Solidarity and the Feelings of Belonging: Textile Industrial Workers in the Socialist and Post Socialist Slovenia

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"At the meetings and the workers' assemblies I often told everyone that we should watch over this chimney of ours and care for it; for it gives us daily bread. If we do our best, we'll succeed, and we'll all be satisfied and happy." This is how the former director of the Litija Spinning factory[1] started our conversation in May 2005. The pensioner who had managed the Litija factory for nearly thirty years tried, at the beginning of his mandate, to *"instil the feelings of belonging to the factory in the workers"* by referring to the factory's chimney. The chimney embodied the production power in the sense of classic industrialization, socialist ideology, and modernization. The former director noted that the feelings of belonging had yet to be established in the 1950s.

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1   The Litija spinning factory (established in 1889) is one of a few textile factories in Slovenia still in operation.

Building on my study of the textile industrial workers' lives in socialism (Vodopivec 2007), I argue that socialist factories (and directors) would systematically establish factory communities and a sense of belonging. Such practice was not merely a part of the socialist ideology or the Yugoslav self-management system, but an everyday reality. In the present article I address the policies and practices that have constituted different forms of belonging and which I associate with the concept of solidarity. Besides the normative solidarity, the basis of the socialist ideology and of the Yugoslav self-management system in particular[2] , I call for a more complex understanding of solidarity. I explore the concept of solidarity by addressing the meaning of a socialist textile factory, an organization of labour and workers' experiences in the socialist period and during the postsocialist transformation in Slovenia.

Textile industry played an important role in the history of industrialization in Slovenia in the 19th century, even though historians place its major development breakthrough in the 1920s and 1930s (Kresal 1976, Lazarević 2014), regarding the capital invested and people employed. At that time, 37 % of all industrial workers in Slovenia were employed in the textile sector (Kresal 1976). In socialist Slovenia (1945-1991), the number of textile workers as well as the importance of the textile industry increased and reached its peak in the 1970s. The socialist textile industrial development changed its orientation. Besides the large textile industrial centres, smaller textile factory branches opened in the rural areas. Textile industrial workers gained a new status in the socialist society. They were included in the core of the socialist modernization plan. In the last 26 years, after the collapse of the socialist system and the Yugoslav state, many textile factories went bankrupt, textile industrial workers lost their jobs, and the number of employees decreased to less than one tenth.

When we discuss solidarity in relation to textile industrial workers, we should also address their political organization, industrial class-consciousness, and increasing political power. The textile industry was important for the history of the Slovenian economy and the history of industrial workers, but it was significant for the history of women as well. From its beginning in the 19th century, employees (production workers) in the textile sector were predominantly wom-

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[2]   Even though the Yugoslav political system and its socioeconomic practice cannot be equated with other former socialist countries in Central and East Europe, comparisons are nevertheless possible. See Vodopivec 2007.

en. Female textile industrial workers contributed actively to the fight for the collective industrial workers' rights (particularly during the collective textile strike in 1936). The female labour force characterized the textile industry in a particular way: the society saw it as a light industry, suitable for female workers. Such representations marked its development and co-shaped the perception of textile workers in the broader society (Vodopivec 2010).

In the article, I refer to the material I gathered between 2000 and 2012; interviews with textile industrial workers (retired, employed and unemployed), managers, directors, trade unionists and office workers across Slovenia;[3] field work in the Litija spinning factory (where I worked for a couple of months in 2005); and the historical literature on industrial workers and industrial work in Slovenia. Even though some of the historical literature addresses the situation in Yugoslavia, the article remains limited to the Slovenian socialist and postsocialist situation.

FACTORY COMMUNITIES AND SOLIDARITY IN SOCIALISM

Textile factories in socialist Slovenia (1945-1991) were considered an important centre of social and cultural modernization, a driving force that raised the awareness of a predominantly rural population.[4] In spite of this political agenda, they were not merely a subject of political propaganda, nor were these processes perceived as such by the local population (Vodopivec 2012a).

Textile factories influenced the lives of various generations as well as the broader local community. Several generations of the same families were often employed at the same factory. Workers knew the factory, materials, machinery, production relations, and factory hierarchy long before they actually got employed there. The histories and memories of families were intertwined with those of the factory. This contributed to the sense of belonging to the factory and to the work experience even more profoundly.

