Kombinacja, or the Arts of Combination in Agrarian Poland

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Geography & Environment of the London School of Economics for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, London, May 2014.

Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work, except where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

I declare that my thesis consists of **98,233** words.

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I can confirm that my thesis was copyedited for conventions of language, spelling and grammar by Professor Gareth A. Jones and Mr. Simon Birkmyre.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my co-supervisors, Professors Sharad Chari and Gareth A. Jones, who helped me chart and navigate this exploration of *kombinacja*. There are not enough acknowledgements throughout the thesis that can give justice to the dedication and hard work they have persistently put into improving my grammar, challenging my thinking process, and clarifying my ideas. Their sharp and critical mentoring has challenged me far and beyond what I had imagined was possible. Under their mentorship, I have experienced a sort of personal enlightenment.

Dr. Frances Pine and Dr. Keith Halfacree's insightful comments breathed new life into the thesis. They helped me identify a theoretical framework for *kombinacja,* a hurdle that I have tried to clear for years. It is under their guidance that I have been able to envision new research trajectories into the terrain of 'transnational *kombinacja*'.

Fieldwork was made possible by the gift of information that I received from my grandmother Zuzanna and my mother Cecylia. Zuzanna showed tremendous dedication to this project. The sensitive information that she delicately extracted from the interviewees constitutes the empirical backbone of the thesis. My mother helped me fix my broken research plan by contacting her socialist-era network for the first time in a quarter century. She clarified the vernacular language during the interview transcription and translation phase. Both brought me closer to the 'village' that until then I had mostly heard about through family stories. They have helped me pursue a profession away from the beckoning call of the cleaning service van in Trenton.

I would like to thank the interviewees in the community who opened their doors and hearts to this project. Since 2009, many of them, including Fidelis who first introduced me to *kombinacja*, have passed away.

This thesis was funded by the LSE MPhil/PhD Scholarship, University of London's Central Research Fund, Polonia Aid Foundation Trust Grant, American Council of Learned Societies' Dissertation Writing Scholarship in East European Studies (NYC), and the Department of Geography & Environment (LSE).

I thank my partner Neil A. Anderson who makes me laugh every day. He has edited my chapter drafts more times than I can count and has formatted the final version of this thesis. Some of his photographs from earlier trips to Poland are also included in the thesis. Neil has financed the write-up dissertation process between 2013 and 2014.

All names and places have been changed for the purpose of anonymity. I have also changed the commune and village name on some archives, laws and web links. Unless stated otherwise, all translations are my own.

I dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my father.

Abstract

Peasants, workers, worker-peasants, nomenklatura and the state in northern Poland's 'Recovered Territories' have employed a strategy they call '*kombinacja*' to survive economic transitions into and out of socialism from 1945 to the present. *Kombinacja* is the process of manipulating space and legal, political, or cultural rules in order to appropriate a resource—food, commodities, labour, information, power—and then combine them into an ersatz product to meet an economic, cultural, or political end. No person, class, institution, or economy 'owns' *kombinacja.* The 'who' and 'what' are relational. The 'when' and 'where' are contextual. Yet, it is not ubiquitous; every *kombinacja* is a form of speech that charts a terrain of economic and political trajectories intended to shift the balance of power at a given point in time.

This multi-sited historical ethnography tracks how these 'arts of combination' have pirouetted across agrarian and industrial, formal and informal, socialist and capitalist boundaries in the agro-industrial commune of Dobra. The arts of combination were forged through the exploitation of workers in Poland's industrialising cities during the 19th century, across its popularisation as a survival strategy during Nazi-occupation, and towards its reformulation into an economic stabiliser for both villagers and the state during the 'socialist' era from 1945 to 1989. Villagers used *kombinacja* to access or hide resources from the state in the midst of broken supply chains, bureaucratic gridlock, food shortages, and complex regulations. When commune officials turned a blind eye to *kombinacja* to stay in power, they too drew from the arts of combination to 'fix' formal state problems in the commune. *Kombinacja* was used to subvert *and* accommodate the state. Reworking the state through *kombinacja* to ensure that no one went hungry informalised the command economy and contributed to the incremental breakdown of the local state apparatus into a feudal-like order. I then turn to nomenklatura privatisation, potato pilfering, alcohol consumption, mushroom foraging, and other practices to trace how *kombinacja* is being reformulated (or not) to rework post-socialism.

The arts of combination call attention to practices that cut across a series of binaries—capitalist/socialist, formal/informal, state/non-state—to show how those marginalised by power seek to control the conditions of their subjection and how those in position of power seek to control the conditions of others' subjection. Building upon J.K. Gibson-Graham's 'diverse economies', the case of *kombinacja* shows us that informality does not always create alternatives that subjugate hegemony; rather, they can alternatively be used to crystallise a hegemonic imaginary. I suggest a much broader understanding of how informality has been a site of ingenuity and inequality, innovation and suffering, across time and space.

Acronyms

AWRSP	State Treasury Agricultural Property Agency *Agencja Własności Rolnej Skarbu Państwa*
EU	European Union *Unia Europejska*
GSSC	Gmina Cooperative of Peasant's Self-Help *Gminna Spółdzielnia 'Samopomoc Chłopska'*
KR	Agricultural Circles *Kółka Rolnicze*
MZO	Ministry of Recovered Territories *Ministerswto Ziem Odzyskanych*
ORMO	Volunteer Reserve Militia *Ochotnicza Rezerwa Milicji Obywatelskiej*
PGR	State Agricultural Farms *Państwowe Gospodarstwo Rolne*
PKWN	Polish Committee of National Liberation *Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego*
PPR	Polish Workers' Party *Polska Partia Robotnicza*
PRL	Polish Peoples' Republic *Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*
PUR	State Repatriation Office *Państwowy Urząd Repatriatyjny*
PZGS	Powiat Association of Gmina Cooperatives *Powiatowe Związki Gminnych Spółdzielni*
PZPR	Polish United Workers Party *Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*
PZZ	Polish Western Committee *Polski Związek Zachodni*
RSP	Agricultural Production Cooperative *Rolnicza Spółdzielnia Produkcyjna*
RWPG	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance *Rada Wzajemnej Pomocy Gospodarczej*
SKR	Agricultural Circles Cooperative *Spółdzielnia Kółek Rolniczych*
UB	Ministry of Public Security *Urząd Bezpieczeństwa*
WZGS	Voivodeship Associations of *Gmina* Cooperatives *Wojewódzkie Związki Gminnych Spółdzielni*
ZNMR	State Agricultural Machine Enterprise *Zakład Naprawczy Mechanizacji Rolnej*
ZUS	Social Insurance Institution *Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych*

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Chapter 1

The arts of combination

1.1. Growing up with *kombinacja*

In 1985, I was born into a worker-peasant (*robotnik-chłop*) family in Dobra—an agro-industrial village in northern Poland. My father Arkadiusz was a manager in the state Agricultural Circle; my mother Cecylia was a secretary in the state tannery; my maternal grandfather Konrad was a tractor operator in the Agricultural Circle and had a seasonal income as the patriarchal head (*Gospodarz*) of his peasant (*chłop*) farm, on which he produced agricultural quotas for the state; my grandmother Zuzanna was the matriarchal head (*Gospodyni*) of the household who worked primarily to meet the farm's quota but earned seasonal income by helping out with washing linen and the beet harvests on the collective farm and in the Agricultural Circle; uncles Roman and Ludwik worked in the state mechanical enterprise and state forestry; and aunt Kinga was a biology teacher who belonged to the Party. Everyone in the family—peasants, workers, and nomenklatura alike—earned wages in state workplaces and helped the peasant farm meet its quota and produce enough food to feed our extended family.

Worker-peasant families—the 'awkward class' (Shanin, 1972) whose members commuted between the peasant farm and state workplaces with an enhanced 'autonomy and flexibility within the labour market' (Kolankiewicz, 1980, pg. 30)—dominated the *gmina*[1] of Dobra. In Dobra proper, *gmina* development projects concentrated the nomenklatura[2] in the village centre along Reunification Street, peasant farms in the northeast near the fields (*pola*), factory workers near the tannery (*garbarnia*) in the southeast, state forestry workers along the village peripheries, and state farm workers on state farm settlements away from plain sight. By the late 1980s, however, due to the necessities wrought by the 'economy of shortage' (Kornai, 1986), most households had one foot in agriculture and the other in industry or the state services sector.

[1] Commune. Dobra was a village and the commune headquarters of other villages.
[2] Locals called them the *szycha* (important people).

Figure 1 Childhood photograph with Zuzanna in Dobra, late 1980s. My private collection.

Class divisions between peasants, workers, and nomenklatura were not publicly visible—but varied on a household basis. Although universal employment was enforced by the state, each household—based on where its members worked—secured a different combination of rations, entitlements, wages, bonuses (*premia*), and access to state knowledge. In order to meet subsistence needs, villagers engaged in '*kombinacja*' which was critical to finding innovative and creative solutions to the constant instability wrought by scarcity. *Kombinacja* (colloq.) is a contextual term in Poland used to describe the process of manipulating legal, political, or cultural rules in order to access a resource—food, commodities, labour, information, power—to meet an economic or political goal. It encapsulates the creative and innovative practices used to acquire and 'combine' resources needed for survival or accumulation. Highly skilled *kombinators*[3]

[3] An individual, group, institution, or state can use *kombinacja* and be called a '*kombinator*'.

in the nomenklatura fared better during the privatisation period and contributed to the class inequality that began to emerge during the transition out of socialism. Most worker-peasants who lost their jobs when state socialism ceased to exist became, quite simply, the 'rural poor'. Emigration to Australia, the United States, and other Western and Northern European countries became one of the only options to secure decent jobs.

In 1990, Jakub—my paternal uncle who lived in Greenpoint, New York—formally invited my mother to the United States. This invitation 'entered' her name into the U.S. Department of State's Green Card Lottery held in 1991. When her name was chosen, the five of us were given a once in a life-time opportunity of an interview at the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw. We drove to Warsaw for the interview and we were granted permanent green cards to *Ameryka.* In September 1992, we flew from Warsaw to Newark Airport, were picked up by my paternal aunt Gabriela, and settled in a Polish immigrant community in Trenton, New Jersey. My father joined a Polish construction firm and my mother joined a cleaning service—occupations they held for the rest of their working lives[4]. I started in 1st grade elementary school.

We lived in an apartment complex populated with Eastern European and Russian immigrants who were mostly cleaning maids and construction workers. Some Polish tenants in the neighbourhood called it a 'PGR' because of its close resemblance to collective life on State Agricultural Farms (PGRs or Soviet *sovkhoz*). The rectangular apartment blocks were built in the 1970s and were connected through small pathways and one circular road that isolated them like a small island. Construction vans started their engines at 4:30AM and the mini-vans filled with Polish cleaning maids left after they dropped off their children at an elderly woman's apartment (*ó Babci*) in the complex. The surrogate grandmother would charge $5 per child per day and teach Polish songs and poems[5]. Some legal immigrant families like mine stayed away from relations with undocumented immigrants, unlike my friend Dagna's father who used *kombinacja* to profit from their legal status by pulling in (*ściągnać*) families and villagers from Poland through the U.S.-Canadian border. In the 2000s, their three-bedroom apartment was filled with something like ten Poles.

[4] Father earned formal wages doing construction work. Mother earned cash cleaning houses. Our household had both formal and informal wages.
[5] The Romanian local childcare market is similar (Kovács, 2014, pgs. 68, 76).

Kombinacja was all around us. Construction workers stole materials or evaded labour from construction companies; cleaning maids stole food and jewellery from the suburban homes. Skilled people in the community produced fake passports and social security cards for a hefty fee. Our neighbours told us how they were only eating potato pirogues because they were saving up $20,000 per person to secure fake green cards from someone in Trenton (they did and later bought a house). In addition to smuggling people, Dagna's father (with whom my father worked in the same construction company) purportedly 'rented' out his legal immigrant status and documentation to immigrants—like his brother—who wanted to start a construction business or get a driver's license. It was like voluntary identity theft. One year, that brother gave us a bathroom makeover and when we asked the price, he said it was for 'free'. He imposed it as a favour. What else did he want, if not protection or for us to keep our mouth's shut should he need our help in the future? The police cars parked along the perimeter of the apartment complex were a fixture in our community. After September 11th, there were many nightly police raids and deportations were immediate—but overall, only a handful of families got caught.

Access to medical services was a source of *kombinacja.* When we arrived in the United States, a man who lived in our shared apartment used my father's identity to get medical treatment in the hospital and departed leaving us with the bill. Another example was when my mother found out that she had thyroid cancer in 2007 and her friend found out that she had breast cancer. Both women cleaned houses for a living and both lived in the same apartment complex. But, while my mother submitted her income taxes, she earned too little to qualify for health insurance and too much to get Charity Care. Her friend Irena—an undocumented immigrant—filed no income taxes, went to a clinic as a 'dependent' of her daughter on a 'sponsored' student visa and got full, free medical treatment. Sometime later, she boasted to my mother about her free medical treatments and how she 'got around' the system, despite being aware that my mother had not. The experience continued to cause tensions especially when I became burdened with the 'daughter's duty' of 'fixing' the American system and navigating it for my mother who speaks very little English. Such *kombinacja* stories in *Ameryka* reflect the competition between immigrants over the limited pool of state resources for poor families.

Young people often become the 'chattels' of *kombinacja.* One young man in the neighborhood who was studying to become a police officer used his legal identity to buy a house for his undocumented family members. My friend Sabina got pregnant at 16 by her neighbour, who was an undocumented immigrant and ten years her senior, and eloped with him a year later. This Polish girl who loved science, became a cleaning maid and drove an Aston Martin. Her cousin Ofelia, on the other hand, arrived without papers with her mother to our PGR, went to a community college under the sponsorship of another legal immigrant and then met an American businessman with who became engaged in order to achieve legal status. She became a cleaning maid. *Kombinacja* and its 'pull' within the Polish community has a stickiness that marries Polish women to the cleaning service and the immigrant community, with little room for economic and cultural liberation.

Kombinacja networks are the glue that keeps the Polish diaspora clustered together and the ideal of the 'American Dream' a difficult prospect behind this curtain of *kombinacja* activity that sucks everyone in. When Al Pacino in *The Godfather: Part III* famously says, 'Just when I thought I was out...they pull me back in'—he expressed my fear of being destined to become another cleaning maid in the PGR. It is frustrating to know that by getting an education, moving out of Trenton, traveling the world, and choosing academia over the cleaning service, I am working *against* the gendered expectation of living like my mother, going to church every Sunday, cleaning houses for cash, getting married, and having children. It is both frightening and comforting to know that if I ever struggle to find formal work, there will always be a place for me in a cleaning service van in Trenton. Then, I will be a 'true' Polish woman.

Father, undoubtedly using a little bit of *kombinacja* back in the village during the socialism era, but drew the line at such *kombinacja* that might constitute illegal activity on American soil[6]. While he earned an extra $20 or so selling scrap metal from the construction sites and accepted tips on the job, he was against the moonlighting practiced by some of the other Polish construction workers. He made it a point to draw this boundary of legality/illegality during my upbringing: we often talked about what other Poles did and what we did not do for money. In fact, it was one of the reasons

[6] I cleaned houses with my mother to earn cash.

why my parents justified our inability to purchase a house or move out of the neighbourhood—we 'followed' the rules of being poor and not upwardly mobile. My parents drilled it into our heads that they had 'sacrificed everything' so that we could 'get a higher education'. My father insisted that he would not do anything during the day that he would lose sleep over at night—sometimes at the expense of being laughed at by other Polish men.

We perceived ourselves to be 'different' from the immigrants who had arrived *za chlebem* ('for bread'; see Erdmans, 1998, pg. 21; Zaretsky, 1996, pg. 123) with the intention of 'using the system' and returning back to Poland where they would build an enviable house with their dollars. The 'lure' of *kombinacja* was that it was a method of achieving a higher-class status in *Poland*, a utopia after decades of grueling, physical labour in the West[7]. Halinka, a fellow villager from Dobra who made it to Trenton without papers in the 1990s, has been working as a cleaning maid and sending back remittances to her husband and two daughters without ever going back to visit them. She lives in a single-bedroom apartment in inner-city Trenton; they live in a brand new house in the 'new' part of Dobra. I only know of one couple that has returned. Everyone else just has 'plans to return' but have been in Trenton for decades. Our family had no intention of a triumphant return, but whenever my mother did visit the village, she always purchased thousands of dollars' worth of gifts for the entire family, put on an air of opulence, and spoke with an authoritative voice about 'life in America'[8].

After my father's death and with no formal income coming into the house, my mother embraced *kombinacja*. She sublet a room to a Polish woman for several months to help pay the apartment bill. When the U.S. Census enumerators were walking around asking how many people lived in the house, the woman pressured my mother to lie about her undocumented status. My mother refused, the woman moved out, and since then has used her personal connections with the Polish landlord to intimidate my mother by

[7] Polish worker-peasants have traveled to the West to earn money. Zuzanna's parents emmigrated to Chicago to become workers in the early 1900s and then returned during the interwar period to buy a farm in central Poland.
[8] Our priest in the Trenton diocese stole $140,000 from the church when he retired to return to Poland in 2004.

breaking into her apartment[9]. Mother has become deeply entrenched in 'gift' exchange networks with immigrant women. Since my mother knows how to use the Internet, her friends who do not own computers call her with different questions she could Google for them. They also drop off food and gifts in return for the 'free' rides that she gives them to Brooklyn whenever she goes to visit. Or, when I go to IKEA, she asks for ten jars of raspberry jam to distribute to her acquaintances. Because she does not qualify for welfare or any other state programmes, these relationships help her get by while living dangerously close to the poverty line.

A new word has entered her lexicon, 'acquaintances' (*znajomi*), and she has nonchalantly begun slipping their stories into our everyday conversations. Recently, she told me that her acquaintances—who are quite well off and own a house—offered to volunteer at a church festival in Pennsylvania and instead of helping out, focused on stealing huge quantities of food from the church. Another *znajoma* told my mother that undocumented immigrants get their car insurance from All State Insurance. My mother called me one day to say that she spoke with the ASI specialist's Polish wife who distributes insurance on behalf of her husband from their home[10]. She had imposed a 'fine' on my mother's insurance bill without explanation, and then began distributing ASI 'credit' to cover it up when my mother complained about the high cost. The theme of these *kombinacja* stories is that economic opportunities are not systemic. They must be carved out using a time-sensitive calibration of networks and resources. This is a skillset that some immigrants seem to possess, unlike those follow the rules, wait for the system to reform, or 'try out' one of those loopholes that have long closed.

These *kombinacja* stories are bundles of information about what is *possible* when 'getting around' the American system. For an aging, Polish woman living below the poverty line, with no formal employment, wanting to make no real changes in her life, and who speaks almost no English, these myths carry messages of survival and hope.

