

SOCIAL MEMORY OF TEXTILE WORKERS IN SLOVENIA

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The post-1991 changes relating to civil liberties and national identity in Slovenia received massive popular support, but the populace did not accept the new economic policies in their entirety. “Capitalism in a democratic way” faced a dilemma: in the memory of most people, socialism represented a system of (social) equality in which differences between people were minimal and security and stability prevailed. The Slovene political and commercial elite’s¹ post-1991 discourse was dominated by representations of the previous, socialist regime as repressive. Yet, for many people in the textile industry, the story of the socialist past is rather different.

The 1990–91 upheaval in Slovenia changed the status of the working class population—the central subject of the former socialist ideology—with respect to both everyday life and Slovene political discourse. This article examines in what ways the post-1990–91 social and political transformations in Slovenia, as well as people’s changed frames of reference, have redefined textile workers’ perceptions of the past and current understandings of both their working and, more broadly, living environments. I will describe the social memory of textiles workers in Slovenia, with special emphasis on how their memories are being shaped and reshaped during the current post-socialist period.

The construction of the past is a process emerging in the present. Furthermore, changing interpretations of the past also reflect new forms of belonging in individual lives. Based on theories of socially constructed memory (Halbwachs 2001; Connerton 1989; Climo and Catell 2002; Hutton 1993), I use the concept of social memory to draw attention to the relative nature and fragmentation of collectivities. By way of the social memory concept, we can analyze contemporary modes of mnemonic management of the socialist past and also investigate memory’s various roles in the construction of present social spaces. The concept of social memory is most useful in investigating the relation between the construction of the past and social belonging. Even though narratives of the past feature various contradictions, I argue that the meaning of the factory as a socialist project

¹ The discourse of the Slovene political, economic, and academic elites is by no means peculiar in any way, but rather the same as Western mainstream discourse. Since the article examines the case of Slovenia, reference is made to the relevant national discourse.

constructed in the memory of people is significant because it defines and legitimizes their present positions in various ways.

My thesis is that the social memory of textile workers considered here can best be addressed by bearing in mind that such memory is fluid and situation-based. Memory in the singular form can only be discussed if it is understood as based upon social relations. Many factors shape the memory of workers: in addition to workers themselves, there are also managers, various management and human resource management strategies, government policy, former and present political administrations, local authorities, economic elites, different international institutions, imaginaries of the factory's retired and employed people, as well as researchers with their own academic agendas. In my research, I paid particular attention to shop floor workers because I find their changed position in the contemporary political space a very significant issue. Nevertheless, I argue that memory is a topic which requires an analytical, relation-based approach.

Although my research had a specific and spatially limited field positioning—I report here the results of fieldwork in the Predilnica Litija (the Litija Mill)² in 2004—my objective is much broader. My questions are the following: What meanings do people attribute to the socialist past? How do they shape them in the present? In what ways do stories about past connect people or shape their ideas about common memory?

Analysis of field notes on specific situations on the shop floor, where I worked as a blue collar worker for two months, is correlated with interviews and conversations I had with retired and current workers, managers, directors, and trade unionists in Litija, as well as in other textile factories across Slovenia. In addition to past and current media coverage (in newspapers and films), I also investigated archival materials of the Predilnica Litija, as well as historic representations of the textile industry and its development.

Textile workers and the change

After 1991, many textile factories went bankrupt, and the number of employees, mainly women, dropped dramatically. In 1990, the so-called pre-Independence period, the Slovene textile industry employed 74,845 people, while in 2004 their number had decreased to 21,535.³

² Litija is a small town in Slovenia, thirty kilometers from Ljubljana, the country's capital.

³ Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, processed by Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia.

Unfulfilled expectations, poverty, and unemployment among the textile workforce after Slovenia's independence in 1991 gave rise to further disappointments. The blame that had been vigorously imputed by individual textile experts and trade unionists to the Yugoslav political leadership in the 1980s was apportioned to the Slovenian government: "The deceased mother Yugoslavia sent us non-market measurements for the textile industry from Belgrade. It is sad to see the young Slovene government doing the same thing. It's really unfortunate!" (*Delo* 1992).