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3   For the list of factories and a more detailed description of the fieldwork see Vodopivec 2007.

4   Such did not relate merely to the textiles but to all of the industry, yet, in relation to other industrial branches, the textile industry had a particular educative role to play (Vodopivec 2012a). My fieldwork was done among textile industrial workers but I talked to other industrial workers as well, usually textile workers' spouses or other family members, even neighbours who joined us in our conversation.

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Textile factories (as well as other socialist factories) would build districts and blocks of flats, organize trips and social events, and arrange for the leisure time of their employees and their families by means of holiday homes at the seaside or in the mountains. Many retired textile workers told me that finding a job in a factory was tempting because it provided a solution to their housing problems. Such practices played a significant role, as housing problems were a pressing issue for textile workers, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s. Besides providing workplaces, factories allowed their employees to get acquainted with different lifestyles. Journeys and excursions organized by trade unions were particularly impressive, as for some employees they represented an opportunity to travel to the seaside or abroad for the first time. Factories would issue internal bulletins and report on technological improvements and employee trips, as well as publish the stories of retired workers or employees and simultaneously inform the workers of the factory operation and performance (a survey of bulletins reveals that the workers were always given a great deal of attention). The Litija spinning factory, for example, published three monographs on the factory, and every worker had at least one of these publications at home. When I visited them, they would leaf through them, proudly showing me photographs of themselves, their family and friends. The historian France Kresal, who wrote all three books, recalled the former director's aspirations to include all the workers in the book, so that they could recognize themselves in the photographs. I argue that with such practices during socialism, factory management systematically created a factory community and a sense of belonging.

By constructing the local infrastructure and structuring the leisure time activities, the factories did not only organize the lives of their employees and their families, but a considerably larger number of people. Factory communities structured and routinized everyday life, production, consumption, reproduction, as well as formal and informal social networks. Employment in the factory played a significant role in the formation of social networks, contributing to family life and integration into the local community. Factories would also build union halls that served as venues for central local ceremonies, and they had their own brass bands and choirs.

Different generations of the same family would gather in the factory for major celebrations: retired workers would be invited to sit together with their still employed children in the production halls in order to listen to the culture program and the performance of their grandchildren. The practices establishing factory communities did not only reinforce the sense of belonging in the employees, but also in the

local population; intergenerational connections were forged between the factory and local community. This is how places where solidarity could be enacted/practiced were formed.

Solidarity was a basic concept of the socialist Yugoslav ideology and its social-self management system, perpetuated by the ideology of labour and communal practices. As labour and communal solidarity practices often overlapped, I will briefly mention some of them. Normative solidarity practices included intergenerational solidarity, "voluntary" contributions in cases of accidents, for example earthquakes, fires, etc., or contributions given to the "underdeveloped regions", work actions, and brigades that built the basic infrastructure across Yugoslavia. One of the propagandized forms was voluntary work. Although it was not actually voluntary, many people have often perceived it as such or remember it this way today. Voluntary workers helped build stadiums, playgrounds, schools, restaurants, open-air cinemas, and holiday houses. Even today, in many cities across Slovenia, younger generations remember which part of the city their grandparents built. According to a historical account on voluntary work in Velenje, a Slovenian mining town, the director of the mine, who himself took part in the work, argued that such activities "united workers unobtrusively." (Kladnik 2013: 257)

Not many historical accounts exist on how socialist solidarity practices were experienced in everyday life.[5] Many foreign experts at the time found the Yugoslav participatory practices of the socialist society, social self-management, social property, and market socialism interesting. The international study by Howard Wachtel (1973) was one of the few critical works on self-management in Yugoslav factories, based on empirical data. The factories selected for the study remained anonymous and might not explicitly include any of the textile factories I have researched. I refer to this work, however, because it gives a general perception of the self-management system by the industrial workers at the time. The study focused on the decision-making power of self-management bodies – workers' councils. The results showed that the majority of industrial workers did not feel that the workers' council – and thereby the workers – had a strong influence in the decision-making process. According to 42% of workers from fifteen companies in Ljubljana, the self-management bodies actually failed in the process

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5   A more detailed historical empirical study of self-management practices and their perceptions as well as ethnographies of self-management would be needed to better understand historical realities, which I have not carried out.