[9] The Polish landlords of the apartment complex have turned a blind-eye to housing undocumented immigrants and accept bribes and gifts for renovations. My mother says that this 'ruling class' in the complex is similar to the socialist-era nomenklatura that offered its members positions of power and protection from the law.

[10] English speaking Poles take bribes from immigrants to arrange access to medical, real-estate, and insurance services. This replicates the socialist-era relationships between the people and the nomenklatura that received bribes in order to gain access to state entitlements.

For me, this is bad news because my mother expects me to perform a daughter's duty in making sure that she too has access to these resources like other immigrants. Take for instance, the myth of the $100 apartment. My mother heard from a *znajoma* that a Polish real estate agent in Trenton secured a low-income state apartment for her aging parents for $100 per month. Of course, when I tell her that this is probably a lie or the acquisition is conducted illegally she does not believe me, yet she pressures me for years to secure it for her through whatever means possible. When I refuse, she says that she has to reach out to the Polish PGR for 'help' because her own daughters will not. When she herself went to the real estate agent who supposedly secured this apartment and even gave her gifts and bribes, the deal fell flat.

These myths extended to medical services and 'miracles'. A *znajoma* informed my mother that there was a woman in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, who knew of a Polish pharmacy that sold a special white powder that would heal my grandmother's leg in Poland. We acquired the powder and mother took it to Poland where she advertised it as American medicine and applied it to grandmother's leg; proclaiming proudly that it had cured her from the inferior quality Polish medicine. No proof could dispel this myth. This system of informal information reveals an alternative mentality about entitlements and a different dimension of observed reality that trumps any other source of information. The message is that in order to acquire that 'possibility' in this American system, one must blur the distinctions between legal and illegal, observed and perceived phenomena. It is a different dimension of existence in this world.

Since *kombinacja* has entered our lives in a real economic sense, it has transformed my relationship with my mother into a series of economic transactions. She packs her car trunk full of food whenever she visits and once I accept, she takes out a packet of envelopes with translations and calls that she wants me to make on her behalf. If I refuse to perform these tasks that have now become entitltements via her gifts to me, she claims it is because I am 'too rich' or want 'money' to do it—treating me as if I were a corrupt, socialist-era 'doctor' who demands money in order to perform a service. In other words, she has 'domesticated' those relationships with public figures in the socialist period as a way of managing her household and children in the post-socialist one. For me, of course, it is one thing to study informal economies and another to be indoctrinated into them and threatened with negative sanctions if I do not 'help' in those

household duties. It is as if I have had to choose between being an upright citizen and being a good daughter.

Thus, growing up with *kombinacja* I learned that the 'formal' way of doing things—whether economic transactions or legally immigrating to a state—were constantly being negotiated and blurred across my neighbourhood. In *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America,* William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki (1918/1996) write that 'assimilation' into American society for the Polish diaspora was an 'entirely secondary and unimportant issue' and that the 'fundamental process' underlying Polish communities has been the 'formation of a new Polish-American society out of the fragments separated from Polish society and embedded in American society' (pg. 107). *Kombinacja*'s role during my upbringing in Trenton was exactly what strengthened Polish immigrants' economic networks, that has territorially clustered them into neighbourhoods like the PGR or innercity Trenton, while 'separating' that community from what I perceived to be the 'American' way of life. It has been one of the basic building blocks of the Polish diaspora—that has economically and territorially marked 'us' Poles from 'them' Americans.

Kombinacja has had a separate career in modern-day Norway. My maternal uncle Ludwik's family members (and many other villagers from Dobra) are all construction workers and labourers on horse-breeding farms in Norway (see Napierała & Trevena, 2010). Before the Schengen Agreement in 1997, Poles like Ludwik migrated without papers and sometimes even got caught; but networks formed and passage became easier over time when the law opened up the borders. They live in feudal-like arrangements—they stay for free in a Norwegian farmers' guesthouse or basement and work the land for pay. When I visited them in 2009, they spoke eagerly about *kombinacja* as a necessary means to supplement their incomes. They siphon construction material, eat food off the farm, and negotiate wages through various theatrics. I even observed some of their activity of 'taking' cabbage from a farm, to which they—knowing I was interested in the term—would laugh and say, '*kombinacja!*' The *kombinacja* in Norway, however, appears to be different than that which I have experienced in Trenton, which shows that not all forms of post-socialist *kombinacja* are alike across geographic contexts.

While in Norway, I became more interested—and somewhat involved—in the transnational facets of *kombinacja,* especially its role in migration. Ludwik stays in Norway for most of the year but his wife Magdalena goes back once a month to Dobra because their teenage daughter Karolina goes to school there. Each month Magdalena packs cheap Polish food into suitcases to bring back to Norway and at the airport buys vodka and cigarettes that she sells to Polish workers for a higher price in the Norwegian countryside. With an intimate knowledge of how Dobra functioned under socialism, they can transplant that system into working knowledge in Norway and earn a decent living for themselves and their four children. Agata in particular has become fluent in Norwegian, has recently purchased a house in the village, and is a caretaker at the local elementary school where her daughter attends. Ludwik told me that he is now living out his socialist utopia—which Poland had failed to deliver—in Norway.

In my family, *kombinacja* has been a versatile strategy that has been adopted in various ways to make ends meet from socialism to post-socialism, from Dobra to America and Norway. It has served as a template for identifying 'good' *kombinacja* (that protects our interests) versus 'bad' *kombinacja* (that does not represent our interests, or is illegal). The social reproduction of *kombinacja* can take many forms from engaging in gift economies, providing protection to immigrants, and enforcing gender roles. By narrating the economic relations of this concept, we can see how it is used creatively by multiple classes towards various economic and social goals.

1.2. How *kombinacja* found me in 2008

Although I was aware of the term and its application, I did not narrate others' or my personal history through *kombinacja.* After high school, when the Polish girls in my age group were falling into the ranks of the cleaning services and boys went to earn 'good money' in their fathers' construction businesses, I followed my siblings' route and attended university. After a study abroad experience in 2005 when I joined a land-rights movement in post-tsunami Thailand that sparked my interest in writing about property rights among marginalised communities, I returned to Dobra in 2008 to research peasants' post-socialist property rights for my senior undergraduate thesis. It helped me to 'fill in' what I had missed when I migrated to the United States and simultaneously pursue my newfound academic interests.

What caught me by surprise during that short trip was how varied the process of privatisation had been from village to village, because of how they had responded to the state's collectivisation drives in the late 1940s and 1950s. Adjacent villages only kilometres apart had vastly different privatisation trajectories. In general, the few villages that had opted out of collectivisation—usually because they were populated by a single extended family or ethnic group that acted in unison—continued some degree of farming while most other villages that once had a collective farm (*kołchoz*) were attached to a state farm (*sovkhoz*, PGR) which had much more complex, partially privatised landscapes. My gatekeeper Alfred and my interviewees continuously referenced the socialist era—especially the 1950s—to explain the trajectory of development in their villages. There was no 'beginning' of capitalism in 1989. Rather, I learned that in order to understand economic and developmental differentiation, it is imperative to understand the conditions under which some villages accepted, negotiated, or rejected collectivisation in the 1950s.

I noticed that peasants ordered time differently from the 'history' familiar in textbooks and televised world events. When I asked my grandmother Zuzanna how her life had changed from the socialist to capitalist eras she responded, 'For me, not much has changed'. She was using a basic ordering principle of survival; that the transition of the formal economy and state apparatus had not been able to transform during the transition process in the 1980s and 1990s. Time was not aligned neatly with the timeline of transition from socialism to capitalism in 1989—various interlocutors claimed that Communism collapsed in 1983, 1987, and 1995—which led me to think that there are other ways that people narrate their relationship to the state and formal economy. Villagers who could legally purchase a state restaurant and run it privately would say that Communism ended in 1983; workers who were left unemployed when the state tannery became privastised in 1995 claimed that Communism ended then for them. The spatio-temporal boundaries of socialism versus capitalism were defined by individual experiences with new and old economic flows. It was the point in time when individuals and families had to make economic adjustments—like becoming restaurant owners or migrant workers—in order to survive outside of the state workplaces where they had worked for decades. Peasants' and workers' perceptions of time emerged as an interesting way to gauge the 'process' of privatisation unraveling onto the village landscape.

When I commenced my doctoral fieldwork in May 2009, I set off to explore *how* peasants chose to accept, reject, or integrate state development plans, such as the collectivisation of their farms during the Stalinist era in the 1950s. Although interviewees often referred to the term '*kombinacja*' or '*kombinowanie*' as the main method of survival against the socialist state, the term evaded my radar because it appeared so familiar that I failed to question its conceptual significance. It was not until I interviewed Fidelis, a ninety-year-old Kashubian[11] who was the village's unofficial intellectual because he had occupied multiple positions (state forestry worker, forestry director, and administrator at the local government office) under socialism, that the term resurfaced as an important process. When I asked him why he kept on referring to the socialist aesthetic and mentality as 'grey' (*szaryzna*), he responded that it referred to the lack of resource flows and unfinished state building projects:

> Because not everything is finished. The city of Słupsk or Dobra itself, it was grey! Grey! Everywhere grey! Grey! It is not the case that a house would be painted somewhere because immediately (someone would ask), 'How does he have money? From what has he made money?' And as a matter of fact, one did not buy paint because there was no paint. Some might have had that type of money, but he could not do it because he did not receive—so he stole it from somewhere. Because simply put, then, it was not called 'stealing', it was called (pointing his index finger up) '*Kombinacja*'! Yes! It was not stealing!"

How could stealing *not* be stealing!? Growing up with *kombinacja* in Trenton, I had associated it with some form of theft, yet in the socialist context, it had been watered down and even positively sanctioned to acquire scarce resources. It was at this point that I began to reimagine *kombinacja* as a flexible process across socialism and capitalism; that *kombinacja* in one context may not be identical to the same concept in another economic, political or geographic context. Although it was not a part of my formal research proposal, this is where my rediscovery of *kombinacja* began, both as a category and its significance in my life. When I returned to the interviews, the term resurfaced in almost all of them in the discussion about the state and survival under communism. Furthermore, when I spoke to people about it in subsequent interviews, people would intersperse their answer with laughter and refer positively to the concept as an 'us' versus 'them' strategy.

[11] An ethnic group in northern Poland have their own language and alphabet.

Everyone knew what *kombinacja* meant within the specific context of stealing from the state, had examples of it, and claimed they never used it personally but appeared to have supported it. If there was any 'formula' to the *kombinacja* stories, it would include a workplace setting in the field or factory, the acknowledgement of surveillance from a party official, an explanation of how something ought to be done and then how the *kombinator* worked individually or collectively to evade the gaze of the state. Finally, the account would relate to how they brought that resource home or benefitted privately from it at the expense of the state. I realised that talking about *kombinacja* was how I could become 'included' in the conversation and learn what it means to be a part of the 'us'. In other words, connecting with *kombinacja* connected me to the heart of the Polish community.

This rediscovery was problematic to my role as an ethnographer and to my newfound 'subject', because my personal experiences with *kombinacja* could not be separated from what I had 'rediscovered' during fieldwork. Could, and indeed should, I write from the perspective of a Western ethnographer who stumbled across an odd term, or a subject that with some training from relatives one could learn this skill-set of thinking like a *kombinator*? It never occurred to me to identify myself as 'traversing' both subject and ethnographer sides even though I have evidently done so. I played along with the dualism of being either an ethnographer or a subject. When I embraced my 'subject' voice, I felt accountable for any negative representations of my community[12]. In other words, in order to figure out *kombinacja,* I thought that I had to position myself at the centre of analysis by undoing or contesting my opinions about *kombinacja* that I developed as a defence mechanism to aid integration into American society. In order to write from an auto-ethnographic perspective[13], I had to rework my own prejudices, understanding, and experiences with *kombinacja.* I had not imagined *kombinacja* as having 'multiple roles' or as pluralised across geographies and time. Instead of questioning dualities, for a long time I reinforced them.

The more I knew about *kombinacja,* the more I gravitated towards the subject voice without knowing it. The narrative began to accidentally take the shape of the

[12] See Skott-Myhre et al. (2012) on accountability in auto-ethnography.
[13] Reed-Danahay (1997) writes that auto-ethnography stands at the intersection of native, ethnic, and autobiographic ethnography (pg. 2).

'vulnerable observer' (Behar, 1996) or 'autoethnography' (Steedman, 2003; Limón, 1994). I began narrating *kombinacja* through a voice which represented the community rather than as an 'ethnographer' conducting analysis from a more distanced perspective. I did not know which voice was the subject or the ethnographer. However I could easily find explanations without specific ties to empirical evidence but just *knowing* that if this was the case or this were the context, this is how the villagers would perceive or act on it. I sometimes took the voice of the state and sometimes took on prejudices and misconceptions that were not even my own. Whose voice was it really;[14] the UK-based ethnographer 'I', the Trenton/immigrant 'I', or the Dobra/local 'I'? Or were they 'blended voices'? (Brettell, 1997, pg. 243). In her memoirs, Hoffman (1989) writes about the multiplicity of voices that emerge due to her dislocation from Poland to America and struggles with 'searching for a true voice', wondering whether she can 'trust English to speak my childhood self'. She attributes these voices to the lack of a geographic centre in her life 'pulling the world together'. Instead, she struggles with the 'scattered nodules competing for our attention' in the form of multiple voices (pgs. 274-275). Struggling with these voices, I realised that reflexivity would be a continuous process. In order to write the ethnography, I would have to rewrite myself.

It was difficult to question my family's narration of *kombinacja.* On the one hand, my mother would say that *kombinacja* is a global phenomenon, 'The whole world is one big *kombinacja*' even if the world did not know that this concept existed or was aware that an action could be defined as such. Ludwik told me that having lived both under socialism and capitalism he knew that Westerners—including myself—could not understand or think in the logic of *kombinacja* because they mostly engaged in formal economic activities. They never experienced socialism and could not inhabit this other dimension of dancing around formal structures, dislocating resources from formal economic flows and reformulating them into new economic objects for private advantage.

[14] O'Reilly (2009) writes that insider ethnographers differentiate themselves from outsiders in that 'rather than *describing* the unconscious grammar of the community; their ethnographies are *expressions* of it, the result of a superior insider knowledge gained through primary socialisation' (pg. 114).

The suggestion dawned that in order to tap into this mentality and understand it, I would have to re-indoctrinate myself into this 'other' world of *kombinators*. I thought that engaging in the conversation about *kombinacja* would somehow help me bridge that linguistic and cultural gap with the rest of my family of farm labourers and the rural poor. 'Diasporic' Poles and 'native' Poles are basically perceived to be two different species. Eager to please and learn, if they told me *kombinacja* was something Westerners *could not* understand because they had not been raised in a society such as ours under socialism, then I believed that binary and included it in how I presented my work. I have had the tedious task of undoing some of these conceptions and prejudices; as a diasporic 'native' ethnographer, I have in turn brought on board a lot of ideological baggage.

1.3. *Kombinacja*'s origins

Part of this project of undoing these prejudices emerged through my investigation about *kombinacja's* existence in historical records. *Kombinacja*, as it has been described thus far, is a colloquial term with no formal definition in the Polish dictionary other than what we define to be 'combination' in English (i.e. 'to mix'). Given its multivalent and multi-sited existence in socialist Dobra, post-socialist America and Norway, the question of whether *kombinacja* operates as an isolated phenomenon—specific to Dobranians who had exercised the strategy under socialism and adapted it to their survival strategies to their host countries—is a legitimate one. In other words, is *kombinacja* a phenomenon that can be studied across Poland?

In his investigation of urban survival strategies in post-socialist Warsaw, Kusiak (2012) defines *kombinować*[15] as an historical narrative in the survival of the Polish nation:

> Since feudal times in Poland it has been considered a skill which one should be proud of, as it allows the underprivileged to access otherwise inaccessible resources and trick the oppressor. It was the exceptional ability to *kombinować* that helped the majority of Poles to survive the Nazi occupation, the socialist shortages, and the shock of post-1989 inflation (pgs. 296-297).

[15] Verb tense of *kombinacja*.

In her investigation of 'resourcefulness' in 1970s Warsaw, Mazurek (2012) defines *kombinowanie*—in the past tense—'as a family tradition' which 'was a defense against negative circumstances, against the cyclic trauma caused by property loss and diminished social status' (pg. 306). Barcikowska (2004) defines *kombinowanie* on open.democracy.net, 'as part of an indefinite struggle for biological survival, an all-too-human defense mechanism against an inhuman system' (pg. 1). While it is a relief that other anthropologists and sociologists had noticed this process in other parts of Poland, they all situate *kombinacja* in the 'feudalism', 'family tradition', and 'human instinct' boxes that propagate the myth of *kombinacja* rather than supporting it with historical evidence. Furthermore, all studies of *kombinacja* are time-capsuled into the 'socialist' or 'post-socialist' period rather than understanding its transformations over time. Since *kombinacja* is a colloquial term and it has been in the Polish 'tradition' for a long time, would it not have at least one entry in the dictionary? I began to suspect that the term *kombinacja,* which sounds a lot like English 'combination', was a cognate to a foreign term.

I began enquiring about its etymology and historical origins. After conducting some archival, historical, and literary research, my best guess at the time of writing this thesis is that *kombinacja* originates from the Latin *sociare* (to combine)—the origin of the word 'socialism' that became popularised during the rise of British socialism in the late 19th century (Bevir, 2011, pg. 14) —and its popularisation is likely the product of West-East labour and literary movements. This is not to imply that these sets of practices did not exist prior to the import of the term '*kombinacja*' into the Polish lexicon. Instead, calling them *kombinacja* linked with a broader political and economic movement of 'combinations' that swept across industrialising Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries.

During the Industrial Revolution in 19th-century Britain, 'combination' (organised alliance, association) was a term used in legal texts and newspapers to describe workplace struggles between skilled workers (or journeymen) and masters, prior to the advent of formally recognised trade and labour unions. Masters entered into combinations with one another to set prices, wages, and working hours in response to the technological advancement of industry; journeymen organised meetings with each other to agree upon wages and their limitations on the number of apprentices they would allow on the workshop floor. The introduction of new industrial technology

meant that skilled workers who wanted higher wages could be replaced by the masses of unskilled labourers migrating into the cities and who were willing to work longer and for less. Then, when combinations of both masters and workers settled on their plan the two sides in each workplace met annually or bi-annually to establish the conditions of their working contract. Given that there were no trade or labour unions, this was highly variable from workplace to workplace (see Whatley, 1987; Thompson, 1963). Master combinations versus worker combinations represented the struggle over who got to set limitations on capital flows, labour output, and the overall development trajectory of the Industrial Revolution. Thus, the association between 'combining' and 'socialism' was false because masters' combinations pushed back on the workers' combinations for better wages and hours.

