. Какой бы он ни был где бы он ни жил ему хочется комфорта любви света и всё такое прочее. Благополучие. Вот и в бытовом отношении вопроса семья ещё где-то да? Они ну в семье семья потому что уже выходишь на более широкую как бы социальную эту даже вот исключая какие-то дворовые кампании всё-таки личностных взаимоотношения преобладают да? А вот уже какие-то социальные общества: работа учёба какие-то общественные организации. Там везде в у истоках стоит идеология. Стояла. Определённая идеология да? но в наше время.

ДАС: И в очень откровенной форме.

ГЛ: В наше время да. Это было конкретная идеология. И вот такое вот видишь двоемыслие что ты в общественном. А без общественной организации ты существовать не мог в России. В советской России да? потому что ни работа ни учёба оно просто тебе запрещалось. Определялось как тунеядство. Если ты например не являлся там положим матерю которая воспитывала ребёнка или женой ну рассматривается что ты сидишь. У нас некоторые писатели вот такие как Бродский да? они же пострадали они были посажены посажен за тунеядство. За то что нигде не работал ничего не делал. Поэтому без общественной вот этой вот структуры ты никуда не мог. В общественной структуре ты существовала по этим требованиям. А прихотился дома и существовал по своим требованиям. По бытовым. Которые довольно сильно расходились. Вот ты в общем-то моё ощущение. Моё восприятие.

ГЛ: Потому что сейчас вот эта информационность да определённая да? вот эти объёмы информации они очень сильно изменили отношения вообще не только нас и у людей старшего поколения. Я тоже человек старший...

ДАС: Да у всех.

ГЛ: изменили отношение. Понимаешь мы стали более как это называется

ДАС: Слушаю.

ГЛ: большими космополитами.

149 “ДАС” is the acronym chosen to mark my name in the present transcriptions’ excerpts.

2. 2. 24th August 2015

Interview at the council of veterans in the Kirovskij district

First part

ГФ: Ну я вам хочу сказать как оно может сказаться. Оно материально никак... никак не может сказаться потому что предприятий нет. Нам материально никто не помогает. Мы общественная организация. Мы существуем только за счёт того что находим спонсоров сами. И проводим эти мероприятия. А от предприятий мы ничего получить не можем. Их просто нет.

ДАС: Я я

ГФ: А ветераны есть. Наши ветераны есть.

ДАС: вопрос был таким как уменьшение количества трудящихся ну когда-то их было больше да? и как их уменьшение в этом районе сказывалось на

ГФ: Да никак. Нам другие приезжали. Оно у нас не идёт уменьшение. У нас оно уменьшение не идёт.

ДАС: Ветеранов? Нет.

ГФ: Нет

ДАС: [неразб.]

ГФ: А про работающих я не могу вам такую картинку говорить. Это не входит в мои обязанности понимаете?

ДАС: Ну... ну вы наверное у вас есть мнение по этому поводу?

ГФ: Нет и мнение я не буду говорить. Почему? Потому что работающих здесь нет. Они все работают на территории центрального района. А проживают всё здесь. Вот как было шестьдесят тысяч проживающих здесь в Кировском районе так и есть. Они не уменьшились. Они здесь так и живут. Просто они передвигаются с места работы с Кировского. Сейчас передвигаются в Заводской район. Они там работают.

ДАС: Где их новые рабочие места.

ГФ: Да да да да они туда переезжают. То есть вот у нас увеличился транспорт. Пятьдесят первый маршрут нам просто ускорил увеличили там раз расстояния [неразб.] время пребывания на остановке. Сейчас вот идёт... идёт у нас вот предвыборная кампания. Нам даже карманы сделали чтобы не было пробок. Потому что весь транспорт в основном все работающие едут на ту территорию города и они там все работают. На Азоте на Химпроме на Мехзаводе на Коксохиме понимаете?

ДАС: мм

ГФ: То есть. А пенсионеры и жители как они здесь жили так они и живут. Они здесь не уменьшились в количестве.

ДАС: Ну да это понятно. Я же не о пенсионеров спросил.

ГФ: Я говорю все жители!

ДАС: мм Да. мм Сейчас. Я ещё получил информацию мм что касается заводов всё-таки при всех закрытиях остались ну следующие действующие предприятия. То есть это не обязательно в узком смысле промышленные но всё-таки. мм Это Полимер. Что Полимер он до сих пор

ГФ: Полимер он был он здесь. Он не закрывался. Он и работал здесь. И он только расширяется Полимер со своей так сказать структурой продукции. Он расширяется. Он был. Он не закрывался.