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of consulting the workers. The study of four Slovenian companies[6] illustrated that the companies were mainly controlled by the managers, management boards, and directors. The workers in all four companies believed that the workers' councils should have exerted the most influence. The discrepancy between the perceived and actual influence was especially felt by unskilled workers, not by the managers. Judging from the surveys, the workers wanted to have more influence, mainly with regard to the working conditions, labour relations and wages, while they were less interested in the factory's business operations.

Historian Jože Prinčič – who analyzed party policy dynamics, entrepreneurship, and the role of directors in socialism (2008) – further pointed out these discrepancies by claiming that the directors overpowered the role of the self-management bodies. As of the 1960s, the companies gained more autonomy (in relation to the Communist Party). Consequently the director's team played the central role in running the business, even though its decisions had to be formally endorsed by the workers' councils.

This point was also raised by a former director of one of the textile companies, whom I interviewed in 2001: he described the workers' councils as bodies which he had to consult in order to "justify his decisions". His statement indicates that the director would make decisions, but that he had to substantiate them.

The retired elderly female workers whom I have interviewed would rarely make any particular references to self-management themselves. Whenever the workers' councils were mentioned, younger women (born after World War II) would often ignore them or comment that they only involved more meetings, conflicts, and negotiations on irrelevant things. Nevertheless, this does mean that workers have never addressed the ideas of self-management. But their concerns did not involve the decision-making power in the workers' councils, but rather the transparency of the factory's operation and the protection of collective rights.

Although the interviewees referred to socialism as a system of greater equality between people, they did not exclude hierarchies or relationships of authority in their recollections of the past. They took the labour organization that established the hierarchy for granted, and internalized the inequalities between the hierarchies of positions (despite also being critical). However, they did not take the wage

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[6]   Wachtel cited the unpublished material prepared by Bogdan Kavčić, Veljko Rus and Arnold S. Tannenbaum (Control Participation and Effectiveness in Four Yugoslav Industrial Organizations. Mimeographed, 1969).

differences for granted. The director-to-worker pay ratio was one to four, pointed out the female interviewees, and *"the pay scale was disclosed on the notice board."*

A retired older employee of the Litija spinning factory told me that the director helped *"the children earn their bread."* Such portrayals were common among many retired workers; the directors were seen as fathers, providing welfare for the employees' children (Vodopivec 2012a). The expectations that the directors should help workers with their children were also noted during my fieldwork in 2005.

The older retired generations would often refer to their lives and relationships in the factory as family life.[7] *"We were truly a family in the factory,"* commented an older retired woman in Litija (2003). As he described his attitude to the employees, the former director used similar family-life metaphors: *"The factory was my first home, and my wife and children came second."* The former directors of other textile companies pointed out their responsibility and concern for the employees, particularly women. This relation between directors, female workers and factories can be interpreted in the context of socialist paternalism. Socialist paternalism, however, was not considered repressive; people perceived it as the factories' concern for the employees.

The archive of the workers' council meetings of the Ljubljana-based Pletenina Textile Company provided me with an insight into the vivid and dynamic debates during council meetings in the 1960s. The workers' representatives in various commissions actively participated whenever the management would present business plans. They made suggestions with regard to labour organization, reported on day-to-day work-related problems, in particular regarding the relationships on the shop floor, in production, and circumstances external to the factory environment.[8]

When reading the meeting reports, I was surprised by the attention given to social policies and the harmonization of the employees' family and work environment: this is something that demonstrates a complex understanding of their interaction. I am mentioning this because of the different understanding of the basic concepts, social expectations, conceptual schemes, and social structures related to both

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[7]   The older generations of retired workers, born before the World War II, experienced both systems –capitalism before the war and socialism after it. For them the change was profound. In addition, such metaphors can be interpreted in the context of memory construction processes or life histories narrated in old age. For additional information see Vodopivec 2007.

[8]   The structure of meetings, together with the employees' participation, started to change in the process of economic restructuring in the 1970s.

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the understanding of solidarity and the formation of the conditions or opportunities for its development in the socialist past and during postsocialist transformation.