Thus, 'combination' was not borne out of industrial 'capitalism', nor was it specifically related to workers' solidarity. In 'Chartism' (1853) written to the *New York Daily Tribune,* Karl Marx writes that combinations do not belong to anyone in particular and even though many combinations fizzled out, combinations over time amounted to the turnover of economic and political power as they had done so in the pre-capitalist era (pg.1). Combinations generated economic difference which disrupted the formal economic order. In *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1867), Marx similarly stated that feudalism was overthrown through the 'partial' combinations of the bourgeoisie:

> In the bourgeoisie we have two phases to distinguish: that in which it constituted itself as a class under the regime of feudalism and absolute monarchy, and that in which, already constituted as a class, it overthrew feudalism and monarchy to make society into a bourgeois society. The first of these phases was the longer and necessitated the greater efforts. This too began by partial combinations against the feudal lords (pg. 125).

Not all bourgeoisies entered into combinations. Those who did, however, generated enough differentiation within the system in order to disrupt it and establish their leverage over its trajectory. Combination, as a tactic to gain control over formal economic development, helps us understand why masters' combinations existed in the first place (they were the residue of the overthrow of feudalism) and why they pushed back against workers' combinations (they were protecting their formal order). Workers were disrupting the behemoth of industrial capitalism created by the masters, and securing control over capital flows, wages, and the expansion of technological

innovation that contributed to the struggle over formal economic and political power. Entering into combinations meant making a claim through economic differentiation over existing formations of economic and political power.

During the Industrial Revolution, combinations exemplified the workers' budding class-consciousness akin to how the bourgeoisie had acquired class consciousness via their combinations to overthrow feudalism. Marx (1867) wrote that the 'first attempt of workers to associate among themselves always takes place in the form of combinations'. Workers' combinations as a 'common thought of resistance' had a 'double aim': 'that of stopping competition among the workers, so that they can carry on general competition with the capitalist'. (pg. 125). Marx was wary, however, that workers' combinations could generate a shift in the distribution of political power, of which socialists as well as capitalists were members. This third method of economic self-determination did not please 'economists' or 'socialists':

> The economists say to workers: Do not combine. By combination you hinder the regular progress of industry, you prevent manufacturers from carrying out their orders, you disturb trade and you precipitate the invasion of machines which, by rendering your labour in part useless, force you to accept a still lower wage […] The socialists say to the workers: Do not combine, because what will you gain by it anyway? A rise in wages? […] Skilled calculators will prove to you that it would take you years merely to recover, through the increase in your wages, the expenses incurred for the organisation and upkeep of the combinations. And we, as socialists, tell you that, apart from the money question, you will continue nonetheless to be workers, and the masters will still continue to be the masters, just as before. So no combination! No politics! For is not entering into combination engaging in politics? (pgs. 123-124).

Unlike in Britain, combinations in Poland became a radical mix of class consciousness and nationalist resistance against foreign colonisation[16]. During the Industrial Revolution, Poland had been partitioned by the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Prussian empires (since the 18th century). Formal education about these partitions was banned, thus the Polish language and national identity was taught in transient 'flying universities' (*universytety latające*). Due to limitations on political organisation and expression, much of the commentary on economic and political liberation was taught

[16] In France, they engaged in *combiner*; in Germany, *kombinieren.*

through Polish literature. Polish authors, in the 19th century Young Poland (*Młoda Polska*) modernist movement, began using the term '*kombinacja*' to explain Poles' economic struggles against industrialisation and nationalist struggles against Russification [17]. In the novel *Ziemia Obiecana* (Promised Land, 1899) about industrialising Łódź in the 19th century, Nobel Laureate Władysław Stanisław Reymont claims that '*kombinacya*' [sic.] is something that is 'unfolding' in the world:

> Think, what is this strange *kombinacya* that is unfolding today in the world: the human enslaved nature's forces, discovered masses of strength—and went into his own shackles exactly into his own forces. The human created the machine, and the machine made him its own slave; the machine will expand itself and grow until infinity and so will the human's enslavement expand and grow (pgs. 345-346).

Similar to the workers in Britain's industrialising centres who were faced with the substitution of their labour with machines, so Reymont's description of machines represents a threat to human freedom. While in the British case the workers combined against the masters' combinations, in the Polish case, the reader is not so 'sure' who the Master is or who is responsible for this top-down '*kombinacya*'. However, Reymont later describes the worker retaliating against that *kombinacya* with his own individual *kombinacya*: 'He wandered around Łódź for entire days, submerged only in *kombinacya*s that sought to harm the manufacturer' (pg. 355). Again, this references the British workers' combinations that were partially engaged in Luddism on the workshop floor in order to physically wreck the machines that cheapened their wages and eventually substituted their labour. However, unlike the British workers' combinations, the Polish worker was isolated and carried out *kombinacya* on his own. So, while we see the same dualism between masters' and workers' combinations to control the progression of industry, in the Polish case, rather than being a specific employer, the master is a more mystical category for a process that is engulfing and enslaving the country. Rather than engaging in group *kombinacya,* the worker is left to his own devices. Reymont's usage of *kombinacya* functioned as a commentary on Polish workers' fettering to the (foreign) machine and future potential for solidarity with the 'combination' labour movements spreading across industrialising Europe.

[17] I could not find usage of the term prior to the 19th century.

Polish *kombinacja* acquired a dimension of *aesthetic* resistance. Since public demonstrations against the occupiers were illegal, resistance became embedded onto the site of the body and its ability to dance around the institutions of the occupier. *Kombinacja* was no longer something specific to the workers, the workplace, wages, or machines, but instead was democratised and pluralised as a strategy that could be used by anyone for any purpose.

Stefan Żeromski in *Syzyfowe prace* (Labours of Sisyphus, 1897) revealed this magical and nationalist dimension of *kombinacja* (*'nacja'*, in Polish, means 'nation'). The novel takes place in a schoolhouse in Tsarist-occupied Congress Poland, where children were not allowed to speak Polish on school-grounds and were taught Polish history by Russian teachers. The children used *kombinacja* to distort reality and achieve a sense of distance and liberation from the educational institution. When one student met his Russian teacher with big glasses, he wondered whether she could even 'see' him and then 'by a process of strange associations of impressions' he used the process of *kombinacja* to help imagine the teacher as 'similar to […] a huge fly' (pg. 4). *Kombinacja* here represents the ability to imagine different possibilities. In a later passage, the teacher identified students using *kombinacja*—'Around the first class Radek noticed, that this student *kombinóje* with hardship and that he almost has no memory' (pg. 77). We still see this interaction with the 'master's gaze' that is able to identify *kombinacja.* It was only in the physical education class that children's bodies were free from institutionalisation—'Without an understanding of any type of method action, blindly and through conjecture, gave birth to character, excited the memory, and with using his own elements or horsing around [the] perceptiveness and strength of using *kombinacja*' (pg. 78). Żeromski clearly shows that *kombinacja* is like a form of childish deviance that seriously undermines the 'Other' but which in itself should not be castigated too seriously. Through *kombinacja*, nationalist resistance could now be embodied in deviant thought and displayed in bodily movements.

During the Bolshevik Revolution, the Soviets combined both the British combination and Polish *kombinacja*. State-censored Soviet literature in the 1920s reframed the *kombinator*—'dystopia's Provocateur' and the 'Truly Free Individual' (Zholkovsky, 1994, pg. 254) as a bourgeoise capitalist. Ostap Bender—the *Velikii Kombinator* ('Grand Schemer')—was introduced in Ilia Ilf and Evgenii Petrov's novel *The Twelve*

Chairs (1928). Ostap, whose dream was to become a millionaire and move to Rio de Janeiro, 'effortlessly squeezes information out of people, slips in and out of roles, and penetrates through situations' in a 'brilliant twistiness in the aesthetic of other worlds' (Pesmen, 2000, pg. 204). Ostap hunted 'individual treasure in his collectivist land' and 'subverts the very idea of conformity by artistically aping the official clichés' (Zholkovsky, 1994, pg. 242). The Soviet *kombinator* was a mix of the British masters' capitalist spirit, the Polish workers' Luddism in Łódź, and the Polish children's innovative strategies for subverting Russification.

What is fascinating is that even with these nuances of *kombinacja* in the Soviet case, the word and strategy remains to be used to describe deviance. If they had followed the British model of combinations that strove for workers' rights—a model that seems like it would fit well with the proletarian revolution—then the *kombinator* would have been a worker's hero. Yet, the *kombinator* was a deviant, more akin to Marx's definition of combination as representing a subversion of a formal order; which in this case, represented the Soviet state. Even if the proletarian revolution was the product of workers combinations against the Czar and the bourgeoisie, the *kombinator* figures continued to be the wrecker under the dictatorship of the proletariat[18].

Between the rise of the Soviet Union in the 1920s and the end of the Second World War in 1944, *kombinacja* took on another dimension: *kombinacja* was a method of using personal networks to transfer scarce resources from the public realm into the private. Pesmen (2000) writes that the Soviet *kombinator*'s strategies, akin to the Russian chess strategy of *kombinatsiia* ('a planned sequence of moves that bring unexpectedly great profit'), became '*the* prerequisite for understanding Soviet life'. It became a fundamental component of how people acquired scarce resources which they were not legally entitled to or could not acquire by going to a store (pg. 204). It represents a horizontal diversification of the economic fields in which *kombinacja* could be organised and practiced. Here, the formation and reproduction of class consciousness, nationalism, and political submission are of secondary importance to the role of *kombinacja* in socially and physically reproducing the household and family unit.

[18] In 1996, Petrov's chapter 'The Grand Kombinator' came out as a book with the Cyrillic on one side and Hebrew on the other—which suggests a renewed admiration for this literacy character.

This adaptation of *kombinacja* as a basic instinct of survival was most powerfully illustrated in war survivor's oral narratives and Jewish Holocaust literature. In Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz* (1958), the Häftling (inmates) used it to acquire third-rate tobacco in the concentration camps: 'The traffic is an instance of a kind of "*kombinacja*" frequently practiced: the Häftling, somehow saving a ration of bread, invests it in Mahorca; he cautiously gets in touch with a civilian addict who acquires the Mahorca, paying in cash with a portion of bread greater than that initially invested' (pg. 80). The narrator claims that, 'Whosoever does not know how to become an "Organisator", "*Kombinator*"[...] soon becomes a "musselman"—a walking cadaver' (pg. 89). In a similar vein, in Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1973), Haskel uses '*kombinacya*' to get past the German guards in Sosnowiec camp (pg. 116), as seen in Figure 2. The Hebrew 'combina' (קומבינה) used in Israel (Jauregui, 2014, pg. 30) is the only other term that is used in the same context as *kombinacja*[19]. We see how Jewish *kombinacya* that subverted one formal order under the Nazi occupation was then adopted as 'combina' to support a new formal order.

This brief historical sketch covering 19th century Britain, partitioned Poland, Soviet Russia, and Nazi concentration camps reveals several important qualities about *kombinacja*: (a) it can take the form of a group, individual, institution, or process (e.g. 'industrialisation'); (b) it can be both physically traceable in the form of wage increase and resource flows through networks, as well as not traceable but only expressed in politicised forms of creative thinking with bodily movements; (c) it has no geographic, ethnic, or class loyalties: it can be adapted and used by multiple actors in different countries (and places) during different economic and political transitions; (d) it is a process that can produce economic difference or preserve (or impose) a formal economic and political order; (e) it is not ubiquitous, meaning that each combination or *kombinacja* are specific actions and activities that exemplify contextual struggles over resources and power within a specific space and time.

[19] Sivan (2010) writes that it is 'a slogan word referring to the bypassing of rules or commitments' in which 'each of us gets to decide whether to follow the rules or change them', a concept of economic and political self-determination that was critical to the state-making process for Israel in 1948 (pg. 1).

Figure 2 *Kombinator* in Spiegelman's *Maus* (1973, pg. 116).

The irony of *kombinacja* is that it resists binaries that give form to economic, political or cultural rules, but that it in itself preserves some semblance of an identifiable 'form'. This rubric of *kombinacja,* revealing its internal flexibility as a strategy as well as its external application to multiple geographic, historical, economic, and political contexts, is what I mean when I refer to 'the arts of combination'[20]. Not only does it take innovative thinking to subvert or preserve a formal order through skillful adaptation to and manipulation of shifting activities and binaries, but the flexibility of the strategy across time and space exposes how it in itself has woven itself around the narrative of 'history' without getting caught or seriously researched, while at the same time diffusing and infusing economic projects and changing historical trajectories.

[20] Thanks to Professor Sharad Chari for this phrase.

1.4. Researching *kombinacja* from socialism to post-socialism

My experiences with post-socialist *kombinacja* in Trenton and the types of *kombinacja* exercised before the Second World War are very different, even though they are referred to by the same term. Its post-socialist expressions in reproducing gender roles, easing migration and smuggling patterns across national borders, preserving the geographic cluster of the diaspora, defining economic ethics ('good' versus 'bad' *kombinacja*), and providing political protection to immigrants, are new expressions of *kombinacja.* Ethnographic studies of *kombinacja* in Poland reemerged in the late 1970s and 1980s, however nothing seems to have been written about how it adapted to the postwar socialist state-making project, from early to late socialism, and from socialism into the 'transition' into capitalism after 1989. My research attempts to address this 'blind-spot' on the transformation of *kombinacja*. My guiding questions are:

(a) How has *kombinacja* changed and evolved over time?

(b) How did each expression of *kombinacja* affect the formal economy and state development processes such as postwar reconstruction, collectivisation, de-collectivisation, and marketisation?

(c) In what ways did the state benefit (or not) from the economic differentiation reproduced through *kombinacja*?

I track these 'arts of combination' across the boundaries of the agrarian and industrial, formal and informal, socialist and capitalist in the *gmina* of Dobra located in Poland's Recovered Territories (*Odzyskane Ziemie*) which make up the western and northern part of the country. These territories that were annexed from Germany after the Second World War are an interesting fieldwork site for investigating *kombinacja*'s transformations from the socialist state-making period to the post-socialist period. The territories were a site of immense economic struggle over the postwar development trajectory between Poles and the Soviet-backed Polish state that was attempting to establish its own state presence on the German lands. Unlike the rest of Poland that resisted collectivisation in the 1940s and 1950s, the Recovered Territories became Poland's most Sovietised region. Densely populated with enormous state farms (*sovkhozy*), collective farms (*kołchozy*), and nationalised industry, they resembled

Soviet Russia more than the rest of the country that was dominated instead with private family farms.

The territories are a prime location for investigating how *kombinacja* is transmitted between groups that come in to contact with one another. After the war, the territories were the location of one of the largest human resettlement campaigns in modern history, with millions of Germans replaced by millions of forcibly resettled Ukrainians, repatriated Belarusians, and 'wild-cats' from central Poland—who all spoke different Slavic languages, practiced different religions, had fought on opposite sides in the war, and had experienced different degrees of Sovietisation. Did each ethnicity produce its own variant of *kombinacja*? How did the local state representatives manage *kombinacja* to build or disrupt solidarities between these ethnic groups? At what point did *kombinacja* become such a part of everyday life that it could be described as such by a Kashubian who had few prewar ties to the Polish community? How was it socially reproduced within each household? These questions aim to reveal how *kombinacja* became adopted by other groups as part of a broader process of assimilation to local economic conditions and how it became embedded into the everyday way of life alongside the 'formal' state and economy, even changing the very binary of formality and informality.

Investigating *kombinacja* across the socialist, capitalist, and post-socialist contexts in Poland can illustrate informality's flexibility across time and space. Informality is a response to what Polanyi (1944) identified as the 19th century formation of the state-market nexus that positioned the modern state as the regulator of formal economic activity (see Castells & Portes, 1989, pg. 12-16; Hart, 1973, pg. 69; De Soto, 1989, pg. 12). It enables labour and capital to imperfectly align, establishing *systemic* linkages between the formal and informal sectors, and transforming the state's formal power (Hart, 1973, pg. 78). As Alsayyad and Roy (2004) define informality, 'if formality operates through the fixing of value, including the mapping of spatial value, then informality operates through the constant negotiability of value and the unmapping of space' (pg. 5) and drives home its relationship with *kombinacja*'s evasion of form. As Hart (1987) underscores, the 'informal' has theoretical applicability across economic contexts: so long, he writes that 'there is formal economic analysis and the *partial*

institutionalisation of economies around the globe along capitalist or socialist lines, there will be a need for some such remedial concepts as the informal economy' (pg. 1).

In this thesis, I explore the uneasy fit between '*kombinacja*' and 'informality. Both *kombinacja* and informality blur spatial, legal, or cultural boundaries that limit material and immaterial resources to a very specific group of people. By investigating *kombinacja*, we can establish some methodological precedent for tracing informality's transformations over time, under and through the current of 'formal' economic and political changes. What role does informality play in the function of the state-market nexus across socialist and capitalist economies? In what ways does informality benefit the 'formal' economy or state? How does it get reproduced alongside the 'formal'? These questions can help reposition informality at the centre of historical and ethnographic investigation to uncover new histories and processes at work in ordering or disordering economic, political, and social life.

Chapter 2

Making possible worlds

2.1. Introduction

Tracing *kombinacja*'s evolutions across socialist and capitalist transitions complicates the existence of capitalist/non-capitalist, capitalist/socialist/post-socialist, informal/second economies, formal/informal, private/public, and private/collective binaries. Binaries limit our understanding of the complex political, economic, and social processes that are produced and reproduced through the bridging and blurring of these 'ideal-types'. They diminish the human creativity and innovation that gets channelled into the production of economic alternatives that are co-opted into hegemony through the binary structure. *Kombinacja's* refusal and refutation of binaries links it empirically to multiple post-structuralist and constructivist theories of heterogeneity, relational property, and the complexity of space.

Kombinacja is polysemic and allows us to think across different sets of literatures. When we investigate 'what it does', *kombinacja* links up with informality (Alsayyad and Roy, 2004), habitus (Bourdieu, 1993); the study of 'how it does it' links up with 'domestication' (Creed, 1995, 1998, 2011); 'what its effects are' connects with the complexity and relationality of space (Massey, 2005) as well as the ideas of alternative and diverse economies (Gibson-Graham 1996, 2006), 'second economies' (Grossman, 1977) and 'informal economies' (Hart, 1973). No single one of these categories, however, can encompass the totality of *kombinacja,* and this is for the better, because this encapsulates what it does best—the evasion of form. Nevertheless, because most of them are connected through the discourse of *possibilities* and openness to difference, there are strong links to the spirit of the art of the combination project. This thesis will consider what our knowledge of *kombinacja* and informality can bring to the idea of diverse economies, as well as the existing split between informal and second economy studies.