The situation of textile workers worsened due to other political decisions. The Slovene government reduced financial support for kindergartens, education, health care, and social services.⁴ However, the problem of the labor market in the 1990s was not only in numbers of furloughed workers, but the fact that they frequently did not receive compensation or payments due them. Both press and television reported on business crimes—that is, unregulated actions by individual directors of textile enterprises that with government "help" manipulated troubled enterprises and "transformed" them into their private companies.

The everyday life of a textile worker changed dramatically. Employment in a socialist factory had determined the life of an individual in social space and time. Due to the socialist "practice of lifelong employment," the worker's life was defined in one social and cultural space.⁵ In socialist ideology, labor fundamentally defined social identity, one's social position, and security. This was not merely an ideological construction. Employment in a factory provided additional benefits (such as health and social insurance and pensions), as well as lunch or brunch in the canteen, holidays in summer retreats owned by companies, and housing in apartment buildings or loans for building houses. Everyday working practices, which during the socialist epoch also related to local social contexts, produced their own norms and hierarchies, which cannot be completely equated with the ideological rhetoric of the regime in power.

Public discourse on the importance of industrial labor, which under the previous political regime posited a key place for working women and men and their labor, played a major role in defining workers' expectations. According to the study I conducted, it significantly shaped workers' experiences and their perceptions of the working environment. At the same

⁴ The process of privatization and reconstruction was accompanied by the simultaneous individualization of social, health, and pension insurance, which also caused dramatic changes in the labor market.

⁵ It is important to see and understand the significance of such explanations in the present. Formal employment also brings control over future insecurity, which is in particular at present very relevant.

time, the organizational structure of the factory fostered a sense of belonging to a workplace, and thus their position in social space.

With deindustrialization, shop floor workers tend to disappear from the discourse of transnational economic elites.⁶ In post-socialist Slovenia, the range of eminent actors promoted by the media, economic, and political elites underwent a total transformation. Exhausted victims of the socialist economy replaced portraits of revolutionary and self-sacrificing textile workers, and yesterday's heroes became social anachronisms. Nowadays, political documents and newspapers feature managers. Post-industrial discourse makes no mention of workers; the subject has become anonymous.

A worker is replaceable in the present trans-local economic discourse, as well as in management policy discourse and actual practices. In Slovenia, new business techniques and managerial strategies were developed under the influence of international standards. These techniques were used to make people into flexible and self-regulating workers. While in socialism the emphasis was on a collective and social responsibility, today it is on self-control and individual responsibility. However, the shift to flexible production required dismantling the Fordist organization of production as well. Socialist production, and Fordist production in Western Europe and the U.S., was organized along assembly lines.⁷ Now labor is organized in small groups in which everybody is mobile and qualified to operate various jobs. Organizational changes meant substantial changes in labor discipline. Using various techniques—standardization, quality control, participatory management—managers tried to turn their employees into “self-regulating” and “self-monitoring” workers (Dunn 2004). It is important to bear in mind the present economic discourse on mobile and flexible workers for the following discussion of social memory.

According to macroeconomic data, Slovenia passed the so-called transition successfully. In 1999, the country surpassed its 1988 GDP. In 2004, it joined EU, and on 1 January 2007, it was the first among the new member states of the EU to adopt the European currency. Besides, the microanalyses prevailing in public discussions (mainly produced by economists and sociologists) focus on individual enterprises, managers, on implementations of reforms, and emphasize the positive role of the managerial elites. However, not much attention is at present paid to the issue of how macro changes are dealt with by individuals on micro levels.

⁶ For appropriations of such discourses in post-socialist Poland, see an ethnographic analysis by Dunn (2004); for development of such trans-local discourses in the EU, see Procoli (2004).

⁷ This does not, however, mean that we can equate socialist and Fordist organization of production (Dunn 2004: 14–15).

The Predilnica Litija,⁸ built in 1886, is still in operation today. Interviews with former and present employees show how important it is for people that the factory has been in operation for almost 120 years; the reasons behind it is that on the one hand it has provided long-lasting means of subsistence, whereas on the other, it represents symbolic capital.⁹

Factory employment policy was to hire local residents and their relatives. Very often, workers' mothers, aunts, and grandmothers had worked in the same factory, and sometimes even their fathers, uncles, and husbands. Recollections of the factory thus overlap with those of family. Informants revealed that factory management continually encouraged recruitment of relatives with the intention of reinforcing and co-creating intensive memory of "the spinning tradition." Temporal continuity was supposed to substantiate and enhance collectivity.