Development, according to the socialist scenario, was not limited merely to numbers, capital and production growth, but rather anticipated the modernization of the society, construction of the basic infrastructure (roads, electrification, communal facilities, etc.), as well as the improvement of the personal and social standard of people.[9] At the time, living standard assumed the collective fulfilment of needs, health, social security, and adequate working and living conditions of employees. The analysis shows that the most attention was given to housing (the issue was critical), establishment of food canteens within factories, childcare facilities, assignments to other suitable workplaces within the company, identification of occupational diseases, etc. All these fields of social care were very important for textile workers. Due to the unsuitable working conditions, textile workers most often suffered from rheumatic (spine) and chronic respiratory diseases, directly related to their living conditions and working conditions in particular.

SOLIDARITY AND LABOUR ORGANIZATION ON THE SHOP FLOOR IN SOCIALIST TEXTILE FACTORIES

The socialist ideology encouraged competition among the various textile factories and among the shifts within a single factory. It was very important that the shifts met their production norms. The production norm occupied a crucial role in the workers' memories. Besides the shifts, individuals had to meet these quotas as well, which resulted in conflicts, tension, and competition. The production norm system would often provoke nervousness and fear.

Many workers claimed that they had been upset because of the high production norms. Yet they qualified women who failed to achieve them as incompetent or not sufficiently hardworking. The production norms discriminated people, in particular separating blue-collar workers from their supervisors and white collars. It prevented the workers from vacating their workplaces and inhibited mobility.

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[9] The developmental economic and social tasks were not perceived equally by all companies. There were socialist factories that even opposed a more active social policy. However, in the context of socialist modernization, social concern for the employees was institutionalized.

The apparent autonomy of norms played an important role in the wage payment system; the workers would blame themselves for failure (Burawoy 1985: 171). On the other hand, due to this apparent autonomy the workers felt that they could organize and control their work. Some interviewees argued that norms were fairer, as one was paid in accordance with one's actual performance. However, the opinions of the production norms in the past remained contradictory.

Retired female workers told me that sometimes they did not want to leave their workplace, not even for a lunch break, in order to perform better. Such dedication was not popular among the workers. On the other hand, retired employees would also mention women who "did not try hard enough" and "paid for it" in their old age due to lower pensions.

However, the younger workers argued that due to the socialist practice of equalizing wages, it did not matter how hard one worked. They claimed that elderly women in particular could not keep up with the speed. The younger generations had to produce more to fulfil the shift norm.

Elderly women, on the other hand, knew the machines better and they had more work experience. They were usually highly respected among the other workers (technicians and supervisors), and they were also the ones who would teach the younger generations and newly-employed workers. The newcomers depended on their older colleagues, and if they did not mentor them, the newcomers could learn the process incorrectly. Thus they worked more slowly, and consequently did not meet the norm or they executed the task incorrectly. In this way, the older and more experienced workers would retain authority and influence.

The plurality of different disciplining mechanisms marked the production workers' experiences – besides the labour organization also gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, family histories, etc. – and constrained or enabled solidarity. The organization of labour in the factories established a system of production and formed the workers' subjectivities, relations between people, and different forms of belonging. In production, the employees were divided into technicians, supervisors, and machine operators; and jobs were divided between men and women. However, the division that influenced the employees most profoundly was between production and offices.

Although the organization of labour in the socialist factories in Slovenia was similar to the Fordist division into small units on the production line, these units were not equal – similarly as the Yugoslav self-management model cannot be equated with other socialist

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countries. Nevertheless, even in socialist Slovenia the factory regimes were determined by political decisions, quota systems, lack of machinery and resources, and in particular by the system of soft budget constraints[10]. Consequently, directors were forced to accumulate stock and to think and act in such a way as to gain control over resources. The negotiations between the factory directors and the state (political officials), as well as between the workers and their superiors, affected the centralization of power in the factories, while simultaneously establishing the factory communities, the sense of solidarity within the factories and among their employees in particular. Factory managers had to deal with outdated technology, lack of resources, and complicated administration due to the large number of production workers. The relationship that formed between the management and production workers enabled the latter to obtain – in exchange for extra hours and hard work – guaranteed posts, social security, various bonuses, shares of the profit, and other benefits, such as access to education, housing, and family and child assistance (i.e. scholarships, summer jobs, etc.). Being somewhat dependent on the production workers, the management would grant the workers more autonomy and flexibility in their work organization. Many textile industrial workers were semi-proletariat: they retained access to land by themselves or through their extended family. Land cultivation contributed to a better living standard of many industrial workers. During major seasonal works on their land, the workers would be absent from their respective factories. Such practice, often tolerated by factory managers, could be interpreted in the context of the same silent pact between production workers and factory managers. In socialism, formal and informal economy interlinked in a particular way; the latter served as an important security tool and was based on reciprocity and trust, social networks of factory communities (which also often overlapped with kin), neighbourhood relationships, rural communities, and personal/family friendships. The specific relationship of trust between the factory and its employees enacted solidarity.