This chapter is an attempt to create theoretical space for the study of *kombinacja* through the blurring of aforementioned multiple binaries that currently limit rather than

illuminate its functions and transformations across economies, states, time, and space. The initial section begins weaving this narrative by first laying out Gibson-Graham's work on diverse economies which blurs the capitalist/non-capitalist binary and then using their project to structure the remainder of the chapter. In the second part, I blur the capitalist and socialist binaries by bridging the gap between the highly politicised 'informal' versus 'second' economy literatures, by demonstrating how informality has existed in both sets in similar ways.

Informality, in my view, deals with a category that relates to the relationship to the state-market nexus rather than to any political claim about the 'problems' of capitalism or socialism. It is relational in that it can be co-opted by anyone; by people as well as states themselves. In the third part, I provide some additional theoretical tools, like domestication, habitus, fields, and complexity theory that can help provide a much more fluid theoretical landscape for the investigation of *kombinacja* across economies, time, and space. By blurring these boundaries through *kombinacja*, and connecting it to the literature on informality, I hope to connect the practices and lessons of Russian, and Central and Eastern European communities—that have been isolated from informality debates—to the global struggles of the rural and urban poor.

2.2. The diverse economies turn

Feminist geographers J.K. Gibson-Graham argue that capitalism is 'just one particular set of economic relations situated in a vast sea of economic activity' (pg. 70). 'Capitalocentric' discourse, however, deterministically relates these other forms of economy[21] to capitalism; namely that they are 'fundamentally the same as (or modeled upon) capitalism, or as being deficient or substandard imitations; as being opposite to capitalism; as being the complement of capitalism; as existing in capitalisms' orbit' (Gibson-Graham, 1996, pg. 6). Capitalism, through the prism of this post-Cold War, hegemonic imagery[22], is 'an object of transformation that cannot be transformed' (Ibid. pg. 253) and which exists 'outside politics and society' (Gibson-Graham, 2006, pg. 53).

[21] Like self-employment, unpaid work, gifts, barter, moonlighting, informal lending, illegal exchanges, self-provisioning, and under-the-table exchanges (pg. 77).
[22] Hegemony 'entails the persuasive expansion of a discourse into widely shared norms, values and perceptions' so that it feels naturalised and fixed (2006, pg. 55).

They suggest a language of the 'diverse economy' in which the 'economic landscape is represented as populated by a myriad of contingent forms and interactions' and in which we use the thinking technique of 'reading for difference rather than dominance' (pg. 54). This includes conceptualising economies in terms of 'different kinds of *transaction* and ways of negotiating commensurability', 'different types of *labor* and ways of compensating it' and 'different forms of *enterprise* and ways of producing, appropriating, and distributing surplus' (pg. 60). Thus, the language of diverse economies includes nonmarket/market/alternative market transactions, unpaid/wage/alternative paid labour, non-capitalist/capitalist/alternative capitalist enterprises rather than just an economy conceived of only wage labour, market exchange of commodities, and capitalist enterprise (pgs. 53-68).

The diverse economy, which gives theoretical life to this 'multidimensional nature of economic existence' (pg. 77), is not static, but a messy 'space of recognition and negotiation' (pg. xxx). Economic relations are contingent, not deterministic; value is 'liberally distributed rather than sequestered in certain activities and denied to others'; dynamics are 'proliferating rather than reducible to a set of governing laws and logics' (pg. 60). Subjects weave in and out of different forms of transactions, labour and enterprise. Class becomes decentered and diverse as individuals 'participate in various class processes, moulding multiple class positions at one moment and over time' (1996, pg. 59). When considered in their totality, subjects' economic activities can be identified not as fixed and singular, but as complex combinations of capitalist and non-capitalist transactions and forms of labour, interacting with multiple types of enterprises at different points in time.

Gibson-Graham deconstruct the capitalist/non-capitalist binary by challenging us to imagine the totality of the economy as 'a site of multiple forms of economy whose relation to each other are only ever partially fixed and always under subversion' (2006, pg. 12). They point to evolving research on informal economies[23] which challenge capitalist hegemony because of the 'alternative representations of society as decentred, incoherent and complex' in which production takes place at home and elsewhere and not at the 'center of the economy or the locus of its principal driving force' (1996, pgs.

[23] 'Informal economies' include any quasi-legal and illegal activities that operate alongside of and/or through 'formal' economies regulated by law (Rakowski, 1994).

5; 172-173). Informal economies challenge the Marxian definition of class because, 'As more people hold down two jobs, as more women enter the paid workforce, as work practices are changed to include the decision making input of workers, as the "informal sector" and hidden workforce increases, so traditional class mappings seem less and less relevant' (2006, pgs. 52-58).

Gibson-Graham identify transition studies as a fruitful site for the re-envisioning of hegemonic neoliberal capitalism in the post-Cold War era. They point out that cartographic maps of the Soviet Union before 1989 were uniformly coloured red as if the economy had been completely socialist (1996, pg. 244). Then after 1989, 'it seems that the eastern bloc countries are homogeneously capitalist' (pg. 259). The authors question what this eastern European 'capitalism' means:

> Does it mean that collective and communal and feudal and individual and family processes of production (some of which may be the same thing, and many of which co-existed with the presumptively hegemonic state sector) no longer exist […] that non market exchange networks and barter systems that were in place before 1989 are no longer operative or are not now being created to deal with new problems of privation and scarcity, problems associated with a new economic and political and social order? […] What about the so-called "mixed economies" that existed in the conceptual third-space created by the duality of capitalism and communism? Are these mixtures now homogenized, purified, because "communism" no longer exists? (1996, pg. 244).

In the 1980s, scholars of the second world pondered the same question —what would happen to the 'second economy' during the capitalist transition[24]? In Soviet Russia, the second economy provided up to 12% of the total workforce, which was subcontracted by the 'formal' command economy (Treml, 1992, in Pavlovskaya, 2004, pg. 337). Skeptical that it would just be 'solved' by a dose of 'capitalism', Korbonski (1981) claimed that the 'second economy in Poland is there to stay for an indefinite period of time, certainly for as long as the "first" economy does not succeed in satisfying the basic needs of the population, by eliminating persisting shortages of goods and services

[24] Kornai (1992) writes that the 'first economy' covered everything that 'qualifies in the official ideology of the classical system as the "socialist sector," that is, the bureaucratic state and cooperative sector'. The 'second economy' then 'consists of the sum of the formal private sector composed of officially permitted, small family undertakings, and the informal private sector' (pg. 85).

and sources of illegal income' (pg. 12). Ethnographers had detected the early signs of the second economies' internal transformations. Szelenyi (1988) claimed that Hungarian *polgárosodás* ('embourgeisement') that encompassed differing 'strategies for breaking free of the straightjacket of Soviet-style state socialism' began to change. In the 1970s, the term *polgár* (burgher/bourgeoise) referred to individuals with sufficient autonomy to distinguish them from 'state subjects', but by the 1980s *polgárosodás* began to signify a *process* of economic growth for the second economy and private sector (pgs. 51-52). The 'Capitalist' transition converged upon not only a deteriorating command economy but a robust and transformative second economy that could adapt to new economic conditions.

The 1990s were a boom for the 'second economy' which presented real problems to the capitalist model, because rather than being included as marginal activities in the new capitalist hegemony—using Gibson-Graham's language—it both subverted parts of it while linking up with its processes. The decline of formal employment since 1989, with the loss of about six million jobs in the first decade of transition in the ex-Soviet bloc, resulted in a 'forced flexibilization' of the workforce through which 'workers have had to engage in flexible and multiple employment strategies to ensure an adequate income' (Smith & Stenning, 2006, pgs. 193-194). Terms like 'multiskilling' and 'garbage contracts' (*śmieciowe umowy*) entered the Polish lexicon. In Russia, the second economy increased from an estimated 16% of GDP in 1989-90 to 35-44% in 1994-95 (Schneider & Enste, 2000, in Smith & Stenning, 2006, pg. 193)[25]. It contributed an estimated 8-12% to the GDP in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, 20-25% in Hungary and Poland, and up to 54% in Yugoslavia (Milanovic, 1998, in Smith & Stenning, 2006, pg. 195). Without jobs, money or food, some people diversified their economic activity to survive; others, like the old elites, profited from partial capitalism. Morris and Polese (2014), claim that 'there is one certainty about informality[26] in the region', that 'it has increased markedly since the end of the socialist period' (pg. 195).

[25] In 1996, the second economy produced an estimated 46% of Russia's GDP (Pavlovskaya, 2004, pg. 337; Goble, 1999).

[26] I use informality, second economy, and informal economy synonymously because there is no consensus on which words to use in the post-socialist literature.

Ethnographic studies have shown that the second economy followed multiple trajectories in the ex-Soviet bloc during the 1990s and 2000s. Some elements of second economies adapted to capitalism, some faded, some carved out economic niches to stave off the influx of capitalism, and some burrowed deep into the state that monitored, legalised, and regulated the sanctity of capitalist transition. Second economy practices were continued when people were met with similar if not worse economic conditions during the transition they experienced under 'socialism'. For example, when formal food distribution systems broke down in Bulgaria in the 1990s, villagers and city-dwellers survived off of their networks and resource flows that they had developed under socialism (Creed, 1995, pg. 543; Cellarius, 2000, pg. 70). In this case, the second economy 'carried over' to conditions that mirrored the past shortages and when people realised that this new 'capitalism' was not actually making their lives any easier.

Others continued to engage in second economy activity to socially reproduce their trusted networks. When the American Gerber factory came to Poland in the 1990s, local managers were replaced with non-locals because the former had 'built networks by giving one another gifts and favours of various sorts, then used those networks to obtain access to goods in shortage' (Dunn, 2004, pg. 52). Gerber sought to break apart activities that diverted company resources and hampered productivity. The second economy affected the ability of foreign, private entrepreneurs (who knew 'capitalism' best) to import formal capitalist workplaces in the first place. Unlike the Bulgarian case, the Polish case showed how the second economy was a way to adapt to new economic conditions to ensure that the social structure stayed the same (see domestication in the following section).

Other examples show how second economy activities were restructured to blur into the formal economy. Russian *Blat* and *tolkachi*[27]*,* initially based upon material exchanges, were now becoming monetised (Ledeneva, 2006, pg. 1). The informal institution of *kompromat*—a Soviet-era term used to describe the dissemination of compromising information about another citizen—became embedded in democratically-elected governments where public officials used blackmail, misappropriation of budget funds, giving and accepting of bribes, embezzlement, cronyism and nepotism, discrediting

[27] Ledeneva (1998) below.

connections, and spying and tapping for political gain (Ibid. pg. 61). The second economy has been adjusted to new economic and political conditions in such a way that it has burrowed itself into the very 'formal' institutions responsible for ushering these countries through the capitalist transition.

Other transitions of this economy have been more ambivalent. Lampland's (1995) ethnographic study of 1990s Hungary reveals disagreement among the peasantry regarding the existence of their second economy: '"*Protekció*[28] has been eliminated in socialism; now one has 'socialist connections'" one claimed, accenting the depoliticisation of the activity with a capital 'P'. Another, however, stated that it '"makes the world go round. As long as the world is the world, this is the way things will be. That'll *never* change!" (pg. 262). For some, the second economy was diluted while its importance grew for others. People tailored *protekció* to their own economic goals although there is considerable disagreement about the precise trajectory the second economy took in people's lives.

To bring this back to Gibson-Graham's 'mixed economies' during the transition into capitalism, the ethnographic evidence demonstrates that second economies both increased and diversified with multiple economic trajectories. This exposes the frailty and incompleteness of the capitalist transition in the ex-Soviet bloc. Even into the 2000s, the second economy constitutes an estimated 20% of the GDP in Central and Eastern European states and an estimated 40% or more in Russia, Ukraine, in the Caucasus and central Asia (Schneider *et al.,* 2010 in Morris & Polese, 2014, pg. 2). The second economy has not only survived the economic transition, but has grown into a major economic sector, challenging at points and supporting at others, the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism. It both changes and is changed by capitalism. This is not good news for the idea of capitalist hegemony, for economic difference is one of the 'ghosts that haunt the concept of capitalism' (Gibson-Graham, 1996, pg. 243).

Investigating the transformation of the second economy, from the socialist to the capitalist transition, through the language of the diverse economy shows how important post-socialist informality is in current debates on capitalist hegemony. What can post-socialist informality contribute to the literature on diverse economies? This question

[28] Lampland (1995) below.

requires us to investigate how an increased focus on informality, post-socialism, and diverse economies is transforming the very analytical and theoretical debates among scholars of post-socialist studies.

2.3. Towards a post-socialist informality approach

'Informality is here to stay', Morris and Polese (2014) write, and its persistence in post-socialist states, is 'evidence of a lack of hegemony of capitalist relations in these spaces' (pg. 6)[29]. Smith and Stenning (2006) echo the observation, stating that capitalist development in post-socialist states 'should be seen as one part of a diverse economy, constituted by a host of economic practices, articulated with one another in dynamic and complex ways and in multiple sites and spaces' (pg. 190). Informality is not going to be neatly tucked under capitalism's wing but is producing versions of it and pushing post-socialist scholars to drop the limiting transitology approach[30] and embrace concepts of informality and diverse economy as a means towards 'de-othering the study of post-socialist space' (Morris & Polese, 2014, pg. 7)[31]. According to Morris and Polese (2014), transitology has 'othered' informality as a negative vestige of the past or a transient phenomenon which is likely to disappear through monetisation or further capitalist development and democratic governance. They demonstrate this claim by pointing to aspects of informality such as 'Soviet-era *blat-type* practices in healthcare and trade/entrepreneurialism, the thirst for unobtainable commodity items in informal trade, some blue-collar practices that are partly parasitic on the formal enterprise', that resemble a socialist past. Its other aspects, however, informality can be 'closely tied to emerging forms of marketed relations and the particular role (or non-role) of the state', or used as a way of 'choosing their *own* distance, even withdrawal […] from state-society relations as much as practically possible' (pg. 6-9). A single transition narrative from one formal economy to another cannot explain the complex trajectories of post-socialist informality as it changes, reacts, and interacts—or not—with capitalism.

[29] Morris and Polese (2014) define informality as a diverse '"repertoire" of strategies and tactics which include engagement with the formal on some level as well' (pg. 6).
[30] Kubik (2014) writes that the six assumptions that underlie the transitology approach are compartmentalisation, emphasis on agency, presentism, naturalism, focus on formal institutions, and focus on whole states as units of analyses (pg. 31).
[31] I treat informality as the process of carving out niches that give life to alternative and diverse economies.

Standard theories of transition overlook other transitions and do not capture the complexity of post-socialist economies (Pavlovskaya, 2004, pg. 329).

Kubik (2014) similarly argues that 'considerable analytical leverage can be gained from thinking about informality, not as an unwelcome legacy of the communist system or an undesired by-product of the new capitalist/democratic system, but rather as an inescapable albeit "functional" component of the *transitory process*'. Informality's diverse formal-informal hybrids 'resemble neither the clear-cut blueprints of institutional reformers nor the concealed informal networks sometimes blamed for all the ills of post communism. Those half-visible, half-hidden networks of influence have often been overlooked by scholars relying on "imported" analytical categories of transitology and the "normal" categories of social science'. Importantly, these hybrids have a dual nature: On the one hand, they empower the ex-communist elites who are struggling against new elites. For example, old elites use 'complex recombinations of the newly acquired formal prerogatives and long-standing informal connections inherited from the old regime' that had the effect of moving resources 'from plan to clan' and thus are allowing old elites to retain their power. The second nature is that these informal-formal hybrids empower ordinary people who are struggling to survive under new economic reforms (pgs. 59-60).

Furthermore, the language of diverse economies helps open up new post-socialist spaces for investigation. Current post-socialist studies, based on the second economy canon, focus on the centrality of the household and fail to address other multiple geographies—urban housing blocks, urban and rural linkages, remittance economies—that constitute, enable, and constrain non-capitalist practices (Smith & Stenning, 2006, pg. 191). The diverse economy literature helps 'rescale' the transition by unearthing and defining a large quantity of economic practices 'in order to connect national structural change, transformation of local urban spaces, and household experiences' (Pavlovskaya, 2004, pgs. 329-330). It provides a language that helps articulate 'capitalist and non-capitalist economies to the mutually constitutive sets of social relations that underpin the diverse economies of post-socialism' (Smith & Stenning, 2006, pg. 191). Its poststructuralist approach allows us to look beyond the language of structural explanations (global capitalism, neoliberal reform) or dual sector approaches

(informal/formal) by favouring a grounded, 'interpretive and analytical understanding of informal economy' (Morris & Polese, 2014, pgs. 6-9).

In confluence with the diverse economies language, Kubik (2014) proposes a methodological approach of 'contextual holism' which emphasises complexity, multidimensionality, and relationalism in post-socialist transformations. By contextual holism, he does not mean an emphasis on 'wholes' as indivisible entities, but rather a 'call to treat each phenomenon as a part of a field of relations with other phenomena, as an element interconnected with others within a specific configuration'. Rather, a 'whole' is a 'specific configuration of elements' and each 'whole' is contextual, in that it is 'articulated differently in different contexts' (pgs. 27-28). Contextual holism embraces the principles of relationalism[32] ('weak' structuralism), history matters, constructivism[33], formal-informal hybrids, and localism (pg. 45). He adds that the concept of 'recombination'—in which 'new and old elements, are incessantly recombined in a creative manner' (pg. 48)—is 'one of the most powerful tools for focusing on holistic analysis' (pg. 48). He emphasises that informal-formal hybrids are best investigated through an ethnographic focus to identify these contextual configurations (pg. 66).

Building upon the idea of multiplicity and the complexity of economic activities, in her investigation of household economic practices in post-socialist Moscow, Pavlovskaya (2004) argues that people have had to 'radically change their occupations, take on multiple jobs, work informally, increase domestic production of goods and services, and rely extensively on networks of extended family, relatives, and friends' (pg. 329). Smith and Stenning (2006) argue that these multidimensional practices—that 'range from work in the formal economy, to growing food on a household plot, to selling possessions in the street or produce grown or collected, to providing help and assistance either *gratis* or on a reciprocal basis'—help reproduce a sociality to economic life, in that they 'are part of a regular set of activities undertaken and used by individuals, households, and communities to try to sustain livelihoods but to sustain a sociality to

[32] Relationalism is defined as 'an approach to a sociopolitical reality that avoids the extremes of individualism and holism or agency and structure' (Kubik, 2014, pg. 49).
[33] Constructivism is 'the manner in which people conceptualize, model, or envision how the world around them matters for what they do politically' (Kubik, 2014, pg. 54).

economic life which requires mutual, reciprocal, and embedded forms of economic activity (pg. 192).