The reason behind choosing Predilnica Litija for in-depth research is also due to the fact that it is one of the few spinning enterprises in Slovenia still in operation. Furthermore, its personnel are made up of the same people as prior to 1990–91. The spinning enterprise is a relevant and interesting place for fieldwork because it displays various strategies and negotiations between new forms of management and recollections of past practices.

In analyzing field material, I deal with actual explanations of various subjects regarding the transformation of a socialist factory into a post-socialist enterprise. The following questions are raised: By what means do the individuals employed in the factory deal with post-socialist redefinitions of work? And what meanings do they attribute to work while facing new management strategies and reorganizations of labor? According to field observations in the factory, many factors lead to tensions and constitute new modes of memory: changes in spatial relations on the shop floor promoted by new managerial strategies; disciplinary measures and reorganization of labour; various modes of negotiations in conducting (changing) relations between state (public) administration, international organizations (e.g., the World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, World Bank), and local enterprises; worker-management relations; as well as employee and management leadership relations.

⁸ The Litija mill does not represent (views of) all textile workers in Slovenia. It is a (micro) case study to determine how people, in their everyday lives, deal with large political and social changes.

⁹ Referring to the concept coined by Pierre Bourdieu, I see factory as a recognized and acknowledged source of social identification, and also a place where past and present are interconnected in a particular way; because still in operation it continues to shape feelings of duration.

In the name of improved efficiency, state bureaucrats and managers promote different forms of worker and employee discipline, and by way of a strong hierarchy define individual responsibilities.¹⁰ Attitudes not captured by these categorizations are labeled as remains of the past, socialist times, both in the factory and general public. Factory managers define present strategies based on the critique of the past socialist system, which they portray as incompetent and inefficient. They refer to it as a “democracy,” in quotation marks, in which workers were far too free and protected (workers themselves often agree). In comparison with current free market rationalism, they consider socialism an “emotional system.”

In the view of managers, economic and political elites, as well as by this factory’s management, workers are associated with socialism. Investing workers with a socialist experience makes of them socialist subjects, who find it more difficult to adapt to changes.¹¹ As a result, factory managers refer to socialism much more often than the shop floor workers do. Even though management conceives of new strategies as being in opposition to socialism, it often presents them in a manner that highlights historical continuity. To illustrate, the head of one department in the factory said that he “drops a compliment or two so that things are sort of back in the old way.”¹²

The flexibility demanded by managers and emphasized by modern economic discourse differs, however, from workers’ interpretations of the same. Workers argue that the experience of socialist constraints and shortages made them a flexible and more suitable labor force for a capitalist enterprise due to their ability to adapt to batch production more quickly and their experiences of working over time in tough conditions and on old, worn-out machines. In such cases, workers do not claim that the socialist organization of work and production was better, but that their experiences from times of socialist constraints legitimize their contemporary status as better workers in the capitalist enterprise.

On the other hand, managers, too, use their experience of the past when talking about various strategies of survival. Such experiences are supposed to help them in the present. The former director of a textile factory compared the Yugoslav economy with the European Union. The very memories of past experiences in socialist Yugoslavia, and various past management strategies, are supposed to play an important role in promoting the economic position of Slovene enterprises and the state in relation to the union:

¹⁰ Compare also Dunn (2004).

¹¹ Such processes are not only specific for this factory, but they are very common in mass media as well.

¹² A conversation with a head of department at Predilnica Litija, 2004.

Of course there were [in socialist times, N.V.] restrictions, many things were fixed, just like they are now. I don't know... agriculture gets subventions from the European Union, (...). If you know how and you are fit, you can get it, and if you don't, you can't. It was restricted in the past, you couldn't get over that, and also the Yugoslav government didn't change, for example, quotas, just to give more to one than to the other. You had to orient yourself within those restrictions and find your own path."¹³

In his interview in 1994, his successor also confirmed how useful the past Yugoslav experience was to the management: "In the school of the Yugoslav market, which broke down, we had learnt very well to back more horses!"¹⁴

The breaks: between "now" and "then"