The value attributed to industrial labour was formed through the relations between people, objects, and tools, on the shop floor,

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[10] By using the economy of shortage concept (coined by János Kornai in 1980), socialism was presented as a system of various modes of negotiations between administrative politics and factories. By addressing the shortages within planned economies and processes of negotiations, anthropologists in particular put the focus on studying the practices at the everyday level (considering individual choices, decisions and strategies), thus treating individuals under socialism as agents as well (Vodopivec 2007).

within a particular local community, and in the broader society.[11] Yet, labour was more than just a technological process, a rational or competitive activity subject to capital or political ideology. It was an embodied experience. In production, the embodied dimension of labour was direct and evident. The work was characterized by a number of non-verbal aspects that united production workers and simultaneously created specific body memories. These aspects could include many occupational diseases suffered by workers that operated similar machines or were employed in the same branch of textile industry. Recognizing common feelings, sharing experiences, and embodying skills also united the workers and initiated solidarity. I experienced that myself: after working in production for a while, I suffered from neck pain, burning feet, dry eyes; and thus I was able to relate to many life stories of the women I interviewed and feel connected to them.

THE POSTSOCIALIST TRANSFORMATION

The policies and practices of the factory community formation changed during the period of postsocialist restructuring, enhanced by the admission of Slovenia into the EU and the intensification and flexibilisation of labour. *"We are a joint-stock company, however the workers and pensioners are still major shareholders,"* stated a supervisor in 2004.[12] *"What I'm saying is that we're still somewhat old-school."* When asked what that meant, he said: *"Back then* (under socialism) *everybody owned everything and yet nothing. Now with private property, if twenty people invest money in the factory, it becomes theirs. No social property anymore. As I say to our workers at the meetings, now the factory might belong to us more than it did before. Earlier it wasn't ours."*

However, the interpretation of what is *"ours"* changed. The concept of joint-stock companies is closely related to the notion of ownership. This is a perception that was not shared by people in the socialist past. In the interpretations of the socialist past, *"our factory"*

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11   In Slovenia, the value of machine-operating physical labour started to change, in terms of its social value, already in the 1970s. Today, machine-operating physical labour is not an asset in the labour market. However, as I argue in my fieldwork, "knowing" a machine – i.e. operating it in the true sense of the word – still matters in the production of the Litija spinning factory. In fact, it calls for specific knowledge and skills, where experience is considered more important than school education.

12   Similar to many other companies in Slovenia, the Litija spinning factory was privatized through an internal buy-out. It became a joint-stock company in 1995 and a limited liability company in 2005.

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refers to the concept of belonging. Socialist factories systematically promoted the sense of belonging and constructed the workers' identities. Workers were perceived as social beings that satisfy their social needs for social security. Unlike today, social security was considered a nucleus serving the development of the workers' belonging and identity. Belonging was a network of entitlements, social relations, rights, obligations, duties and reciprocities.

In postsocialism, the workers' altered position in everyday life is characterized by inequality and power relations. In such a context, the difference between us and them is marked by the division between workers and factories. The factory that the workers used to refer to as "our factory" is now perceived as their opponent. They reproach "corrupted young managers" and the state that enables and tolerates their actions.

This is related to the restructuring of the labour market that redefined the workers' subjectivity, transformation of management regimes (within human resource management), and discipline techniques. The focus of human resource management[13] shifted from group relations to the individual: to their autonomy and creativity. Workers were no longer considered social beings that satisfied their need for solidarity and security through group relations. They were treated as individuals who construct their identities through work.

Loyalty and belonging remain important qualities of an individual, the so-called soft skills that an individual needs to acquire and market (Vodopivec 2012b), but they are no longer a part of the factory community policies, as was the case in the times of socialist factories. In terms of the redefined social and employment policies in the postsocialist market economy (in particular after the accession to the EU), today's society does not pay the same kind of attention to the harmonization of family and work environment.