Importantly, linking post-socialism to the diverse economy and informality language to explain these processes can help empower and 'de-other' post-socialist *studies* which are often omitted from mainstream informality and diverse economy literatures coming from the ex-first and third worlds. Since the Cold War, post-socialist countries have been 'othered' as passive, acted upon by capitalist development, and located behind the (still) closed borders of the ex-Soviet bloc (Buchowski, 2006, pg. 478, footnote 4). A major theoretical work on 'urban informality' (see AlSayaad & Roy, 2004) will omit the entire ex-Soviet bloc from analytical engagement and an important work on 'domesticating neoliberalism' (see Stenning et al., 2010) will not explain its career outside of the ex-Soviet bloc. There is a mutually comfortable silence in not engaging the 'other'. Using the diverse economy and informality language, however, puts into question whether post-socialist countries adapt to the capitalist model or whether they are adapting it to post-socialism. A renewed focus on post-socialist informality opens up much more academic space for linking phenomena of post-socialist countries to the rest of the world[34].

There is a growing consensus that investigating informality and diverse economies in the context of post-socialism can be beneficial to theoretical and analytical debates on a global scale. Morris and Polese (2014) argue that it is a mistake to see informality 'as a purely "transition" phenomenon—something that institutionally-deficient Eastern European countries are plagued by'. Embedded socially, and in the formal economy, in post-socialist countries, informality can help map the futures of many developed countries' economies undergoing economic crises—'a mere foretaste of lasting change' (pg. 1). This is a variant of modernity that 'the West needs to take note of, as we stand on the cusp of centrifugal economic and social forces at the heart of the formalisation project of the EU *acquis*'. Post-socialist informality adds to the multiple modernities perspective and can help in the 're-framing of debates as diverse as those around globalization, transnationalism, and substantive, versus formal, economic models of social behavior […] a transformational pendulum away from 'homo economicus' and

[34] There is a push towards understanding 'how Cold War representations of space and time have shaped knowledge and practice everywhere' (Chari & Verdery, 2009, pg. 12).

towards more "embedded" forms of economics: human, diverse and "real-world"' (pgs. 7,9). Wanner (2014) has the best interpretation; that post-socialist informality studies 'suggest myriad possibilities for finding solutions that neither lie squarely within "capitalism" nor in "socialism," but rather in some innovative selection of aspects of each system that still leaves a space for the human will to improvise' (pg. xvii). Thus, adopting the informality and diverse economies language can both de-other post-socialist countries from mainstream debates and rebrand post-socialist countries from being sites of economic failure to being engines of economic innovation.

2.4. Blurring the capitalist/socialist binary

Informality is part of the modern experience in both capitalist and socialist economies. Italian worker-peasants have engaged in *combinazione,* the 'surreptitious harvesting of grains or potatoes' on other people's farms (Holmes, 1989, pg. 53); Ghanaians in Accra have depended on a 'combination of income sources' from both informal and formal sectors that constituted a 'buffer against unemployment' (Hart, 1973, pgs. 78-79); Russians have used *blat* and *tolkachi* to access and swap scarce state goods and services under socialism (Ledeneva, 1988, pg. 25); Chinese cooperative farm workers have hidden state production and distributed through the *quanxi* (social connections) which 'greased the socialist economy' and operated 'according to a logic and organisational structure that is different from that of the centralised state and its administrative, military and legal arms' (Chan & Unger, 1982, pgs. 452-453; Friedman, et al. 2005, pg. 126; Nee, 1991, pg. 268; Smart, 1993, pg. 399; Wallace & Latcheva, 2006: 81; Yang, 1989, pg. 35); Angolans have used *esquema* (scheme) or the 'ability and capacity of an individual to build networks to solve economic problems' and *candonga* or 'illegal appropriation of a product for sale on the grey or black market' that developed under colonial capitalism and have become central to alleviating food shortages (Santos, 1990, pg. 161); Chileans have used *cuña*, Israelis have used *protexia* and *combina*, and Mexicans have used *palanca* (Lomnitz, 1988, pg. 53), etc. The literature shows how marginalised and powerful groups have devised innovative practices and strategies to survive (and/or manipulate) the economic crises that have arisen from their state's regulatory power (Henken, 2005, pg. 362).

Although 'informality' theoretically applies to socialist and capitalist contexts, approximately 95% of the literature on informality since the 1970s has been produced in

the ‘first’ and ‘third’ worlds, and has only referred to the relationship between ‘informal economies’ and capitalism. Because many Western scholars have had no access to fieldwork behind the Iron Curtain and because much of the Soviet academic work was censored, the debates on informality and informal economies have been uneven.

While a synthesis of these varieties of informality across socialist and capitalist economies seems an almost common sense exercise, it refutes decades of Cold-War era politicisation that has separated informality into the geopolitical camps of ‘informal economies’ in the first and third worlds on the one hand, and ‘second economies’ in the second world on the other. In capitalist contexts, the term ‘informal economy’ has been used to define any quasi-legal and illegal activities that operate alongside of and/or through ‘formal’ economies regulated by law (Rakowski, 1994). In socialist contexts, that same division existed between ‘second’ and ‘first’ economies. According to Kornai (1992) the ‘first economy’ covered everything that qualified ‘in the official ideology of the classical system as the “socialist sector,” that is, the bureaucratic state and cooperative sector’. The ‘second economy’ then consisted ‘of the sum of the formal private sector composed of officially permitted, small family undertakings and the informal private sector’ (pg. 85). The differences between various second and informal economies were probably not too different from the various degrees of differentiation between informal economies across capitalist contexts or second economies across socialist contexts. Informality clearly lies at the crux of both literatures as both ‘second’ and ‘informal’ economies are reactions to state-regulated ‘formal’ economies.

Yet, into the 2010s, the ‘academic curtain’ between ‘studies of the ‘second’ and ‘informal’ economies has barely been lifted. This absence of conversation poses the question, echoing Gibson-Graham’s question above about what happened to socialism’s “second economies”, that if ‘second economies’ were particular to socialism and ‘informal economies’ specific to capitalism, then what does one call the existence and adaptation of ‘second economy’ practices in the post-socialist period? Some scholars like Verdery (1996) have simply substituted the term ‘second economy’ with the term ‘informal economy’ (pg. 27). As other scholars have shown in their work, picking up on informality and diverse economy literatures reveals that the idea of capitalist hegemony in the ex-Soviet bloc is a myth. Indeed, post-socialist informality helps blur the

capitalist/non-capitalist binary[35], concurrent with Gibson-Graham (1996, 2006), and links the post-socialist experience to a global political economy.

However, while post-socialist scholars focus on 'not-quite' capitalism, they use post-socialist informality or diverse economies without explaining the political, analytical, and theoretical implications of a shift from 'second' to 'informal economy' and 'informality' literature. The silence is perfectly understandable; tackling the informal and second economy literatures is a grueling task, but it neglects some very important opportunities to analyse how informality changes over time and economic periods. What is it about these second/mixed economies discussed above that allows them to transition so effortlessly between seemingly different economic systems? How did informality work to dismantle (or establish) *socialist* hegemony? How does this blur the boundary between capitalism and socialism? In the spirit of Gibson-Graham's reasoning, was there a similar binary of socialism/non-socialism that we need to consider? If the issue of informality across capitalism and socialism puts into question a more fundamental way that all of our societies are ordered, then the idea follows of the modern nation-state as an organising apparatus that defines and regulates 'formal' economic activity. If informality is on the rise, what does this mean for the modern state?

History still matters, *especially* when people are able to adapt informality (like *kombinacja*) to form 'second economies' in the socialist era and then adapt that same strategy to form 'informal economies' (let us say even if they are different from second economies) in the post-socialist era or even capitalist countries as demonstrated in Chapter 1. The finding that different varieties of informality harbour culturally-engrained logics and imageries that can adapt to any type of 'formal economy' should not get lost in the attractive language of 'post-socialist informality' and 'diverse economies' that seeks to put history in the backseat.

When we merge the findings from the second and informal economy literatures, we see that the broader significance of informality lies not in identifying the failures of ideal-type economic systems like 'socialism' or 'capitalism', but more importantly, informality's contestation of the modern-state's (and its representatives') self-

[35] Thanks to Dr. Keith Halfacree for this point.

proclaimed role as mediator and enforcer of 'formal' economic activity that propagates the myth of these formal/informal binaries and 'isms'. They complement one another. For example, second economy studies have focused more on centralising informality in the private sphere, whereas informal economy studies have focused more on the public sphere. Second economies have placed more emphasis on the role of informality in the state and elite informality while informal economy studies are just beginning to breach that subject. The following sections first explain how informal and second economy literature emerged independently of one another and what roadmaps they can provide for one another to study informality in spaces that have been their 'blind-spots' since the 1970s. In this way, we can begin building a more globally cohesive theory of informality.

2.5. Rethinking informal economy literature

Informal economy research emerged out of 'unemployment' studies in urban settings in the early 1970s (Hart, 1971, 1973; ILO, 1972). Hart (1973) coined the term 'informal economy' to refer to legal and illegal 'self-employment' as an income-generation strategy used by unemployed *and* employed Ghanaians in Accra (pg. 69). The International Labour Organisation (1972) identified 'informal sector' activity performed by profit-making 'petty traders, hawkers, shoeshine boys' on Kenyan streets, who it claimed had little connection with the formal sector and reinforced the binary (pg. 6). Both revealed a variation in how informal activities relate to different formal economies across geographic contexts and encouraged more research on dual-sector dynamics, as the existence of a tertiary informal-formal division of labour was symptomatic of a weakening state-market nexus in the spread of market capitalism. Although informal economies did not 'begin' in the 1970s, they were seen to be growing and have become central to how resources flow among the booming global population.

Since the 1980s, scholars began to critique the informal economy concept i.e.; that only the poor engage in it, that it is unorganised and unstructured, and that all its activities are illegal (ILO, 2000, pg. iv). Instead, they have found the informal-formal hybrids of many economic activities, that capital finds a way to offer economic incentives for formal actors to informalise their relations and engage in, or overlook, informal actors operating through, or parallel to, formal institutions and economic relations (Bromley, 2004, pg. 278). Informal activities subsidise capitalist enterprises with low-cost goods

and services (Portes & Shauffler, 1993a, pg. 49). For example, *comisionistas* (unsalaried Mexican workers who earn commission) are legally hired by informal firms that are illegally unregistered with the Mexican Institute of Social Security, a federal agency (Levy, 2008, pg. 33); formal construction firms in Mexico City employ informal subcontractors who hire temporary workers on demand (Lomnitz, 1976); department stores in Bogotá subcontract production to informal shops (Peattie, 1982); garbage pickers in Calí provide industries with recyclable inputs (Birkbeck, 1978). These dynamics in the 'interstices of the formal system' are horizontal and create 'a porous membrane, not a rigid boundary' between the two sectors (Fernández-Kelly, 2006, pg. 4; Lomnitz, 1988, pg. 43).

Horizontal networks operate through ethnicity, patronage, etc. based on a working understanding or trust (Lomnitz, 1988, 48; Castells & Portes, 1989, pg. 12; Gilbert, 2004, pg. 76). With certain members of the network in the formal economy and others in the informal, both communicate through their networks which allows them to predict the state's 'next steps' and readjust faster than the state can enforce or pass legislation to regulate them (Berger & Piore, 1980; Bromley, 2004; Castells & Portes, 1989; Gorz, 1982). This revised approach has rejected the usage of broad occupational categories to assign workers to a sector, because many workers use both informal and formal sectors to generate income by either continuously or discontinuously alternating between sectors or concurrently combining earnings from both (Portes & Shauffler, 1993a, pg. 46).

Many of these accounts reveal capitalocentric renditions of how the informal economy relates to, or could be fixed or augmented through, more or less formal reforms and regulations. Hart (2010) argues that their grounded innovation in reworking formal economies to redistribute access to income generation to a larger number of people is significant for future development models (pg. 145). However, scholars have argued whether more or fewer state policies are needed to steer informal economic development (Rakowski, 1994). Informal economy actors have been identified as marginalised outsiders from the exclusionary formal economy who need the job creation initiatives of development agencies; pro-capitalist actors struggling against state regulations and demanding loosened state regulations; proletariats engaged in class struggle against the capitalist state-market matrix; a heterogeneous group of actors

engaged in the 'routine operation of capitalism' that need more flexible labour codes and entrepreneurial development programmes (Portes & Böröcz, 1988; Portes & Shauffler, 1993a,b; De Soto, 1989, 2000; Nun et. al, 1967; Gilbert, 2004; Hart, 2010). Castells and Portes (1989) argued that the informal economy is the bastion of market capitalism rather than a threat, and that 'in an ideal market economy, with no regulation of any kind, the distinction between formal and informal would lose meaning since all activities would be performed in the manner we now call informal' (pg. 13). They propose that the problem of the informal is that the state apparatus is too rigid an institution to flexibly adapt to the complexity, multiplicity, and temporality of human economies. They question whether the state-market nexus could ever effectively contain or develop informal economies.

Furthermore, new research on informality in capitalist countries, coming out of developed and developing countries (not including the ex-Soviet bloc), shows that one of the important effects of this systemic bridging of the economic informal-formal divide is that it informalises the state itself. Roy (2004) uses the terms 'informal vesting' or 'informalisation of the state' to refer to the 'structural informalisation that comes to be systematized and institutionalized' based upon multiple intersections of ethnicity, religion, fundamentalism, etc. that serve as bridges to the informalisation of formal institutions (pg. 159). Israel, for example, uses ethnic identity to justify 'urban informality as a planning strategy' to isolate minorities on the West Bank (Yiftachel & Yakobi, 2004, pg. 218). In Accra, the 'commanding heights' of the informal economy are in the 'corrupt fortunes of public office-holders' that use it to get around bureaucratic gridlock (Hart, 2010, pgs. 144-145). In her study on urban poverty in Kolkata, Roy (2011) shows that upper-class towns, built on the periphery of the city and that are in violation of state law protecting agricultural land and wetlands, are not seen as illegal and informal—such 'elite informality' 'is often legitimized and even practiced by the state' (pg. 270). In Peru, Uzzell (1994) writes that there 'has been a tendency to formalize elite informality, using legislation to create market distortions of which, with privileged access to information and capital, only the elite can take advantage' (pg. 161). Control over the formal is waged at the site of the informal—formal institutions begin to practice their formal powers for informally defined goals. Whoever wields the power to exercise and define informal activity within the formal possesses the ability to exercise leverage in all forms of political life.

Informal economy studies often neglect to tell the 'other' side of the story. For example, what 'services' does informality provide that actually reproduce the state-market nexus? How does the state co-opt the diverse economies produced through informality to ensure that their services can be channelled towards formal projects? How does informality function in the reproduction of elite power for the state over the long term? What role does informality play in the actual formation of the state? Researchers studying state informality in capitalist contexts can refer to a similar pattern to that investigated in the second economy literature on how horizontal networks took over the state as *the* organisational logic of capital flows. There is an overlap in relations between informalisation and the state, in which the late stages of state-regulated capitalism are beginning to resemble the late stages of state socialism as informalisation ushers in the transformation of an economic and political order. Thus, learning about the role of informality in the socialist period can provide important parallels of how informality actually reproduces the state's formal functions and its role as regulator of the 'formal economy'.

This is related to issues surrounding corruption. Most informal economies offer a class-based approach to corruption in their investigations of 'elite informality', however, what about the reproduction of positively-sanctioned 'corruption' in households and communities? Deliberation about cases in which engaging in illegal or unregulated informal activity is considered more 'moral' than joining a formal workplace. Second economy literature can provide an insight into the intimate reproduction of informality in the family, household, social group, that makes us uncomfortable but which gets into the very basic question of how informality is ingrained in the atomic levels of our societies.

2.6. The transformations of the second economy

In the 1970s, around the same time that Keith Hart introduced the idea of the 'informal economy', Gregory Grossman coined the term 'second economy' to refer to the unplanned, unregulated, unreported, private, legal, illegal, semi-legal, or suspicious income-generating activities—through which resources like goods, services, benefits, privileges, information were channelled via networks—which were inconsistent with, or in direct violation of, the command economy in the second world (see Grossman, 1977, 1979; Łoś, 1990a, pg. 2; O'Hearn, 1980, pg. 218; Sampson, 1987, pg. 124; Sik, 1992,

pg. 155; Stark, 1989, pg. 651). Some anthropologists equated the 'second economy' with the 'informal economy', lightly suggesting the need to investigate both forms of informality existing on both sides of the Iron Curtain (see Pine 1993, pg. 241, footnote 2; Wedel, 1986, pg. 36). While scholars of the first and third worlds focused on exposing informal economies as proof of the limitations of capitalism, scholars of the second world equated second economies with the incorrigible downfall of the command economy. Historical investigations regarding the second economy's existence prior to the prewar period—or its role in the socialist state-making process in the postwar period—never came to light.

Nevertheless, anthropologists working across the Soviet bloc reported the second economy practices of peasants, workers, worker-peasants, professionals, nomenklatura and state officials in factories, fields, bureaucracies, and government offices at all scales of the command economy. These included petty theft of socialist property (stealing or withholding state goods and services), foot-dragging, refusal to take initiative, moonlighting, production of ersatz resources using state resources and selling them on the black market, speculation of garden plots allotted by the state, slowing down production to steal time, taking paid or holiday leave to go shopping, selling smuggled state goods, selling state building materials in the private housing sector, diverting deliveries of scarce commodities into state warehouses, borrowing state cars to operate unofficial taxis, illegally hiring state or informal construction crews, bribing officials, accepting bribes, small-scale production and selling of handicrafts, operating underground factories that are fed off of diverted materials from state factories, and many other activities that grew in the interstices of state ownership through the means of production and central economic planning. (Grossman, 1977, pg. 29; Grossman, 1979, pgs. 837-847; Henken, 2005, pg. 369; Humphrey, 1996, 1998; Korbonski, 1981, pgs. 1, 5-9; Lomnitz, 1988, pg. 49; Lampland, 1995; O'Hearn, 1980, pg. 218; Pine, 2002, pg. 80; Sampson, 1987; Stark, 1989, pg. 652; Verdery, 2003, pg. 67).

Extensive price controls, state suppression of private activity through the imposition of high self-employment taxes, government corruption, and unsatisfied demand cultivated fertile ground for these practices. The second economy grew during the economic liberalisation reforms and roll-back of the state in the 1970s. Economic demand reworked the 'formal' or 'first' economy. At the time, Poland took Western loans to

modernise industry and the influx of capital flows, urbanisation, and foreign influences strengthened the second economy's grip (Sampson, 1987, pgs. 133-134). When inflation continued and disposable income was not met with more output and supply of consumer goods and food, the second economy became central to the redistribution process (Korbonski, 1981, pg. 3). More scarcity within the formal system meant greater economic opportunity and innovation for alleviating scarcity through informal economic practices. A 'class of self-employed entrepreneurs' emerged, who became increasingly independent from state wages (Kemeny, 1990, pg. 56; Szelenyi, 1988, pg. 50).