Discussions about socialism and communism in the contemporary media most frequently relate to politics or maybe the economy, as we have just seen. However, socialism as perceived and recollected by those included in the study is not a story about the former political system. It is a story about social relations. Memory of everyday life during the socialist epoch was obviously depoliticized and focused on ordinary events, problems, and joyful moments. I do not claim that socialism was not a politically organized system, but that the majority of people, in particular workers I was talking to, did not specifically emphasize the relation between socialism and the political system. As one of the former workers said: "Before we didn't really know about it [politics, N.V.], now we do because it's in the media all the time. Before we knew Tito, and that was it. It wasn't like today, when you keep hearing about the politicians in the media all the time."¹⁵

Unlike former directors, who were closely related to the Communist Party, production workers do not recall political pressures. They very rarely refer to the past as a communist period. That is why, in accordance with the terminology that people used, I refer to remembering socialism and not communism.

However, a relevant question is how politics (or the political) is understood by different generations or by people coming from different

¹³ Interview with a former director, Litija, 4.8. 2005.

¹⁴ Conversations with former directors, on the other hand, show that in spite of systematic political determinations, internal planning and production strategies in socialism weren't totally passive and that everyday practice was very negotiable (compare also Prinčič 1999).

¹⁵ Interview with a retired worker, Litija, 26 November 2004.

positions. Elderly workers do not include self-management and the workers' councils in the category of the political. To judge by their narrations, political pressure was experienced sometime at religious holidays, because they had to work on those days. "That was under communism back then,"¹⁶ a retired woman explained to me as to a representative of a younger generation. However, on Christmas Eve or the Easter, workers often brought ham, cookies, and so forth to the factory. Such secret festivities in dressing rooms were accompanied by fear. But although the workers were caught by the director several times, he never reported the event.

Some elderly workers believe that under socialism "everything was public and you could say anything you pleased." Others, especially the generations born after WW II, are, in contrast, convinced that "everything was concealed and nobody knew a thing about factory matters." And above all, workers were not to speak out about the life or operation of a factory. Yet, this situation was ascribed to the factory hierarchy and not political repression.

Even though people did not talk about past political pressures, some described the factory after WW II as a "party cell" where "old partisans" got jobs. In TV Slovenia's news reports and documentaries, the spinning factory was an example of a modern and politically well-organized factory. Today there seems to be no mention in the workplace of the factory's past, good political reputation.

In their narrations, workers do not always explicitly refer to socialism. They talk about the past in general, although they may refer to values that they elsewhere attribute to socialism. Instead of socialism, people in the factory talk about Yugoslavia, or they use some shortened forms, such as *Yuga*. On the shop floor, I would quite often hear them saying: "*Yuga* has gone, along with the profits, rewards, bonuses, and free Sundays."¹⁷

Having analyzed the material collected, I discovered that the organizational principle of narrators' memory is based on the rupture between the "times past" extending as far back as the pre-WWII period and well into the post-war period, which is referred to as the time of "greater connectedness and social care displayed by factory to the employees," and "the present" that people interpret as this day, last week, a particular day five years ago or a certain point following 1991, i.e. the year which obviously represents an important turning point in their organization of memory. In addition to the 1991 "war of independence," massive layoffs of workers in 1990, or the loss of the Yugoslav market, which is an important

¹⁶ Interview with a retired worker, Litija, 26 November 2004.

¹⁷ A conversation with a worker in Predilnica Litija, 15 November 2004.

turning point in narrations by office workers and managers, the rupture is not always defined by a specific year. It can either refer to the period, when younger generation came to the factory, ethnic or local foreigners¹⁸ came to town or neighborhood, or just the time of technological modernization.

The break between the past and the present in narrators' interpretations changes their relation to the past, and likewise their various group identities. However, present narrated strategies of survival show that people's relation to the past does not imply a total rupture. The narrative rupture does not only encompass dramatic changes. People perceive it as a break because they expect continuity. They continue to shape memories of the socialist past, which legitimizes their specific expectations. "Gosh, it's hard to change the socialist mindset which we grew up with to being responsible for yourself and not expecting others to take care of you," said one general foreman. However, the issue is not only about changing the mindset. Even at present, workers shape memories of the past that establish such expectations.

On the one hand, memory is constructed as a difference between "now" and "then," while on the other, its strength is based on the continuum and its existence provided for by contemporary everyday practices. Narrated past events are not defined in exact temporal frames, as people shift them depending on the relations they are involved in, as well as the situations addressed. In people's memory, past events are most often flexible and not arranged in a chronological order. In their life stories and interviews, the significant events in their family life are made a point of reference (such as a marriage, a child's birth, a death in the family, etc.).