Contemporary active employment policy in Slovenia actually promotes individualization, the policy of the individual's activation; workers themselves should ensure their employability, and the state is not obliged to provide it anymore – it is merely supposed to assist them. It is no longer about employment, but employability – i.e., the ability to transform professional profiles. The flexibilisation of the labour market was introduced as rationalization of social security costs within the EU. The modernization of social security systems was based on shifting (more) responsibility to the individual. The state was sup-

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[13] This is related to the general transformation of the workers' subjectivities rather than merely to industrial workers.

posed to become more efficient on the account of responsible and informed citizens and the outsourcing of social services.

Social transformations resulted in the invention of new vocabularies and expectations – social rights, for example, were renamed as social transfers. These reforms changed the way they tackle or explain social problems, exclusions, and structural conditionality. Structural reforms were accompanied by the stigmatization that served as a form of control, a way of disciplining the society. Unemployment and poverty were not considered structural problems, but rather the results of people's personal decisions and their lack of motivation (Leskošek 2014).

Drawing on works by the sociologist Nikolas Rose (1998), I see that the self-responsibilisation – stemming from the withdrawal of the state from social provision, marketization of labour and health, and from the transformation of workers' and citizens' "subjectivities" – has changed the way we understand and treat social conditionality and class relations. The self-responsibility paradigm is the matrix that emphasizes self-dependency and self-reliance with idea that "we cannot count on anyone but ourselves". Nikolas Rose draws attention to self-regulatory mechanisms, the contemporary role of economics, management, and entrepreneurship in order to create an entrepreneurial self that urges us to steer our lives and ourselves as a business. In this context, entrepreneurship is not merely an organizational or a business model, but it establishes the ideal of the individual's activity in different spheres of life; we should all think, behave and act as entrepreneurs. Business methodologies establish new ways of thinking in order to maximize productivity, competency, and efficiency with the aim of ensuring economic and personal growth.

I do not claim that these processes are totalizing. However, I want to point out the social effects that result from these processes: firstly, risk and responsibility are shifted from the institutions onto the individuals' shoulders; secondly, those who cannot adapt and "be flexible" become socially excluded; and thirdly, such expectations are internalised, and failure to fulfil them results in feelings of guilt.

In the first period of socio-economic restructuring after the attainment of Slovenian independence in the 1990s, all key players were included in the redistribution of the former social property: state (administrative policy), employers (managers), and workers (unions). The social pact terminated after EU accession (2004). In the second period, which radicalized the relationships, workloads increased and wage growth was systematically restrained (Stanojević 2010). The third period of changes coincided with the third wave of privatization; the radicalization of relations among workers, employers, and state; and Slovenia's

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entry into the Eurozone. The third wave (managerial buy-outs) had material and strong psychological effects, as privatizations dramatically deepened mistrust in the society (Stanojević 2010, Lorenčič 2012).

Labour market flexibilisation is related to the redefinition of labour. The imperative of the contemporary organization of labour is competitiveness – in the labour market as well as in production. Such production reorganization pits workers against each other, as they become each other's competition. Based on interviews with redundant workers from the Mura Textile Company,[14] tension and mistrust among the blue-collar workers has increased over recent years. The loss of trust among workers has resulted in the decrease of social capital in industrial collectives and consequently in the broader social environment. In a town where people know each other, tension and mistrust not only pose a problem at the workplace, but also in the local community.

In the new competitive context, many textile factories (those that have not closed) have transformed into organizations with flexible production. The first managerial "move" in labour-intensive export-oriented companies was to exacerbate the internal regulation mechanisms. The intensification (during the integration process and after EU admission) escalated the system of rigid internal authoritative regulations (Stanojević 2010). As explained by Silva, a former Mura worker, the working conditions changed; the procedures in production were only set up in theory, and it was never *physically tested whether such work could be executed in practice.* The working time did not include the time-consuming preparation (different materials require different machines), the time spent waiting for the materials, or the fact that machines might require repairs in the event of failure. The shortage of consumables (scissors, thread, spools, and shuttles) prevented the workers from performing their tasks on time, while the production norm was simultaneously increased. The working procedures were additionally aggravated by other conditions: *"We couldn't make the air conditioning work. It was hot, 42 degrees. And you could only meet the production norm by working between eight and ten hours. Now we are all allergic to bad air and heat. It doesn't surprise me that some die of stroke now. The pressure and impossible conditions have left a mark on us. We were like baby chicks under light bulbs."*[15]

Additionally, the textile industry (as well as many other industrial branches) in Slovenia has suffered from management buyouts

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[14]   In the socialist Slovenia, Mura became one of the largest ready-to-wear textile companies. The Mura Textile Company went bankrupt in 2009.