'Red-collar crime' was rampant (Łoś, 1990c, pg. 204). 'Nomenklatura capitalists,' managers acted like owners to ensure the proper function of the firm through report padding, price violations, producing the wrong assortment of products, falsifying accounts of goods in process, lowering quality of output, and misappropriating funds. Diversifying production outside of the plan and diverting state resources into the second economy while simultaneously claiming accounting books as 'spoiled' or 'lost in transit' was a form of using barter to access necessary production supplies from external sources when they were not available through formal channels. During the 1970s, they used their state position to become liquidators, selling out the state to the highest bidder for private gain. Through second economy dealings, they increased the efficiency of the first economy, food and resource circulation to more people, and became profitable for private goals. It was through the second economy that they could meet the state plan while benefitting from it individually. Thus, through the managers' and officials' actions, first and second economies operated in a symbiotic relationship (Berliner, 1952, pg. 355; Grossman, 1977, pg. 30; Korbonski, 1981, pgs. 9-11; Lomnitz, 1988, pg. 43; O'Hearn, 1980, pg. 219; Stark, 1989, pg. 637; Walder, 1995, seen in Henken, 2005, pg. 371).

By the 1980s, the second economy 'came into its own'. Korbonski (1981) argues that the failure of formal distribution chains of food between urban and rural areas resulted in peasants and their agents marketing meat and food products to urban consumers door to door at high prices, and in effect the second economy's 'contribution to maintaining the food supply at a reasonable level was absolutely crucial'. Its surrogate role in alleviating the malfunctioning formal economy made the 'government's crisis

management incomparably easier' (pg. 11). By the 1980s, it became 'an integral feature of state socialism' (Stark, 1989, pg. 651). In a move reminiscent to debates on the breakdown of the formal and informal economy binary, the 'first' and 'second' economies too became a false binary—both were interdependent upon each other to ensure that a maximum number of people as possible could live a decent life under state socialism.

2.7. Blurring the first/second economy binary

Networks constituted the basic unit of second economy activity. Even if a person acted alone, there was no way that they could circumvent the state without a web of protections that helped divert and circulate state resources. Manipulating the flow of resources around, through or via the state required a type of knowledge about how state resources enter and exit the system, who patrols it, and how transactions could occur multiple times but without being predictable enough to be caught (Scott, 1988, pgs. 177-178; see Lonkila & Salmi, 2005, pg. 681). Thus, government officials and workplace managers were often—if not always—connected at some point to the networks that reproduced the second economy.

Some networks were so ingrained in everyday life that new colloquialisms —often not formally defined in dictionaries and encyclopedias—were used to describe them. In Hungary, there was *protekció* which Lampland (1995) defines as the 'diversion of collective resources for private gain' through a series of 'elaborate strategies' that were 'required to negotiate the strongly personalised character of economic transactions in socialism' and which often relied upon personal relations with representatives of the state (pgs. 261-263, 348). In Russia, the term *prinosheniye* (bringing to) referred to the act of giving gifts to authorities for long-term protection. When Russian state-owned retail stores received goods, salespeople laid certain ones aside for favoured customers who gave them tips which they then split with their supervisors, who then split it with their superiors (Grossman, 1977, pgs. 30-40). There was *blat*, which encompassed a broad range of activities like bribery, patronage, protection, acquaintanceship, and reciprocal favours to acquire scarce resources (Berliner, 1952, pgs. 356-7; Cellarius, 2000, pg. 84; Creed, 1998, pg. 205; Fitzpatrick, 1994, pg. 62; Lonkila, 1997; Ledeneva, 1998, pg. 41; Sampson, 1987, pg. 128). In Poland, there was *znajomość,* which referred to acquaintanceship with economic undertones, and *załatwienie spraw* which meant

running economic errands, doing things *na lewo* ('to the left' or illegally) and of course there was *kombinacja* (Dunn, 2004; Hann, 1985; Kusiak 2012; Korbonski, 1981; Mazurek, 2012; Wedel, 1986). All of these examples show that negotiation, innovative strategies, and leveraging were implemented to build networks solely to extract resources from the state plan (Grossman, 1977, pg. 29).

This diversion of resources through networks created new informal spaces. For example, the Russian term *dolgostroi* meant 'unfinished spaces' that were planned but never completed due to lack of resources which were purportedly diverted through second economy activity (Borén & Gentile, 2007, pg. 100; Grossman, 1977, pg. 29). In Poland, there were *meliny,* informal bars in people's homes that sold illegally acquired vodka and illegally-produced alcohols like *śliwowica* (fruit brandy) and *bimber* (moonshine). Thus, second economies were so engrained in everyday life that they carved out physical landscapes. While informal economies in the capitalist world were often depicted as being physically visible in public spaces, the second economies were marked by the spatial dislocation of resources from the sites where the state had intended to put them.

These second economy systems 'created' new shadow economic actors who became well-known for the specific services that they provided to the people and to the state. In Hungary, there were the *polgár,* or entrepreneurs who began to operate 'market-oriented mini-farms' and ran them as enterprises with returns on investments and economising them with labour and capital. They depended upon legal protection from state agents and party cadres 'for whom the opportunism and self-interest of the market came to predominate over and provide greater rewards than loyalty and commitment to the Party' and who became 'naturally self-interested in an environment of scarcity' (Henken, 2005, pgs. 371-372; Szelenyi, 1988, pg. 50). When the state apparatus began to break down and could no longer feed its own people, allowing these actors to thrive was, in a way, a strategy used by the state officials in order to ensure that all chaos did not break loose.

Similarly, in Russia, enterprise managers faced with workplace shortages sent out *tokachi* or 'pushers' to seek out resources for the state firm on the black market so that the workplace could complete the plan. Thus, these networks brought resources to the state which shows how the second economy facilitated legal sector goals on the one

hand while simultaneously corroding the state construction plans elsewhere (Berliner, 1952, pgs. 356-7; Cellarius, 2000, pg. 84; Creed, 1998, pg. 205; Fitzpatrick, 1994, pg. 62; Lonkila, 1997; Ledeneva, 1998, pg. 41; Sampson, 1987, pg. 128). *Shabashniki* were moonlighting construction crews from Russian state firms who provided services outside or during working hours and contracted themselves out to build homes. They were a favorite among officials who employed them to build their summer homes (Borén & Gentile, 2007, pg. 100; Grossman, 1977, pg. 29; O'Hearn, 1980, pg. 225). In Poland, there were the *kombinators* (see Chapters 5-7). Importantly, these shadow actors were not trying to tear down the command economy but were providing services that made it work better, or at all.

2.8. Blurring collective/private property

Building upon the previous point, one of the most fascinating lessons that I have taken away from second economy literatures is the management of property relations that systematically occurred on an everyday level. 'Theft' of socialist property was one such phenomenon because it blurred the distinction between supporting versus undermining the state plan. Take the collective farm, for example. Collective farms, created through 'voluntary' collectivisation of private peasant farms, were theoretically owned by the peasant farm workers and managed by the state administration. Yet, studies have recorded peasant second economy strategies of stealing collective farm resources for their private gain even though a poorly-functioning collective farm would hurt them in the long run. Peasants 'stole' fodder from the farm to feed and maintain their private livestock, surreptitiously exceeded limitations on plot areas and livestock holdings, marketed collective farm goods on the black market with the help of middlemen, and borrowed machines for use on their own land or other purposes (Fitzpatrick, 1994, pg. 4; Grossman, 1977, pgs. 26-29; Sampson, 1987, pg. 127).

But 'theft' is the 'capitalist' way of looking at it in that we imagine that the state 'owned' property and that it did not belong to the people (thus undermining the very idea of the socialist revolution). Verdery (2003) described how Romanian peasants substituted the word 'stealing' with the word 'taking' of socialist property on collective farms (pg. 67). Those who justified theft of socialist property as 'taking' shrewdly situated second economy practices in line with the state propaganda of collective property, of everyone building socialism, of everything that belonged to the state

belonging to the people. Similarly, Polish workers and peasants justified theft of socialist property as 'stealing from oneself' and in effect, denying any existence of a division between state and workers' economic interests (Korbonski, 1981, pg. 9).

Both workers and peasants manipulated this 'paradoxical role as *simultaneous employee and co-owner*' (Firlit & Chłopecki, 1992, pg. 100) by paying themselves 'dividends' from their factory or collective farms. 'Taking from the state' or 'stealing from oneself' implied that citizens who had constructed the state had the natural right to take the state back should their economic situation become dire because they were the ones who had built and managed it. This put the state in an awkward position. Cracking down on widespread petty theft would have been a public declaration of a divergence in state and worker economic interests. Since workers and peasants justified their position to appropriate state resources based upon the *state* logic that they constructed the state and voluntarily collectivised their private land, isolating a collective farm's economic interests from the workers and peasants would have been a rejection of the state's propaganda campaigns. Thus, people were in solidarity by justifying their second economy practices within the state's formal logic rather than against the plan. 'Taking' socialist property showed an evolutionary adaptation of populist vernacular language that situated the workers and peasants as more proletarianised than the state and in which their justification of the practices was 'inescapably tied to official political processes' (Humphrey, 1998, pgs. 226-227). They justified informality using state propaganda.

Due to ever-present labour shortages under state socialism, 'stealing from oneself' or 'taking from the state' is how workers and peasants—who had no independent unions—bargained wages and labour hours with their state bosses. Although workers and peasants were universally employed, they were allowed to switch to workplaces that provided better wages, working conditions, and second economy perks. Managers were forced to make concessions on the state plan to meet their demands and preferences, to compete against other workplaces for much-needed labour. While this was incongruent with the rules of the internal labour market, it was congruent with market principles that workers operated by to choose workplaces as well as with the competition for labour between managers for sought-after labour forces like migrant workers. The continual

allowance of petty theft of goods and moonlighting was a necessary concession managers had to make to keep workers working.

By allowing moonlighting, however, managers contributed to labour shortages on the workshop floor, which in turn caused shortages in state goods and services (Pine, 2002, pg. 80; Sampson, 1987, pg. 134). By 'taking', workers and peasants were telling the managers 'listen, this is what we want and need in order to come to work' (Henken, 2005, pg. 369; Sabel & Stark, 1982, pg. 451; Stark, 1989, pg. 637). Access to the second economy in the state workplaces doubled as a form of social control as managers rewarded workers' submission to the state via access to second economy practices for their private gain. Thus, managers had to strike a balance between comfortable quota completion and workers' access to state resources for private usage. This relational oscillation between the people and their workplaces over how much they could pilfer was at the crux of the reproduction of socialist labour in the command economy.

'Stealing' operated under a different set of rules between private households. While socially accepted in collective spaces, 'taking' in the private spaces between networks was condemned because the second economy was dependent upon the circulation of resource flows between grouped households within a given locality (Grossman, 1977, pg. 29). In Lampland's (1995) study, Hungarian peasants explained that 'If you don't steal from the state, then you're stealing from your family' which referred to the opprobrium of stealing from fellow villagers—'us'—who shared resources rather than stealing from the state—'them'—which received its capital from elsewhere (pg. 260). Stealing from 'us', or of the resources already in second economy circulation, was a way of contributing to inequality, while stealing from the state resources that came from outside of the village contributed to the overall developmental growth of the entire community. People were willing to blur the difference between collective and private ownership when they operated in public, but they reinforced private ownership in private.

State officials knew this because they too were a part of the community, and had homes and families who depended upon others for resources that they did not have access to. In the second economy literature, households used a wide range of monetised and non-monetised transactions, e.g. reciprocity, patron-client relations, and trade of

commodities and services (Cellarius, 2000, pg. 73; Grossman, 1977, pg. 29; Hann & Hart, 2011, pg. 126; Humphrey & Hugh-Jones, 1992; Łoś, 1990b, pg. 41). These networks acted as safety nets and each member became a 'resource to others—a link in a chain upon which many others may depend' (Mars & Altman, 1983, pg. 558). This established a 'flow' of resources and services that bound households together. State agents who carried out and protected the law were simultaneously included in culturally-defined reciprocity networks that included family and friends and manipulated state resources to reciprocate favours, goods, and services they received from their networks (Hann & Hart, 2011, pg. 126; Lomnitz, 1988, pg. 45). A manager who engaged in theft from the enterprise was part of the 'us' (locals) who stole against 'them' (higher authorities); in turn, higher authorities and managers may have constituted an 'us' by meddling with records and accounting books against an invisible 'them' who could have been the worker-peasants below or higher authorities above.

The terms were flexible and provided social protection for anyone who identified with the 'us' and close inspection of those who did not (if they dared). Or, they were engaged in patron-client relations and clientelism among political elites, who appointed kin and acquaintances to government positions to secure state resources within the network. Networks that shared disproportionate food and resources emerged as a shadow class that enjoyed more state resources and hoarded material wealth (Eisenstadt & Roninger, 1981, pgs. 233-245; Korbonski, 1981, pg. 12). The households which controlled access to resources articulated the duality of second economy activity as a source of economic independence and political corruption. It was crucial to maintain multiple identities, to jump spaces and identities, and not have a linear identity or identifiable site of movement, transactions and opinions[36].

Verdery (2004) pointed out that we need to consider how the command economy did not have a clear definition of where individual interests began and collective interests ended. In her description of the socialist property system in Romania, she writes that it was difficult to decipher 'who owns what' in a state enterprise. Due to budget constraints and ambiguous property laws, 'managers'' right to move items of the socialist patrimony around at will contributed to one of the hallmarks of socialist

[36] Thanks to Professor Gareth A. Jones for this point.

political economies: the widespread barter and trading of the goods necessary for production in socialism's 'economies of shortage'. Underground factories emerged as 'managers employed entire sections of the workforce and the infrastructure of the factory for production entirely on their own'. There were cases where 'enterprises that regularly traded raw materials for production, for example, a shoe factory and a factory that made leather coats, might not have clear boundaries around their 'inventory', since the goods in any firm's fund of circulating capital were fungible, enabling timely substitution of materials from other enterprises' (pg. 1). This 'relational management of resources' existed at every level, as managers hoarded and hid state property and commodities from higher scales of state surveillance[37]. They adjusted their 'private' and 'state' interests whenever it was necessary to keep their job and elite status.

When we carefully inspect the role that second and first economies played in ensuring that the everyday socialism worked properly, it is difficult to identify second economy practices as merely a sign of protest against the centrally-planned economy. Rather, it is more helpful to identify the advancement that the proletarianisation of a workforce has on adjusting and transforming the rigid operations of a centrally-planned economy. Workers propagated informality and second economy practices to increase the efficiency of the system because they wanted more resources or services, not to tear down state socialism. In other words, through their actions, they were making a call for a reform of the system. Due to the complexity of informal-formal combinations that required the constant switch between formal and informal, first and second economic practices, it is clear that anyone who engaged in the second economy had an economic stake in ensuring that the state plan was completed, that the next quota was announced, and that they earned an income and ensured access to those state resources that secured their livelihoods.

Thus, the second economy should not just be written off as a form of passive protest, or solidarity against the plan because these actors were deeply dependent upon the state and did not possess an alternate, autonomous economic strategy exclusive of state resources and production (Sampson, 1987, pg. 135). Rather, they possessed intimate knowledge of how the state (mal)functioned and where the grey areas of the law existed

[37] Thanks to Dr. Frances Pine for this point.

on the local state level, where goods were circulated, at what time, what was expected and what could be leveraged for their benefit, who had access to which state resources in the area, etc. Every working adult had access to some piece of this knowledge and combining that knowledge was vital to ensuring that the entire community survived during decades of shortages and poverty.

2.9. State informality

One of the main revelations that came from second economy studies is that informality both supported and subverted the state. Creed (1998) has claimed that in times of shortages, second economies were necessary to alleviate shortages at the formal, institutional level. Therefore, the tension between which activity to allow or not allow towards the preservation of the formal system was at the core of local state dynamics under socialism. Utilising informal economic activity to enhance the circulation flows of resources that would have by definition been carried out by formal mechanisms was 'inherently unstable, requiring continual renegotiation' and it was this negotiation on the local level that signified change under socialism (pgs. 530-531). The second economy became the means through which the site of the formal and who got to define the formal was waged between struggling forces in society. The second economy was a very fluid space through which local power struggles over state resources played out. At the heart of the negotiation was who would gain the most from informal activity. From the lessons of the second economy, we need to ask what specific structural and systemic boundaries are being resisted (or not) with informality in 'informal economies?'

The second economy met consumer demand for goods, income and services which was caused by the state's bureaucratic gridlocks and redistributive deficiencies *and* broke down the state, which in turn, increased that demand. While the first economy was paralysed in its centralised structure, rigidity, speed, inefficiency, and responsiveness to quota completion, the second economy was decentralised, efficient, flexible, and adaptable to local demand. The second economy increasingly substituted the state's formal economic objectives and became a more reliable distribution network, increasing the flow of goods and services, providing extra sources of income, building consumer trust, and producing cyclical output more than the formal, first economy. Paradoxically, because the second economy diverted state resource flows, it became dependent on the state while simultaneously subverting its first economy. As a 'corrective mechanism',

the second economy *encouraged* the centralisation and rigidity of the Soviet plan because it was a quick fix and gave the state 'no incentive to improve central planning'. The state broke down *because* it continued to follow its bureaucratic rationalisation, did not adapt, and retained its political hegemony (Grossman, 1977, pgs. 38-40; Henken, 2005, pg. 362; Ledeneva, 2006, pg. 21; O'Hearn, 1980, pgs. 231-232; Stark, 1989, pg. 654). This is very similar to the pattern of informalisation discussed in the informal economy literature. There is a lot of discussion to be had between the two literatures on how the state co-opts informality for its own purposes.

What informal economy researchers can learn from second economy studies in late stage socialism is that the state preserved its political hegemony through its acceptance of the economic benefits provided by second economy activity. For example, in Poland, the state's crisis was caused and propagated by the people's disobedience towards the plan; thus, the state grew aware that a crack-down on the second economy was impractical and instead, tolerated it. Since everyone was universally employed and provided social welfare benefits from the state, the state actually *subsidised* the second economy, while at the same time contributing to labour shortages and in turn, augmenting workers' bargaining power to increase working conditions. The state was in a position to consent to second economy activity with partial labour shortages or a crackdown on the second economy and widespread disobedience. As the state informalised and accepted the second economy's more formal functions inside of its workplaces, what emerged was a partial institutionalisation of market relations and the expansion of informal private entrepreneurialism in the workplaces, evidenced in the rise of the entrepreneurial class within the socialist workplaces (Korbonski, 1981, pg. 7; Portes & Böröcz, 1988, pg. 23; Sabel & Stark, 1982, pg. 458; Stark, 1989, pg. 637). These entrepreneurs carved out the state workplaces to distribute resources to meet local demand. In a way, the state itself co-opted informality as a way to stabilise the formal economy. Thus, learning from the second economy literature, we should ask what ways the state in the 'informal economies' are benefitting from informality in their formal economic systems. This can bring us closer to the purpose informality serves in the reproduction of the state.