Second part

У нас ветераны всех предприятий которые были раньше в Кировском. Предприятий нет а

ветеранов есть.

ДАС: А почему от кондитер от КДВ тогда нет?

ГФ: А у нас не было никогда кондитерской фабрики. Она в центральном районе кондитерская фабрика.

Неизвестная: Хлебозавод был на [неразб.]

ГФ: Хлебозавод он не нам относится. Он то ли к городу относится (звонок)

ГФ: У нас только филиаль. У нас только филиаль. У нас только информация о работе совета ветеранов. Другую информацию касающейся предприятий я её просто не знаю.

ДАС: А мм я конечно интересуюсь связью между профессиональной жизнью и ээ и остальными аспектами человеческой жизни. Почему я задаю такие вопросы? ну в связи с тем что здесь противоречия возникают. Один говорит то другой то. А от строительной индустрии у вас пока нет ветеранов ещё?

ГФ: В городе есть.

ДАС: [неразб.]

ГФ: Есть ветеранская организация Промстроя. Есть. Есть

ДАС: Но в вашем знаете

ГФ: В нашем не было строителей здесь. У нас тура не было строительной организации.

ДАС: Ну я просто узнал о что на территории Кировского района создались ээ создано производство железно-бетонных изделий но это уже в новом

ГФ: Но а МИКС

ДАС: это после мм перехода.

ГФ: У нас есть. У нас есть завод железно-бетонных конструкций Жез-БК есть. Но они то же самое. Совет ветеранов в городе у них. Он объединяет все строительные организации.

2. 3. 31st August 2015

Interview with a retired miner.

First part

У нас это была санзона, где я вот был депутатом. Это называлось “Санзона Коксохимзавода”. Это самозастройка. И должна была, со временем - всё это более пятьсот домов, домишек, старых, деревянных, на правобережной части Кировского района - должна была быть снесена и переселена в благоустроенное жильё. И вот и когда сессия, городская, проголосовала закрыть “Коксы”, пришёл зам-министр чёрной металлургии. Я сейчас не помню, Иван Николаевич, по-моему. И вот и начинает вот так и так, а я с места и говорю: “Иван Николаевич,” говорю, “ а вот мне в Горисполкоме отвечают что на снос санитарной защиты нету денег.” “Как, нету? Мы отпустили четырнадцать миллионов.” теми денгами. Это когда пятиэтажка стояла, так магазин “Радуга” был, шестьдесят первый магазин. Там бараки, двухэтажные, деревянные. Вот эти дома стоили миллион примерно, чуть больше, миллион двести, многоэтажки. И вот и он говорит: “Отпустили на снос санитарной зоны четырнадцать миллионов.” А с Горисполкома ему: “Вы нам дали всего четыре миллиона.” А он - зам-министр - говорит: “А вы освоили только два миллиона!” А я ему с места говорю: “А нам на правой набережной ни одной... ни одной квартиры не дали.” Потом меня заставили, чтобы я список составил, его проверили ещё сто лет, и успел добиться людям около сорока квартир.

Second part

И вот мне на шахте выделили, по очередь.... “Жигули”, одиннадцатый номер. Одиннадцатое

“Жигули” было. Вот... И вот меня начальник участка говорит: “Николай Николаевич, давай Васи Волкову!” У нас бригадир был, потом взрывником стал. “Он на день рождения на пенсию идёт. Давай ему твою!” Я ему отдал свою очередь на эту машину. Он получал и я буквально через три месяца мне опять эту машину выделили. Я съездил, получил в Прокопьевске. Вот. А потом, вот... а когда депутатом был, обратился к генеральному директору, Кухаренко. А мы в одной группе, мы были. А он генеральный директор в объединении шахт, нашем “Северокузбасс” был. А он жил лучше, Евгений Иванович Кухаренко. Я ему на “Волгу”... “Волга” была, заявление...

Я пошёл в объединение, а Кухаренко: “Николаевич! Так, прости пожалуйста! Нам надо запчасть для комбайна. А так не помажешь, не поедешь!” Не получишь. Такая запчасть, дорогая, для компании, комплекса. “Я твою “Волгу”... давай отдадим! Ну твою. Я тебе обещаю что...”

Third part

А он корявый был, он, пожалуй, не работал на шахте. И там ему кислотой, ему по... лопнули или чего, слесари. Ему всё лицо обозло кислотой. А на наши заводы... это не секрет, сейчас эти все заводы закрыты. Это у нас много было военных заводов.