[15]   Interview, Murska Sobota, June 2011.

and the depletion of company assets. The number of employees in the textile industry dropped to less than one tenth over the last twenty years.[16] Factories have closed, and the unemployed textile workers have often had to fight in court for overdue wages, severance pays, and other social contributions. Social contributions have been deducted from their salaries, but not paid to the state for health, social insurance, or pension scheme.

Industrial workers, the central protagonist in the socialist modernization plan, have lost their previous institutionalized position. The reformed labour market policies have redefined the workers' subjectivities, production relations, and conditionality. The transformation has affected the way they understand and practice solidarity.

CONCLUSION

The narratives about solidarity in the socialist past are contradictory. During interviews, people may often claim that solidarity used to be more pronounced in socialism than today. Nevertheless, no fixed places of everyday solidarity can be identified in the sense that people perceived them as such directly.

Daniel Barbu argues that there was no solidarity in communist Romania, despite the political propaganda implying that there was. However, he points out that the short-term; nomadic forms of solidarity should also be considered, such as queuing (Barbu 1998, cited after Bădică 2012). Despite being despised, subject to criticism, and a laughing stock, queues established a form of sociality (people sharing information on products or standing in a queue for somebody else) that reinforced the solidarity of those who waited in queues against the system. Although Slovenia with its self-management system cannot be compared to Romania, I agree with Barbu's idea of nomadic solidarity during socialism, which was, in Slovenia, demonstrated by opposition to the system as well. To "trick the system" or "be resourceful" is the most common reference in many memories. I am referring to the example because it addresses other forms of solidarity besides the normative or institutionalized ones. This is what I have strived for in this article.

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16   The term textile industry, used in the article, refers to the production of textiles, clothing, footwear, and leather (according to the categorization of the Textiles, Clothing and Leather Processing Association at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia).

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In the paper, I draw attention to the places where short-term solidarity was demonstrated in everyday life. In addition to normative solidarity and different political institutions, ideologies and day-to-day life, socialist textile factories constituted particular places where solidarity could be practiced, as they established factory communities and implemented a specific labour organization. However, I argue that a more detailed study of the historical materials would be required in order to better understand how solidarity was experienced and understood during socialism.

In their narratives of the socialist past, the workers would refer to "our factory", believed in it, and spoke of it favourably. This did not mean that they have never been upset with it, never taken any stock from the factory and used it for their personal needs, mocked the ideas of community actions, or complained about them. Yet they were proud to show the extent of their investments. People had taken many collective rights for granted and started to refer to them once they were gone. Within the collective, industrial workers would identify themselves as the promoters of social development and the central political subject of socialist modernization, whereas today they are confronted with material and symbolic impoverishment. This is especially true of industrial workers, although the self-responsibility paradigm and structural adjustments have affected the workers' and citizens' subjectivities in general, as well as everybody's working and living conditions. The self-responsibility paradigm has not only shifted risk from society to the individual, but has also redefined its role: the individualized social conditions and circumstances are presented as the result of an individual's wills, their choices and abilities. Institutionalized solidarity has shrunk, and the conditions for solidarity that may be practiced on an everyday level have changed. However, we should not claim that solidarity has shifted completely to the private and intimate area of family life or to the occasional humanitarian contributions.

Many researchers and trade union movements point to the decline of the traditional workers' solidarity based on citizenship, social rights, and intergenerational solidarity. With flexibilisation and precarity, individualization has resulted in the de-collectivization of spaces where solidarity could be constituted. The reorganization of labour, precarity and the importance of competiveness make any sort of unification difficult, though not impossible. A more detailed study would be needed in order to identify and explore the contemporary places of solidarity in relation to working communities and working experiences, also with the aim of identifying its political potentials.

The article aimed to provide an overview of the different forms of solidarity in socialist Slovenia and within the changed structural conditions in postsocialism, in relation to work experiences and sentiments of belonging. At the same time the paper strived to broaden the discussion on solidarity by calling for a more complex understanding.

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