2.10. Beyond second and informal economy literatures

When Hart and Hann (2011) suggested a second world equivalent to the 'informal economy', they referenced Creed's (1998) work on how Bulgarian worker-peasants 'domesticated revolution' by implementing multiple strategies to economically improve their household economy. He writes that the worker-peasants gradually 'forced concessions from central planners and administrators that eventually transformed an oppressive, intrusive system into a tolerable one (pg. 3). Households were the building blocks of second economy activity because all resources eventually made their way back into the home in some shape or form. This was where families analysed the material demands caused by scarcity and shortages, consolidated knowledge about access points (i.e. individuals) to alleviate those shortages, formed short and long term household strategies, and hid stolen resources outside of the state's gaze. Multiple households grouped together to secure a wider range of state resources like goods and services, but new economic opportunities, access to promotions, education, and legal protection for second economy activity (Kotkin, 1995, pgs. 532-533, footnote 163; Lomnitz, 1988, pg. 52; Rev, 1987, pg. 344).

The idea of domestication is a much more flexible category that omits the historical politicisation and analytical limitations of informal and second economy studies because it zooms in on the household reproduction of informality on an intimate level. In effect, it is a better analytical category for understanding informality over time. Building upon Creed's work, Stenning et al. (2010) have documented how Poles and Slovakians 'domesticate neoliberalism' by implementing their socialist-era networks to survive in the capitalist era (see Chapter 8). Domestication in both systems, helped produce concessions and a readjustment of the state-market nexus in line with household needs.

Domestication helps produce economic difference and this provides an important link to Gibson-Graham's propositions on further investigations into diverse economies. In their description of promising academic sites for investigating non-capitalist economies, Gibson-Graham (1996) argue that we need to pay more attention to the 'process of dislocation' by which they mean 'identifying the alternative economic activities, events, and experiences that have been domesticated, symbolised or integrated within a dominant capitalocentric discourse of economy and giving them space to fully "exist"'

(pg. 57). They too point towards the household as 'the greatest light upon the discourse of Capitalism' because they are major sites of non-capitalist production and because there are more people involved in the household than there are in the capitalist sector, the household is far from being 'marginal' and 'it can arguably be seen as equivalent to or more important than the capitalist sector' (pg. 261). The household is 'a major site of class processes, sometimes incorporating a "feudal" domestic class process in which one partner produces surplus labor in the form of use values to be appropriated by the other' (pgs. 58-59; see Chapter 8). Domestication coming from second economy and post-socialist informality studies can help fill in their call for more academic investigations of the process of dislocation and household economies.

Domestication propagates a more blurred perspective towards public and private spaces. In a way, it emphasises the private sphere, but blurs the barriers within public spaces. It emphasises the household as the central site of economic activity that 'domesticates' the resources scattered around in the 'public sphere' (and its laws and regulations encompassing those resources) and through it, produces economic difference to the 'ism'. The emphasis on shifting resources rather than on appeasing any law or state is a much more accommodating theoretical framework than 'second economy' that emphasises its relationship to the 'formal' or 'official' economy (something that those who exercise *kombinacja* do not always prioritise). For example, in a domestication mindset, the workers in the socialist era were able to spin the idea of collective property in the workplace in order to 'appropriate' it for themselves without calling it theft. The factory or collective farm was their property and thus they could do what they wished to do with it. Again, this emphasises how domestication can work in a blurred private/public binary. 'Domesticating' can help explain the continuation of such practices across transitions—unlike the 'second economy' that emphasises the relationship of informality to the socialist state—because the next 'formal' economy in the 'public' arena becomes just another site where strategies have to be slightly adjusted in order to access the resources and be brought back into the private sphere. Domestication adjusts to shifting public (i.e. privatisation of universal healthcare, factories, etc.) and private spheres (i.e. privatisation of land, migrant worker households split along transnational lines, etc.). This prioritisation of the household needs over the public rules in effect produces economic difference by producing new linkages between the public and private spheres.

The fact that informal economies focused on public spaces and second economies focused on private spaces was one of the major differences between the two economies. If domestication is applied to our understanding of informal economies, then we can analyse them differently; as not simply existing in public space but rather that they (like second economies) channelled earnings and resources into the household and incorporated them into non-capitalist processes at some point. Domestication as the engine of producing difference and the household as an important site in that process provides academic space for understanding how informality blurs capitalist/non-capitalist, formal/informal, informal/second economies, and public/private binaries.

The idea of domestication carries a precaution of the opposite circumstance. I share Morris and Polese's (2014) wariness of 'an easy celebration of non-capitalist practices in the context of "postsocialism"' (pgs. 191-192). They explain that 'Whereas in the previous system workplace relations and activities were more likely to be used to develop social capital networks for favours and access, market transactions have become key as opportunities for cash earnings are now seen as of primary importance. In this sense, the informal economy under emergent capitalism represents a form of self-exploitative social relation, appropriating one's own labour to sustain a livelihood, often in conjunction of course with other economic practices' (pg. 195). For example, 'domesticating neoliberalism' is not a way of calling out for reform but a vehicle for exploitation. Similarly, non-capitalist economies in the household—i.e. feudalism—can be both a source of economic self-determination but of oppression and exploitation.

There is the danger to the process of domestication, in that it can be co-opted. States can 'domesticate' or 'co-opt' economic difference in the private and public domains towards their own hegemonic rule. This idea emphasises the homogeneity of the public realm. The domestication of alternatives is important to the production of the hegemonic norm and the domestication of the hegemonic norm is important to the production of economic alternatives. This struggle over who gets to domesticate what is one of the ideas behind *kombinacja* discussed in Chapter 1, that it is a constant field of struggle over a limited pool of resources. Through this investigation of *kombinacja*, from 1945 to the present, we can learn how the domestication process occurs on both fronts (from the state-making process to the state-breaking process) and how domestication can become both a producer of diverse economies as well as the process

through which those economies are co-opted, homogenised and erased under the myth of capitalist hegemony.

2.10.1. Habitus and fields

The fluidity and flexibility of *kombinacja*, as a strategy that operates in multiple settings, can be best described using Bourdieu's (1993) concepts of fields and habitus. He defines a field (*champ*) as 'a separate social universe having its own laws of functioning independent of those of politics and the economy' (pg. 162). The field is a social or institutional arena—a system of relations, alliances, power struggles—within which agents maneuver and struggle to access, appropriate, and redistribute a limited pool of capital. A field can be a network, setting, set of relationships, or structure with different characteristics (public, economic, political, academic, religious, cultural, etc.). In order to 'enter' the field, an agent must possess what Bourdieu calls 'habitus'—a 'feel for the game', a 'second sense' or 'practical sense'—in order to investigate one's objectives, hopefully with a profit, in that given field (Johnson, 1993, pgs. 5, 8). A field is relational as each agent experiences power differently based upon her temporal positionality within a given field (Bourdieu, 1993, pg. 64). The agent thus appropriates capital through multiple configurations of relations and sites at a given point in time. Understandings fields requires a mapping of inter-agent relations and the contexts where they take certain positions in opposition to others (pg. 181).

Fields are dynamic, in that agents' actions across the field change the field itself. The field faces 'endless changes' (pg. 55) because the 'unifying principle of this "system" is the struggle, with all the contradictions it engenders' (pg. 34). The various trajectories that a certain field takes depend on the '"repertoire" of possibilities which it offers, but on the balance of forces between social agents who have entirely real interests in the different possibilities available to them as stakes and who deploy every sort of strategy to make one set or the over prevail' (pg. 34). The field is culturally reproduced because it upholds the promise of supplying the limited pool of resources to the actors: 'Because the fields of cultural production are universes of belief which can only function in so far as they succeed in simultaneously producing products and the need for those products through practices which are the denial of ordinary practices of the "economy", the struggles which take place within them are ultimate conflicts involving the whole's relation to the "economy"' (pg. 82). The imagery of an economic field as a site of

resources that are competed for by agents with a certain repertoire of habitus provides a much broader range of possibilities for acquiring those resources than what any 'ism' could supply with its legal rules and economic regulations. Yet, any long-standing imagery of an economic field transforms itself into an 'ism', and this is why it is important for the field to be fluid and dynamic, so that it takes no long-lasting form, and that it interacts and hybridises with other fields (e.g. the revolving door between the political and academic fields in American politics). What gives characteristics to a field is its 'system of common references, a common framework', or what Bourdieu (1993) calls the "space of possibles"' (pg. 179).

The association of *kombinacja* and habitus is not new. Mazurek (2012) has already equated *kombinacja* with habitus because it 'means an embodied, internalised, and therefore natural and self-evident way of behavior that helped people improvise or even prosper in times of crisis and rupture' (pg. 317, footnote 6). As in Mazurek's example, *kombinacja* is the habitus that allows families in need to navigate the economic field and find ways of accessing, appropriating, and domesticating those limited resources towards basic survival. However, Bourdieu defines a field as relational and dynamic, in that there are no specific actors who enter it and it is a constant site of struggle. Similarly, agents in the world of *kombinacja* can be both the families in need or they could be the state, nomenklatura, church leaders, etc. The state may enter the field as an agent and use *kombinacja* to co-opt peasant forms of agricultural labour as a survival mechanism in order to save the state's harvest quota plan (see Chapters 4 and 5). This latter set of *kombinator* who merge fields for private benefit fits well with Bourdieu's description of the field as one in which agents can occupy multiple positions as a strategy to gain a competitive edge for limited resources. Similar to habitus, *kombinacja* is used by multiple actors to rework the spatial distribution of resources across a given economic field.

However, the type of actors who engage in the struggle over resources has an impact on the diversification of the homogenisation of economies vis-à-vis the hegemonic norm (using Gibson-Graham's terms). Some *kombinators* like the poor families can domesticate those resources and channel them into the 'private' sphere, contributing to the economic differentiation of the formal economy. But the process can go the other way as well. Other *kombinators* can use *kombinacja* to extract those domesticated

resources and rework them to take them out into the 'public' sphere. Looking at who uses *kombinacja* and for what purpose reveals a constant reworking of networks and space through which resources flow. Many resources are moving from the public to private spheres, once more blurring any notion of neats binaries. When the resources are domesticated, we see more economic differentiation to the hegemonic norm; when the resources are commandeered to benefit the state or formal economy, we see a homogenisation of economic difference under the wing of the hegemonic norm. This fluctuation of the field as a *space of possibles* gives rise to economic differentiation, away from the ideal-type, providing a forum for diverse economies and alternative economies from that of the hegemonic socialist or capitalist norm.

Thus, contextual stories about *kombinacja* which are passed down through generations relay the 'system of references' that are necessary for anyone to understand how *kombinacja* works and what the rules of the game are in the economic field, that do or do not coincide with formal legal rules and economic regulations. There is 'good' *kombinacja*—when the agent or *kombinator* works to secure resources that benefit the milieu—and 'bad' *kombinacja* –when an agent of *kombinator* works to secure limited resources from another milieu. What constitutes good or bad *kombinacja* is in the eye of the beholder. Nevertheless, these good and bad contexts of *kombinacja* help expose this 'separate social universe' and its laws for navigating the economic field. This space of possibles is what is in these contextual stories of *kombinacja,* which tell us about the possibilites of survival under dire conditions.

2.10.2. Multiplicity of space

Investigating *kombinacja* requires a rethinking of space, namely how its production of economic difference carves out different spaces within any formal economy. In *For Space*, Doreen Massey aimed to pursue an 'alternative imagination' of space, by uprooting it from stasis, closure, representation and to resettle it among heterogeneity and relationality (2005, pg. 13). She captures its anti-essentialist and relational spirit when she writes that any specific space is a 'product of interrelations—connections and disconnections—and their (combinatory) effects' (pg. 67). These interrelations produce multiple manifestations of space. In her definition, space and multiplicity are mutually exclusive—'without space, no multiplicity; without multiplicity, no space' (pg. 9-10). Rather than seeing space as static, echoing the 'possibilities' language created by

Gibson-Graham's 'politics of possibility', Massey imagines space 'as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity' with a focus on heterogeneity and difference (pg. 10). This can help explain how a process that focuses on producing difference can carve out spaces for its own existence.

Kombinacja's polysemic nature works well with this relational notion of space because it has affected different people, at different times, and on different spatial scales[38]. Its differentiation, appropriation, and transformation over time is reproduced through the constant blurring of boundaries and contact with multiple scales. *Kombinacja* is a spatial act in that the agent must scope out the distribution of resources across space and then find a way of appropriating and redistributing them to a site or set of sites. It rests on the assumption that space is malleable and subject to transformation through the manipulation of informal, cultural, and linguistic avenues. A *kombinator* believes in the possibility of complexity—sometimes stirring complexity, and producing trajectories and difference is exactly what makes *kombiancja* worthwhile. It confuses order. Building upon this idea in theoretical terms, *kombinacja* is a type of habitus that operates in an economic field and reproduces a space of activity that gives mass and life to alternative economies, which furthers the idea of a diverse economy composed of capitalist and non-capitalist forms. Massey's (2005) definition of space can help illustrate *kombinacja*'s reproduction of multiple trajectories, spaces of economic difference, as well as its own transformations and processes of creative destruction over time.

The last important point which Massey's work adds to the study of *kombinacja* is her acknowledgment of space as an open, fluid system that is 'always in the process of being made', which gives it an 'openness of the future' (pgs. 9-11). Thus, time and space become 'co-implicated' in that 'On the side of space, there is the integral temporality of a dynamic simultaneity. On the side of time, there is the necessary production of change through practices of interrelation' (pg. 55). What she means is that when we look at space, we see multiple simultaneous activities occurring on its plane. Similarly, when we think of *kombinacja,* it represents a multiplicity of activities taking place by individuals, producing different representations of economies and resource

[38] Thanks to Dr. Sharad Chari for this point.

flows, and producing a heterogeneous landscape. This brings to mind how important manipulation of time, and action through time, is to the exercise of *kombinacja* and the extraction of resources. Time is of the essence, in order to evade the gaze of the state, the surveillance of relatives, and the time it takes for gossip to travel around a village. Time is the *kombinators*' co-conspirator against (formal) space.

2.11. Conclusion: embracing complexity

The *kombinacja* imagery fits into a perception of the world in which economies, space, time, people, institutions are interconnected through a heterogeneous clustering of relations that can be augmented and reconnected to allow new resource flows. Thus, it necessitates an open theoretical framework that gives space to possibilities of heterogeneity, complexity, relational space, multiplicity, that provide the loose structure for defining *kombinacja,* but not limiting it in its fluidity and temporality. To this end, this chapter has attempted to bridge multiple sets of literatures, some of which have been comfortably situated in their time-tested binaries but which were limiting theoretical investigations into informality and diverse economies.

Firstly, I have shown the common political and economic project of Gibson-Graham's diverse economies in the 'capitalist' countries and the burgeoning field of post-socialist informality in the ex-Soviet bloc which both seek to demonstrate the farce of capitalist hegemony in the midst of multiple economic alternatives. This helps pave the way for investigations of *kombinacja* under post-socialism; both in Poland and beyond (i.e. America), because it provides the theoretical support that allows economic alternatives to be exercised even in sites that are considered to be 'capitalist'. Given that studies on post-socialism are on the rise, I have attempted to bridge the gap between informal and second economy literatures that have treated informality within 'capitalist' and 'socialist' systems as examples of defunct systems—which may be true—but ones which could not be bridged because capitalism and socialism were binaries. I have shown how they have both been ways of making formal-informal hybrids and both share common ground in the study, for example, of state informality. This blurring of the socialist/capitalist binary carves out academic space for investigating *kombinacja* and informality across different economic systems (especially how they change or not during economic and political transition). This blurring adds to Gibson-Graham's diverse economies, in that it suggests the theory requires a attention to the state and its

particular relationship to non-capitalism, non-socialism, informality, and the processes that generate new economic alternatives under a formal or regulated economy.

Secondly, I have provided some direction into the blurred binary between private and collective property explored in the second economy literature. This paves the way for thinking about the relational property that changes rules according to circumstances, which goes into the management and subversion of the formal economy. This relates to the blurred binary between public and private spheres (and the possibility of multiple privates and publics) that is encapsulated in the domestication literature. These literatures obfuscate any clear association of private with informality and public with formality. This leaves some academic room for comparing and contrasting 'domesticating neoliberalism' and 'post-socialist informality'. All of these categories break down Marxian notions of neatly boxed class status or single category definitions like a workplace , because they show how subjects are engaging in multiple class relations in multiple sites on an everyday level. It again points to the state not being the bastion of formality, but as somehow benefitting or co-opting these expanding processes. These are new, ambiguous areas of research that need attention because they can chart new sites of economic possibilities.

Thirdly, I provided several sites where *kombinacja* can expand the application of informality. Habitus and fields enhance our understanding of *kombinacja* as a strategy of entering into a game over resources that changes the field with every action. The field itself is changed by habitus. Finally, I open up this idea even further to the complexity and multiplicity of space in the process of being made, which works with the notion of fields as being transformed by habitus. This is helpful in imagining how the process of informality—although producing multiple trajectories—can reproduce its function within economic and political fields over time. I will pick up on this again in Chapter 9.

Chapter 3

Remembering *kombinacja*

3.1. The 'plan'

Perplexed by the historical chess-board of privatisation and collectivisation across adjacent villages that I had encountered during ethnographic fieldwork in Poland's 'Recovered Territories' (*Ziemie Odzyskane*; henceforth 'territories') in 2008, my initial data collection was oriented around some key questions: Why did some villages collectivise while other adjacent villages did not? Was there a 'choice' to collectivise and how was it defined, calculated, and negotiated? What was the economic relationship between collectivised and non-collectivised villages? Did they negotiate capital and resources between them, and if so, how? I had hoped that these questions would complicate ideas of the 'transition' from socialism to capitalism by demonstrating how mixed-economies already existed during the socialist period.

The theoretical questions revolved around how ideas about territoriality, property ownership, and resource and land management had evolved and diverged between the people and the state. The territories annexed by Poland from Germany towards the end of the Second World War were a unique site for investigating these processes (Figure 3). The territories had been the site of massive population upheaval as the Polish state deported millions of Germans and repopulated them with an ethnically, nationally, religiously, linguistically, and culturally diverse group of Slavic peoples—many of whom had fought on opposite sides of the war (Chapter 4). Their experiences differed from those in central Poland who had simply returned to their pre-war home. How is it that some villages possessed a stronger sense of territoriality? Did the people's and state's territoriality narratives 'line up' and deviate? How did territoriality turn 'on' and 'off'? I aimed to compare and contrast the people's local narrative and state's official narrative about the formation of the territories in the mid-1940s and the gradual trajectory towards the collectivisation drive in the 1950s.