ДАС: Да

НБ: Очень. Потом уже начали и под землей заводы были. Весь Кировский район, он был военный завод. Взрывы там были, иногда, часто. Гибали люди.

Fourth part

Потом потихоньку, потихоньку наладился. Безработица на шахтах, закрывать начали. Вот так вот тяжёлое время было. До Тулеева у нас был на забастовочной волне, но это искусственно... Ельцин я считаю что он... ненормальный. Путин нормально ведёт себя. А Ельцин... Вот они на шахтёров агитацию провели, чтобы они начали бастовать. Ну вот деньги не выдавать людям стали. Плохо. Вот это место, такое было условие, в 90-97 годах. Деньги задерживали, зарплату. Пенсию задерживали. А когда стал уже Тулеев нет-нет дошёл до... учителям много задержка было. В общем, тяжёлое время было. Всё вот и он добился.

ДАС: Когда Тулеев стал...

НБ: Сейчас вовремя пенсию нормально дают. Ну я пенсию получаю... но у меня шахтёрская. Где-то, за почётного шахтёра, девятьсот рублей доплачат. Семь тонн угля я получаю, бесплатно. Семь восемьсот. Уголь, на топливо.

Fifth part

НБ: Ну это я говорю об этой... благодарности мне... подарков мне много, подарили мне... но орденов у меня нет.

ДАС: А почему нет?

НБ: Ну не знаю. Я не просился, не ходил к этому. Не знаю. Вот я был занесён в книгу, вот во вторую был занесён, в книгу, на шахту, Юбилейную шахту.

ДАС: За ордена нужно просить?

НБ: Ну... Не знаю, не знаю. Взрывников мало, награждённых, как-то...

ДАС: А почему? Ведь работа взрывника, она не менее опасна или важна, чем другие.

НБ: Ну... я, может быть, может... что я не партийный был. Членом партии. Меня готовил. А я говорю: “Пока там будет вот такие люди, которые будут.... то [unclear] сходил, я говорю: Я не член партии.” И на меня обиделся начальник участка.

Sixth part

ДАС: Да-да, вас избирали на эту позицию.

НБ: Сначала старшим нашей улицы. Потом председателем микрорайона, маленький.

Несколько там десять улиц было [unclear] Изменили, соединили несколько микрорайонов, пять микрорайонов. И стал председателем, единогласно выбрали просто. “Председатель Совета Общественности”, то есть, работа с общественностью, всё. Много там каких забот. Я ходил где-то там нацеплять надо, где-то порядок на улице навести, где-то контейнер [unclear] освещение сделать. Вот это... Я ходил, ходатайствовал у города. Мне очень... Если принести мне благодарности, этого мешок надо, целый мешок естественно. Не только [unclear] благодарности... Благодарности общественной, от города, от Тулеева. Вот у меня награда от Тулеева есть, областная.

3. “Anhang Industrie und Umbruch” (appendix on industries and transformation)

Am 9. August ausgeführte Darstellung des Aufbaus und Umbaus der Industrie im Gebiet des Kuznecker Beckens

Als Grundlage der Entwicklung der gesamten Wirtschaft ist die **Kohle** anzusehen, mit Plänen zur Verwertung, die bereits in die vorrevolutionäre Zeit zurückreichen. Bereits 1914 war ein Stahlwerk geplant, mit einer (jährl?) Produktionskapazität von 240 000 t. Die Bewohner des Orts wären etwa an der Zahl von 10 000 gewesen. Dieses hätte weiter südlich auf Eisenvorkommen gebaut werden sollen. Als die Kommunisten schliesslich im Sattel sassen, beschlossen sie ein Werk bei Kuzneck zu errichten, mit einer **Kapazität von 1 Mio. t**. Das ist es, was [Igor´] als sowjetische Gigantomanie bezeichnet. Daraus wurden im Lauf der Zeit 2 Mio t; schon 1940 lebten in Novokuzneck 180 000. **KMK** wurde zu einem Giganten, der sehr schmutzig arbeitete und, obwohl solche bereits 1949 geplant waren, erst 1979 mit Schutzvorrichtungen wegen der Umweltverschmutzung ausgestattet wurde.