Social memory: "us" and "them"

The rhetoric of exploitation is present in my conversations with workers and management personnel alike. In this context, the distinction between "us" and "them" most often translates into "the factory" as opposed to "the workers." "We had a feeling that it was our factory. It meant a lot that it worked well," explained a former female worker while emphasizing that under socialism they believed management trusted them and vice versa. Workers used to refer to the factory as "our factory," but now they understand it as opposed to them. In their accounts, the factory is most often represented by managers. "They are only waiting to get at us

¹⁸ I do not focus on the relations between Slovenes and non-Slovenes in the factory. Workers from other former Yugoslav republics came to the factory after the 1970s. At present, the national differentiation on the shop floor is very strong. According to people's narrations, this differentiation was not felt so strongly before 1991.

with a act of law... something that is bad for workers.”¹⁹ Workers do not accuse management of being abusive and vicious. They believe these processes are enabled and fostered by legislation.²⁰ These past idealizations relate to the changed position and status of industrial workers in everyday social life and space.

There is also the subversive aspect of social memory that accentuates past achievements and disappointments, which are reflected in the statements, such as “If my children wanted to work in textiles, I’d rather have them collect garbage” (Videmšek 2004).²¹ In such cases, social memory is integrated into individual experience, it correlates with self-understanding. Experience is not an objective circumstance that conditions identity, though. Identities and experiences are variable phenomena, discursively organized in particular contexts or configurations (de Lauretis 1984; Scott 1992). Such discourse therefore draws attention to the current status and uncertain future of industrial labor in contemporary Slovenia. The informant holds this view only on behalf of her children, whereas of herself and her generation she says: “We’ll stick it out to the end—us Mura workers, we’re loyal” (Videmšek 2004).

Older generations adopted the socialist discourse, which maintains that work is the essence of identity. On the other hand, young workers who “got stuck in the factory,” as they put it, and then lost their jobs, reflect the dominant discourse strengthened by the state’s economic reform, which substituted workers for intellectuals. “I regret those thirty years of perseverance to remain in this factory,” commented an informant who lost her job in the textile factory at the time when this interview was conducted. “I could have left this place when I finished school [of economics], but I stayed. I’m going to pay for the rest of my life, because I decided to stay in the textile industry.”²²

Memories are shaped by actions, practices, and events, and also by the researcher and her questions. Memory-shaping is taking place in the conversations, in this case in conversations between the worker and me. During the time I spent in Predilnica Litija, some people started talking more about the past with their parents and with their grandparents, who had also been employed in the factory. According to a common sense explanation, memory is already in us, just waiting to be uncovered. However, in this series of interviews I did not uncover it, I actually co-

¹⁹ A conversation with a worker on the shop floor, Predilnica Litija, 7 November 2004.

²⁰ A significant role in these memories is ascribed to the State. On socialist paternalism, see Pine (1998) and Verdery (1996).

²¹ The quotation is by a worker from another factory in the northeastern region of Slovenia.

²² Interview with an administrative employee, Idrija, 5 March 2000.

shaped it. Rather than perceiving individual life stories and remembrances of the past in an unproblematic way—that is, as accounts about the past—I address the problem of their construction. I understand them as a forum of inter-subjective encounters, involving informants and the researcher, where rather than facts, truths, and data in terms of objective entities, social meanings and perceptions of social actors are discussed.

People's memories are a function not only of their life experiences because they are not immune to historical, media, and political representations. When meeting in the street, the retired and employed workers shape memory in the context of past and present representations of the textile industry, as well as various worker discourses in the national and transnational space. Social memory requires verbal and non-verbal articulation; in the street, when meeting on the way to market, in the neighborhood, at a party, or elsewhere. In a shared communication space people construct their own experience and images of the past. The concept of performativity helps us analytically understand that we are not carriers of our memories and experiences. On the contrary, we live them by acting.²³

When women, boiling with rage at the poor quality of yarn, the foreman's behavior, or yet another management decision introducing changes, retreat to the locker room for their break, they talk about their own past experiences and those passed on by their co-workers. In opposition to the management, or together with the shop floor management against the upper management²⁴ or the state, between themselves, or in conversations with me (a representative of a younger generation and a student from the capital city) they underline the historical significance of their place and work in the factory, which legitimizes their current position. Such discourse unifies one group of people and separates it from another. Images of the past which connect people and legitimize their present positions are also political and structured.