Als erstes Produkt fiel, noch vor der sowjetischen Industrialisierung, **Koks** ins Gewicht. Dieses fand natürlich vorrangig in der Metallurgie Verwendung. Des weiteren wurde die Kohle in der **chemischen Industrie** eingesetzt, wo sie zur Herstellung von **Explosivstoffen** und von **Dünger** gebraucht wurde. Schliesslich benötigte die Region noch **elektrische Energie** (auch um etwa die Motoren in den Bergwerken anzutreiben), welche in **Kohlekraftwerken** gewonnen wurde; ausserdem wurden Werke errichtet, in denen Maschinen zunächst nur instandgesetzt, später auch gebaut wurden. Seit den vierziger Jahren kam es allerdings zu keiner Modernisierung mehr, so daß alle diese Zweige komplett überholt waren, als die Wende kam. Zusätzlich waren noch **Nähereien** entstanden, in denen Frauen beschäftigt wurden, da in den anderen Zweigen die Männer dominierten und man für den weiblichen Teil der Bevölkerung Beschäftigung schaffen wollte..

Die **Maschinenbauindustrie** ist als Folge ihrer fehlenden Konkurrenzfähigkeit völlig **zusammengebrochen**. Von der **Textilindustrie** ist **wenig** übriggeblieben und auch dort sind nur noch wenige Menschen im Einsatz. **Kohlebergbau und Energieproduktion** gibt es natürlich immer noch, während die **Stahlproduktion** umfassend **modernisiert** werden musste und viele Einheiten geschlossen wurden. In der Chemie blieben nur diejenigen Betriebe erhalten, die zuletzt gebaut worden waren und die dementsprechend modern waren – etwa die Hälfte. [...]

4. Map of central Kemerovo

Source: http://info.2gis.com/index_en.html (Online version of 2ГИС Russian route planning, mapping and business listing system); downloaded 3rd April 2018.



Notes:

The lines of black-and-white dashes show the course of the railway. The name “Кемерово” (marked in green), visible in the south of the map on the eastern railway, stands for the central railway station of present-day Kemerovo.

The Zavodskij district with its factories dominates the western side, left of the Kuzneckij Prospekt (Проспект Кузнецкий), of the map which shows mainly the Tom’s left bank. At its easternmost end, Soveckij Prospekt (Проспект Советский), in a zigzag shape, passes by the square on and around which the Territory’s government buildings are located.

5. Clubs (of labour veterans) in Kirovskij district

Сведения о работе клубов в Совете ветеранов Кировского района

№№ пп	Название клуба	Дата создания	Кол. Чел.
1.	«Вдохновение»	2008 г.	15
2.	«Завалинка»	2006 г.	10
3.	Клуб по интересам «Садовод»	2001 г.	10
4.	«Золотое руно»	2011 г.	10
5.	«Проснись душа» (православная культура)	2012 г.	15
6.	«Умеешь сам – научи других»	2011 г.	20
7.	«Беспокойные сердца»	2001 г.	20
8.	Ретро – клуб «Под зеленым абажуром»	2008 г.	20-60
9.	Клуб любителей танца «Рио-Рита»	2002 г.	8
10.	«Давайте встречаться»	2011 г.	25
11.	«Золотой возраст»	2004 г.	20
12.	«Бисеринка»	2008 г.	
13.	«Дорога жизни»	2012 г.	10
14.	«Светоч»	2003 г.	10
15.	«Усадьба +»	2011 г.	15
16.	«Рукодельница	2014 г.	15
17.	«Надежда»	2004 г.	8
18.	«Добрые сердца»	2000 г.	25
19.	«Осенний бриз»	2012 г.	20
20.	«Папирус»	2011 г.	20
21.	Теннисный клуб «Искра»	2003 г.	40
22.	Бильярдный клуб	2003 г.	20
23.	Шахматный клуб	2002 г.	30
24.	Шашечный клуб	2002 г.	25
25.	Клуб любителей скандинавской ходьбы	2014 г.	
26.	«Бодрость»	2008 г.	30
27.	«Дружба»	2011 г.	15
28.	Секция плавания	2005 г.	20
29.	ДАРТС	2005 г.	25
30.	Лыжи	2001 г.	40
31.	Пионербол	2006	25
32.	Волейбол	2002	20

6. Glossary

For readers who are not familiar with the Russian language, the following glossary offers the definitions of certain terms, which have been used in the text of the thesis. The definitions are based on the author's experience with their common use in ordinary conversation, but remain close to those found in the dictionary published by the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAN 2007). Most of the terms can be found there with a general Russian definition.

Blat

Блат

A system of informal interpersonal relations for (if possible mutual) assistance, prominent in many Russian accounts of life in socialism. According to Ashwin (1999), it consists of a hierarchy determined by the ease of individual access to desirable goods.