The question is not only how memory represents (past) relations between people, but also how it shapes them (Olick, Robbins, and Robbins, 1998). By constructing memory, people define relations between themselves. Present discords can drive to nostalgia, and yet, also to rekindling past quarrels.

²³ Connerton argued for performativity when analyzing rituals and ceremonial practices (1989: 58–59).

²⁴ The management is not to be understood only in opposition to workers. Furthermore, the management is not a homogenous entity. The question who is a manager or a boss is relation-based. Also, there are different interactions between workers and various leaders; leaders of departments are in direct contacts with workers at the shop floor, while managers in offices have no contact with them.

In their everyday lives, retired and employed people enter various social relations, and their memory is shaped by acknowledgement of similarities in the processes of constructing common images (Brumen, 2000). In specific situations and relations, people shape specific images of the past that legitimize their present positions and establish social ties between them. The very role or use of the socialist past at present is relevant because it legitimizes a group, which—in the process of defining its place in the social space and time and its story about the past—demarcates itself from other groups. By shifting the analytical focus to the very process of constructing the common past, we can ascertain that a certain group constructs its own past when pointing out differences from the others (whom it encounters) (Barth 1970; Cohen 1994). The very act of establishing differences shifts the focus to inner similarities in the bounded collectivity. By analyzing the processes of memory shaping in particular situations we are dealing with how individuals define themselves in contradistinction to others. The analytical focus is on boundary making; by actively attributing meanings and organizing similarities and differences actors construct a common past.

Post-socialist transformation

If before the political upheavals of 1989–91 elite discourse in Central and East European states posited a transition from capitalism, via socialism, to communism, after 1991 transition came to mean a move from communism to capitalism (Muršič, 1991). Such presentations assumed that the previously communist societies were copying capitalist systems and democracies from the West. As a result, the transition has become a central topic in the discussions of political and economic elites, academia, and the media.

By analyzing micro processes in post-socialist studies, a thesis of transformation questions theories of linear evolution. In this respect, transformation is understood as a complete remodeling of basic semantic and interpretive systems, and strives for various possible paths of development and not simply the end result (Burawoy and Verdery 1999: 1–18).

A key question in such problematizations is how to consider the intertwining between past and present. Studies of post socialism point out the role and the meaning of the socialist past in the present. However, it is important to avoid discussing current phenomena only in terms of continuities. The past is constituted as a response to present tensions and new market initiatives (Burawoy and Verdery: 1–18). Researchers of post-socialism do not unveil the socialist remains or the heritage of socialism, but rather analyze various ways of intertwinement between past and present.

Present everyday actions of people are also reactions to international connections, including the transfer of capital in international institutions.²⁵ In addition to historical perspectives, I position the issue in a broader trans-national context. The issue of textile industries keeps entering (into) the global political arena. The textile industry plays a crucial role in shaping new polarizations in the world, where China gains a new significant role. Managers and workers in textile factories still operating in Slovenia constantly face these conflicts and international politics on the micro level.

We can follow the discussion on transition and socialist legacies in the media in the 1990s but at present we very rarely encounter these topics. There are many opposing theories on future economic development. Some economists argue for gradual transition. In such debates, the idea of transition itself is never questioned. Supporters of neo-liberal views assert that gradual transition was necessary at the beginning but later started to hinder restructuring and economic progress. Present tensions, dilemmas, and fears are, according to the politicians, the result of globalization. Economists and macro sociologists often refer to the economy within the institutional framework and focus on the macro level. My drawing attention to the individual and everyday life has an analytic correlation in research on post-socialism that advocates that institutional changes are not to be investigated separately from people they affect. Namely, institutions are people, local subjects with thought patterns and actions who were also a constituent part of everyday life and routine under the former regime. The discourse of de-industrialization and economic or political development is intertwined with post-socialism, and that the processes of social transformation cannot be reduced to the transition from socialism to neo-liberal capitalism.