Chozjain

Хозяин

The “boss” or “owner” in an agency, a household, or other contexts susceptible to hierarchical organisation.

Dvorec Kul'tury

Дворец культуры

The Palace of Culture of a town or district (in large towns). Such buildings hosted events which in socialist times were being organised on behalf of the population by the Communists. They mostly stand out, in the urban environment, for their size and neoclassical, or in any case comparatively imposing architecture.

Gosplan

Госплан

The acronym for the Soviet Russian state's central planning agency, composed by the words “Gosudarstvennoe Planirovanie” (Государственное планирование), literally: “state planning”.

Gradoobrazujuščie (Predprijatija)

Градообразующие (Предприятия)

Literally meaning the “city-forming” (enterprise), this is a common designation for an enterprise which has been a crucial factor in establishing a settlement and in its subsequent development into an urban one. Frequently referred to with regard to towns which have arisen in a certain location because of the decision to create a production site there, the coking plant Koks, in the case of Kemerovo, being a suitable example.

Intelligencija

Интеллигенция

The “Intelligence” is a term commonly used to refer to people characterised by their high

degree of intellectual achievement and a corresponding specialisation at work, whether as scholars or just possessing (usually academic) education in specific spheres of knowledge, to be considered as a kind of status in its own right; the approximate equivalent for a collective term for “intellectuals”.

Kandidat Nauk

Кандидат Наук

The “Candidate of Studies/Arts” is the 1st degree of achievement in a career in Russian-speaking academia.

Kollektiv

Коллектив

A group of people united by common activities and/or interests.

The “collective” of individuals collaborating as the staff of one firm or agency, or of one sub-unit.

Kombinat

Комбинат

A form of industrial organisation, in particular in the socialist economy and usually planned from the onset as one project, in which several facilities of different specialisation are unified and made to work in a coordinated way. Apparently this usually meant that each would contribute goods needed by others in the Kombinat.

Kompromat

Компромат

An acronym composed by the words “Komprometirujuščie Materialy” (Компрометирующие Материалы), meaning any material which might be used to reveal compromising information about a person’s undesirable behaviour. Apparently an important feature of internal power struggles in the Communist Party, Kompromat has become a term now used outside of its original context, mostly for similar forms of blackmailing in present business and politics.

Komsomol

Комсомол

The organisation of youth supporting the Communist Party’s rule, an acronym composed by the words “Kommunističeskij Sojuz Moloděži” (Коммунистический Союз Молодёжи), meaning the “Communist Union of Youth”.

Kryša

Крыша

The “roof” is a term designating a hierarchical system of protection of informal character, (not unlike Blat; s. above), which allows individuals to engage in activities, generally of an economic or a political nature, because of which they would otherwise face serious problems; frequently a reference to such a protection (and control) by criminal means.

Magistralʹ

Магистраль

A main line in any system of communications.

In connection with the Trans-Siberian Railway: the mainline of the railway, connecting the major urban centres at each of its ends and between them. There are several such mainlines, starting from Irkutsk towards the East (and therefore East of the Kuzneck Basin), with different final destinations.

Nomenklatura

Номенклатура

The system of ranking among members of the Communist Party (and membership candidates), the written lists containing it as well as the people themselves.

Perestrojka

Перестройка

The policy, literally termed a “rebuilding”, of thorough reform of both the centralised economy and the form of government by the Communist Party in Soviet Russia, undertaken approximately from 1985 to 1991.

Prospekt

Проспект

A large, broad and straight street (usually with at least two lanes in both directions).

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Abstracts

English

The present master thesis started from an interest for those who used to constitute the declared leading class of Soviet Russia – the workers. A geographical focus is made of the Kuzneck Basin of Southern Siberia, a major producer of coal and primary industrial goods. The urban-industrial milieu in this region is of particular interest.

Fieldwork was carried out with the purpose to identify institutions of the socialist period, to study empirically institutional change and how it relates to the disruption experienced in the Russian society since the 1980s. Specifically two research questions were asked, the first being: “What kind of institutional changes is affecting the definition of identity in the urban-industrial milieu of the Kuzneck Basin?” The enquiry that followed has inspired the author to ask: “In the light of my findings about the Kuzneck Basin, which ideas in relevant contributions on post-socialism, as well as in studies on Soviet Russia, seem promising for future research?”