Conclusion

In this article, the construction of memory is dealt with at two levels: the level of narrating stories about the past, and the level of the present everyday practices. The first is about narrated constructions, i.e. how narrators presented the past in the interviews I conducted with them. The second is about memory as a strategy people use in their everyday lives; the way that employees cope with managerial strategies, reorganization of labor, spatial relations, and changed (trans)local views of the working woman or man. The two levels cannot be totally distinguished because in real life they are intertwined.

Social memory is an academic construction: a constructed analytical category to identify the two levels in the context of historiography, the national and transnational discourse of economic and

²⁵ Slovenia joined the WTO in 1994, the EU and NATO in 2004.

political elites. By way of the social memory concept I deal with how constructing a common past defines processes of social identifications.

When in conflict situations women in a locker room at the shop if—to take an example given above—together shape social memory, they define themselves. Resisting management they underline the historical significance of their place and work in the factory. However, this memory is fluid and relation-based, as are the processes of social identifications.

The analyses of workers' social memory encompasses representations of the past as well as social relations and differentiations, and focuses on the role of memory in everyday life, as well as its impact on the organization and hierarchization of social relations. With reference to theories of meaning construction, social memory correlates with group experiences and identity formations. By attributing meanings in particular ways individuals construct a common past.

Narratives about the past in the factory are filled with contradictions, and relate to various current discourses on the working class, as well as remembrances of the factory and work in the past. People refer to the socialist past when interpreting the capitalist present and arguing for workers' subjectivities and the position of the company. The meaning of a socialist factory is important as it legitimizes their present positions in various ways. Workers share a common idea that their social position has been devalued, it is their express desire to be recognized that has led them to recollect the historical significance of their role in the factory. On the other hand, people are not willing to depreciate their past and biographies, and seek to find continuity in their lives, which also encompasses socialism.

It might be argued that people view changes either as positive or negative and then assess their impact. People tend to narrate the past when faced with tense and conflicting situations, resulting from changed circumstances and the consequent loss of former benefits, such as social welfare rights, lifetime employment, regular income, pension, and free training and health services. However, the emphasis is not exclusively on renewed assessment of changes, but rather on strategies that people utilize in everyday life to retain social recognition in a situation of profound social and economic change.

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POVZETEK

SKUPNI SPOMIN INDUSTRIJSKEGA DELAVSTVA V SLOVENIJI

S politično in ekonomsko spremembo sta se v Sloveniji po letu 1990/1991 tako v vsakdanjem življenju kot v političnem diskurzu spremenila status in položaj industrijskega delavstva – osrednjega subjekta pretekle socialistične ideologije. Nina Vodopivec se ukvarja z vprašanjem, kako zgodovinske prelome ter družbeno politične spremembe doživljajo tekstilne delavke oz. delavci v vsakdanjem življenju in kakšno vlogo odigrajo v njihovem spominu.

Avtorica obravnava pomene, ki jih ljudje pripisujejo socialistični preteklosti. Zanima jo, kako zgodbe o preteklosti povezujejo ljudi oz. ustvarjajo ideje o skupnem spominu. Z analizo spomina se osredotoča na načine, kako se upokojeni in v tekstilni tovarni še zaposleni ljudje soočajo s sodobnimi socialnimi procesi. Analitično pozornost usmerja k vprašanju, kako spomin oblikuje socialna razmerja in ne le kako jih reprezentira. S poudarkom na relativnosti in fragmentarnosti kolektivitet se zavzema za koncept socialnega spomina, v kritiki tranzicije kot linearne prehoda pa govori o post socialistični transformaciji.

Nina Vodopivec razpravlja o doživljanju post socializma na ravni vsakdanjika. Gre za analizo spomina industrijskih delavk ter delavcev na socialistično preteklost v okvirih post socialističnih sprememb. Tekstilna industrija je v tem smislu relevantna. V tekstilni industriji se je tako rekoč porodila industrializacija, velik razmah je doživela po 2. svetovni vojni, zdaj pa se prav v tekstilni industriji odvijajo procesi de-industrializacije. Po letu 1991 so številne tovarne končale v stečaju.

Avtorica se v prispevku sklicuje na analize terenskega dela v še delujoči tekstilni tovarni Predilnica Litija, intervjuje z upokojenimi ter še zaposlenimi ljudmi v tekstilni industriji v Sloveniji ter na analize dnevnega oz. mesečnega časopisja in filmskega gradiva.