The conclusion from the empirical enquiry is that institutional change during as well as after the so-called transition has not eliminated the prevalent paternalist politics. It is possible to conclude that the demonstrative paternalism displayed by the most visible institutions (of government bodies and public organisations) dissimulates the effect of supporting institutions. The future of paternalism seems to be called into question as the latter may loose strength due to the threat of economic instability and to the perceived erosive impact of post-socialist life on them. This answer remains a provisory one: fieldwork has yielded significant results in the form of memory notes, but no coherent picture of the field emerges from them; this at the same time constitutes a basis for a more informed study of the available and most relevant literature.

The sweeping answer to the second question, concerning that literature, could be formulated as follows: to make the best use of scholarship of the post-socialist period, one must interrogate and juxtapose ethnography and area-studies with socio-economic history and related approaches. Even so, much could still be done for a consistent body of scholarship on urban and industrial spaces (of post-socialist Russia) in the context of a world after the Cold War to take shape.

Institutional change, not least with regard to the Kuzneck Basin and its specific political arrangement, remains a promising topic. Many suggestions made by scholars in studies published during the past two decades appear relevant for possible research on this and other post-socialist topics. Therefore, and to emphasise the importance of the field, ideas for future research and for possible research questions have been added at the end of the concluding chapter.

Deutsch

Die vorliegende Magisterarbeit ging aus vom Interesse an jenen, welche die erklärtermaßen führende Klasse Sowjetrußlands waren – den Arbeitern. Der geografische Fokus liegt auf dem Kuznecker Becken in Südsibirien, einem Haupterzeuger von Kohle und Grundstoffen. Das urban-industrielle Milieu dieser Region ist von besonderem Interesse.

Eine Feldforschung wurde mit dem Ziel durchgeführt Institutionen der sozialistischen Periode auszumachen, um institutionellen Wandel empirisch zu untersuchen und wie dieser sich zu den Erschütterungen der russischen Gesellschaft seit den 1980er Jahren verhält. Genauer wurden zwei Forschungsfragen gestellt, wovon die Erste lautet: „Welche Art institutioneller Wandel prägt die Bestimmung von Identität im urban-industriellen Milieu des Kuznecker Beckens?“ Die darauffolgende Untersuchung hat den Verfasser angeregt zu fragen: „Welche Ideen in relevanten Beiträgen zu Post-Sozialismus, sowie in Studien zu Sowjetrußland, wirken im Licht meiner Erkenntnisse über das Kuznecker Becken vielversprechend für künftige Forschung?“

Die Schlußfolgerung aus der empirischen Untersuchung ist, daß Institutionenwandel während und nach der sogenannten Transition die vorherrschende paternalistische Politik nicht beseitigt hat. Es ist möglich zu schließen, der demonstrative Paternalismus der sichtbarsten Institutionen (der Behörden und öffentlichen Organisationen) verberge die Wirkung stützender Institutionen. Die Zukunft des Paternalismus scheint infrage gestellt da Letztere an Kraft einbüßen mögen infolge drohender wirtschaftlicher Instabilität und des als erodierend wahrgenommenen Einflusses der post-sozialistischen Lebensweise. Diese Antwort bleibt eine vorläufige: wohl hat die Feldforschung bedeutende Ergebnisse in Gestalt von Gedächtnisprotokollen gebracht, doch ergibt sich daraus kein zusammenhängendes Bild des Felds; dies stellt zugleich die Grundlage einer sachkundigeren Auseinandersetzung mit der verfügbaren und erheblichsten Literatur dar.

Die umfassende Antwort auf die zweite Frage, jene Literatur betreffend, könnte wie folgt lauten: um aus der Wissenschaft der post-sozialistischen Periode den besten Nutzen zu ziehen, müssen Ethnografie und Area-Studies mit sozio-ökonomischer Geschichte und ähnlichen Ansätzen gegenübergestellt und hinterfragt werden. Auch damit bleibt noch viel zu tun damit eine substantielle Sammlung wissenschaftlicher Arbeit über urbane und industrielle Räume (des post-sozialistischen Rußland) im Kontext einer Welt nach dem Kalten Krieg zustandekomme.

Institutionenwandel bleibt nicht zuletzt mit Blick auf das Kuznecker Becken und dessen spezifisches politisches Arrangement ein vielversprechender Gegenstand. Viele Anregungen von Wissenschaftler/innen in Publikationen der vergangenen zwei Jahrzehnte scheinen relevant für mögliche Forschung zu diesem und anderen Gegenständen. Darum und um die Bedeutung des Felds hervorzuheben wurden Ideen für künftige Forschung und für mögliche Forschungsfragen am Ende des Schlußkapitels hinzugefügt.