Figure 3 Recovered Territories (X marks fieldwork site).
The Polish People's Republic (Davies, 1982, pg. 612).

I spent the 2008-2009 academic year reading around fifty state-censored books published in Poland through state publishers between 1944 and 1989 about the territories. This literature was found at the British, LSE, Senate House, and SSEES Libraries in London as well as at the Butler Library during my stay as a Visiting Scholar at the East Central European Studies Center at Columbia University in New York City. I planned to locate the remainder of the literature in Warsaw's academic libraries during my stay as a Visiting Scholar at Collegium Civitas and the Polish Academy of Sciences prior to the commencement of my fieldwork. The state discourse was quite prevalent in the state-censored academic literature—often coauthored by Party officials themselves—which justified the annexation of the territories (in the midst of international controversy about the land grab) by the state and used the tools of

anthropology, geography, linguistics, archeology, and historical investigation to 'prove' the Polishness of the territories (see Chapter 4). This was the state 'voice'.

One point of contrast that stood out was that the socialist state-making and Polish nation-building projects were concurrently unravelling on the territories. While advertising the territories as Poland's Wild West and the place for starting a new life on reclaimed national territories, ethnic Poles by no means formed a majority among the settlers. The Polish state was resettling Siberian gulag survivors from all over the Slavic world, Jewish Holocaust survivors, Ukrainian insurgents from the newly re-drawn Polish-Ukrainian border, Belausians who did not agree to Soviet collectivisation drives in the east and chose to be repatriated as Polish citizens, Kashubians who had lived there for generations, Germans who married settlers and stayed behind, and even Greek minorities who were resettled by the state. The state was creating the environs for a Soviet, not a Polish society. This mix further complicated the investigation. How did past experiences with Soviet collectivisation in the east affect the discourses against collectivisation? Did experiences with the new state while coming to the territories affect their trust in the state's development policies? Did ethnicity play a role in whether a village collectivised?

The next phase of the plan was to compare the national state discourse with interviews that I would conduct with the very people who had settled in those territories after the war and who were part of the group who decided for or against collectivisation. Anthropological research on Polish agriculture during the socialist period was concentrated in the mostly uncollectivised, central and southern parts of the country (Hann, 1986; Pine, 1993) while most research coming out of the newly annexed northern and western territories, that had gotten a heavy dose of Sovietisation and where my fieldwork sites were located, were concentrated in Wrocław (Kenney, 1997; Thum, 2011). I would have to find local statistics and archives about the resettlement campaigns and collectivisation drives in addition to conducting interviews.

Finally, the official state narratives would be compared to those from on-the-ground interviews that I would conduct during fieldwork for three and a half months in the village of Dobra (collectivised) while living with my grandmother Zuzanna (peasant farmer) and the same block of time would be spent in the village of Zag (uncollectivised)—thirteen kilometres north of Dobra—where I would live with my

aunt Kinga and uncle Alfred (retired teachers). I expected my family to help me locate a snowball sample.

I developed a questionnaire to ensure that the responses were standardised so that I could search for code words that related to the state narrative and turn rich life histories into percentages. It asked about the participant's date of birth, ethnic identity, nationality, origin prior to settlement in the territories, number of languages spoken and so forth. The pre-migration section asked questions about their old farm size, if collective farms and a Communist party existed in their old village, and what had happened to the property after the war. Migration questions enquired about their experience of coming to the territories, what they brought with them, if they were forcibly resettled, if they had the choice to be settled in the city. Arrival questions asked how they acquired their property, how many parcels and hectares they received from the state, what early property relations with neighbours looked like, if they had to engage in trade with villagers to get needed resources, if they thought that the border transfer was legitimate. Village life questions focused on their evolving sense of community, if they participated in village life, if they had contact with other villagers. Collectivisation questions were brief, asking if they supported collectivisation, if they liked the local government, how much land they would have to (or did) give away to collectivisation, and if the state listened to them. The only question about the present-day was concerning what they planned to do with their home. I had naïvely expected individuals who had survived enough upheavals to write a book that their lives could be reduced to 'check-marks' on a form. I was looking for alternative histories and territorialities, but my awful questionnaire confined interviewees to official history.

3.2. Warsaw

In order to gain access to archives and libraries in London and New York City, all I had to do was present a university document and student identification card. Warsaw was a totally different experience. A document or institutional support was not enough to get through the door. Conducting research there required a different skill-set—namely, of being able to identify and manoeuvre through informal and formal relations and exchanges—that I had not developed. Initially, I was under the impression that I needed institutional support through a Polish university to gain access to the national archives and secured two visiting scholar positions at two separate universities in Warsaw to that

end. However, when I met with the departmental director of one of the universities, he casually told me in a hallway to pay him (and only him) $US 300 as a fee for the benefits I would accrue from being associated with that university. This was not something we had established in the emails prior to my 'acceptance' and arrival to Warsaw. Regretfully, I paid him, but I received no receipt, document, or assistance.

When I presented my student card to the female clerk at Warsaw University Library, she refused me access because she did not 'believe' that what I held was a 'real' student card. After multiple complaints to see the manager and after showing my letter of affiliation with the other university in the city, she was still 'unconvinced'. Baffled—thinking that I was probably not the first person to ever present a foreign identification card—I began to wonder whether she, knowing that I was a foreign Pole by my identification, could manipulate the context so that I could 'convince' her to let me in. Again, I had to assume that she wanted something under the table. I sent in two complaint letters explaining the incident to the director of the library and received no response. Ironically, bribing her on the spot would have been the more efficient route in getting access to the university resources.

Experiences like these made me suspicious of every encounter with strangers and institutions. There were 'exceptions', 'hidden fees', 'miscommunication', 'delays' and 'hidden documents' that justified another course of action which was necessary in order to gain access. I was new to fieldwork in Poland and could not tell when someone was bluffing or whether I had actually somehow missed the details. Eventually, my rule of thumb was that when something obvious was being barred from me and the ball was in my court to make a concession on what is legal then chances were something was amiss. I could not get accustomed to bribery in order to access information that I felt I had a right to access, but it became too tedious to work around the constant gridlock of 'private' barriers.

People's activities in public spaces raised some questions. It was in Warsaw where, for the first time in my life, I witnessed an elderly woman who wore church attire and a beret attempting to shoplift chicken wings from a small supermarket. I stood in line behind her. When two girls in their 20s noticed that the woman to whom they had just handed a plastic bag with the wings was buying only a newspaper, they started to accuse her of theft. The woman denied it saying that she put the chicken away because

she did not want it. Then the girls responded with conviction that she could say that to the police when they arrived. The woman nonchalantly responded, 'Oh! I just remember that I may have put something in my bag'. She slowly opened it up, briefly rummaged through and slowly declared 'Oh I put it here!'. Rolling her eyes, the cashier briefly 'chastised' the woman to admit wrong-doing but she did not even have a guilty look about her. She bought the chicken, newspaper, and left. I felt like I had witnessed something from a distant past, where 'incessant finagling', 'creativity', and 'resourcefulness' were the everyday norm (Mazurek, 2012). I had observed 'resourceful' old woman who manipulates her church-going identity to save money, 'softens' her illegal act and may have even conjured up a hint of guilt from the girls who decided not to call the police. The woman's attempt at *kombinacja* felt more elusive than the Vietnamese black market or Stadium-Bazaar sprawled outside of a bus station across the Wisła River (Sulima, 2012).

Concurrently, I experienced a less comedic glimpse of *kombinacja* in the domestic sphere. Prior to my arrival in Warsaw, my mother had secured a home-stay with Zuzanna's one-legged brother Artur whom I had wanted to meet because he purportedly escaped from a Siberian gulag during the Second World War. He and his family sounded excited to have me live with them in one of the largest apartment complexes in Warsaw. Karol who lived with Artur was a historian and Artur's other son, Dawid, had a daughter my age, Urszula, who would help me out. But the illusion wore off. After Dawid dropped me off at Artur's small apartment, it was suggested to me that I pay him $200 to keep good relations. I refused, saying that I could have paid for limo transport for that amount. Relations went downhill from there. It turned out Urszula was a Polish bride who had just been 'purchased' by an African-American Seattle businessman, and was leaving for America that month. Her capacity to assist with orientation in Warsaw was therefore limited. Differently, Karol's ability to be a reliable source on Polish history came to very little due to his alcoholism. He would sit on the toilet at night drinking vodka and, as my room had no lock, would barge in and ramble about something or other before being made to leave. Afraid, I kept a knife under the bed.

What was maddening and intriguing was watching the cycle of *kombinacja* play out between the two men. Who would outsmart the other? Karol would ask Artur for money for 'meat' or 'one beer' or 'taking the dog out for a walk' and his father would respond

that he knew the prices. Then Karol would return with excuses about how the prices had gone up and he had no spare change. One night, Artur got a massive nose-bleed and I took care of him in the bathroom for six hours straight while Karol sat on the sofa drunk and watching television. Neither wanted to call the ambulance, saying that it would take too long for it to arrive and it would be too expensive. By then, I was through with family and moved into a hostel. No matter how many times I explained my reasons for leaving, they did not understand. Several months later, Artur had another nose-bleed and died of a brain aneurism. I never recorded his gulag story.

My encounters with *kombinacja* in Warsaw should have been a caution for what awaited me in Dobra. Depending on the context, sometimes I was treated as a 'foreigner', other times as a 'Pole', which then qualified me to become a site upon which *kombinacja* could be enacted. I was suspicious of anyone who charged me dollars (not *złoty* or pounds) and whenever the amount was in the 'several' hundreds. Importantly, even when a family relationship seemed 'informally' established, the other person could turn on 'formality' without any prior agreement for a transaction, and vice versa. As Dr. Sławomir Kapralski, a sociologist whom I met at Collegium Civitas located in the Palace of Culture and Science—Stalin's towering 'gift' to Warsaw—and who had taken an interest in my work, warned, I would have to learn how to 'play the game' to conduct fieldwork in the villages. Although I was getting a sense of what the game was, I still did not know how to play it. Still, I hoped that Dobra would be different since it was my 'home' village. In fact, it was not too different from Warsaw. Leveraging formality and informality became key to accessing sites, people, and information, which in turn transformed me and changed my original research plan.

3.3. Searching for history

Bureaucratic walls in Słupsk and Dobra were as tall as those in Warsaw. Humiliation, frustration, and anger marked all of my encounters with bureaucracy and the state. My 'American' identity appeared to have mattered more to people than my status as a student from London. When I went into the cartographic office of Słupsk city hall, I walked into a room occupied by four, twenty-something-year-old secretaries and several of their co-workers standing around their desks. I asked if I could look at some old cartographic blueprints of the commune from the Stalinist period. They all glanced at one another with smiling eyes and mockingly repeated the question back to me in

'Americanised Polish'. I walked out humiliated. Janine Wedel (1986) who had similar experiences conducting fieldwork wrote that humiliation in Poland 'is one of the features of almost any contact with the formal organs of the state' and a 'means through which people are socialised into the system' (pg. 149). Many who sat behind a desk were power-tripping.

Yet, people who represented the state territories seemed to have an additional disregard for 'formality'—especially when it was dictated from Warsaw. In the national archives[39] in Słupsk, the documentation I had brought from a university in Warsaw which granted me legal access to the archive was practically worthless. 'What are we, monkeys?' the director asked when he looked at my consent forms and documents. He—not a document—would authorise access. The director first asked detailed questions about my research, my marital status, my age and finances before 'agreeing' to give me access to the archives. He explained that since the old office had burnt down in 1953, only scraps from the 1945-1953 era remained and that they were disheveled in the folders where only he knew what existed. The idea that 'history does not exist' or 'archives do not exist' is a common reaction that other anthropologists have encountered when working in the archives in Warsaw. He brought a folder of disheveled archives from Dobra but rather than bringing me documents from Zag, he brought archives from a nearby commune and said, 'Eh, the history is all the same around here'. The basis of my project was that it was not the same history from village to village, but it was peculiar that the uncollectivised village had no 'documented' history[40].

When I took out my camera to take photographs of the archives, he nonchalantly told me that each photograph would cost 1 *grosz* (a penny). I thought that this was odd because nothing on the website suggested that there was a price to pay other than for photocopies. I reluctantly agreed to it. After I had spent several hours taking over a thousand photographs and turned to pay the 100 *złoty* ($4), he said that the cost was actually 1 *złoty* per photograph, so $400! I demanded to see written proof of these payments which I did not see anywhere on the walls. He took out a huge booklet from

[39] Wojewódzkie Archiwum Państwowe.
[40] Dr. Małgorzata Mazurek, who also conducts research on *kombinacja*, told me that she had a similar experience in an archival office in Poland (February 2014).

deep within his desk drawer, slammed it on the desk, and pointed at the price in the middle of some page. Evidently, in Poland, 'rules' are a matter of opportunity. I refused to pay, prompting him to demand that I erase the photographs from my computer and that (in true Soviet fashion) he would strike my presence from the archival register, and that the state could take me to court if I ever used any of the information in published format. In the end, I—just like the Zag archives—ceased to 'exist'.

One might interpret this encounter as a figure in power leveraging informal and formal scare tactics to create a field of the 'unknown'. Given the number of such encounters with Polish institutions I suspected that this was not a coincidence. But, this form of *kombinacja* worked both ways. I backed up the photographs, showed him a blank external hard-drive as if I had deleted them, threw a *złoty* at him and left in tears. I am not proud of that moment, but it explains my level of frustration with Polish institutions. How does one define and choose what is and is not ethical when agents representing formal institutions operate in the grey zone? It was this repertoire of emotions, of feeling 'justified' for conducting an 'illegal' act, which I began to understand.

On such days I was relieved to escape to Dobra. It was not too different there. The *gmina* mayor from Dobra whose family had been in village politics since the socialist era refused an interview three times and told me to seek history 'among the elderly' and 'archives' in Słupsk. A village teacher who had gathered old photographs from villagers for an exhibition at the local elementary school told me she would share them with me for an agreed price and only after I brought cake to a sit down with the school director. Some of the excuses that the *gmina* secretaries gave for denying access to local archives were that they too were working on the same exact articles and research questions as I was and could not share it at that moment. Some of these barriers were breached when I approached the secretary several times over a longer period of time. It is surprising that Zbierski-Salameh (2013), who conducted research on post-socialist transformation in a similar agro-industrial village in central Poland, wrote that she had 'unrestricted access to personnel and local council meetings' as well as multiple interviews with the staff and access to documents (pg. 11). What was frustrating was not knowing 'why' these barriers were around and showing I could overcome them to access the information that I needed. Every encounter required me to make a major concession to 'make things happen'. Yet, the public libraries at both Dobra and Słupsk were open, had internet

connection, digitized archives, and the librarians were accommodating with the information that they could supply.

These exceptions aside, my experience with institutions was defined by the systematic encounter with nomenklatura 'superiority'. Individuals who granted access to the public resources domesticated public information as their private ownership and used their formal positions of power to leverage resources from me—whether money, coffee, and cake, or information about my personal life, family, and life in America. This sense that 'corruption was everywhere' was difficult to come to terms with because I did not have the skill-set that I needed to get around these mind-games. How else could I have approached these encounters? I felt that my 'own people' did not want to help me. In hindsight, I think what they meant was: 'let's combine our resources to make something happen' but it took a long time to work this out.

3.4. Domesticating research

The Zag plan was slipping from my grasp. Although Kinga and Alfred had initially agreed to host me, they discontinued their interest soon after my arrival. Mother took time off and came to the village to loosen up some family tensions and to put me in contact with her acquaintances (*znajomi*) with whom she and my father had worked in the state factory and mechanical enterprises in the 1970s and 1980s. She had not spoken to some of them for decades; thus, my fieldwork actually required the rejuvenation of old socialist-era networks. She negotiated access to their cars through various gifts and favours (which were not identical). Adam, a police officer, Hela and Tadeusz, both factory workers, and Marek, a retired mechanical enterprise worker took turns driving me around the commune to the original settlers they knew could engage with me. Adam was personally interested in the project and only accepted chocolates. Hela and Tadeusz received a bottle of Jack Daniels and a promise from mother that she would send them a formal invitation to the United States. I paid Marek $200 to cover fuel costs. As the following chapters demonstrate, this same process of reworking the formal and rerouting resources and access was key to survival under socialism. Similar to a state plan, my research plan was too rigid and full of shortages. It was incredible that these mechanisms could be adapted to rework my fieldwork plan. Fieldwork became a family enterprise!

Prior to this fieldwork, whenever mother travelled to Poland in the 1990s and 2000s, I had questioned her spending thousands of dollars on gifts to distribute to family members, friends, and anyone else who might come to visit her in the village. Many of these gifts were never seen again. Family members probably traded and sold them to other villagers for other favours. Interpreting it as wasteful spending used to show her as an American success story, whereas I had failed to see the more functional 'economy of the gift' (Mauss, 1950/1990, pg. 54). This time, I learned that whenever she comes to Poland, she has a lot of errands to run, thus, gift giving is a way of making sure that everyone is 'happy to help' whenever she needed to get something done in the village, city, or when she returned to Trenton. It is a way of carving out economic and social space and the timing and strategising of whom to give gifts has a lot to do with minimising and protecting oneself from possible future risk. These gifts help reproduce familial bonds and socialist-era networks 'just in case' she ever needs to return to the village after she retires in America.

Because villagers saw me first as a 'Materkowa' (woman from the Materka family), and secondly as a researcher from somewhere, mother's gift-giving helped legitimate my work and presence. It was not enough for me to 'explain' my work, someone from the 'inside' had to explain it, even if the language was the same. Somehow, people understood it differently. To 'make space' for me to conduct my fieldwork, she paid people off, helped explain my work, loosened tensions, etc. which was a gift in itself (which she would later use as leverage for me to reciprocate 'daughter's duty' services for her back in Trenton). I found it ironic because my mother rarely mentions anything about my academic interests with her fellow working-class friends. Yet, in the village, by helping me rework my plan, she helped me show other villagers that young women *can* be researchers and achieve a higher education. Mother helped *embed* my fieldwork into village life through her artful manipulation of local discourse, distribution of gifts, and rejuvenation of her old networks. This repositioned my work in a different 'social field' because by accepting gifts or agreeing to share their networks, villagers began helping me to secure information as a way of reproducing good relations with the Materka family.

Two codes of 'ethics' affected my research plan. I feared deviating from the original framework of the funded protocol. This was the framework where I would parachute

into the community, present documents to grant access to offices and interviewees, participate little in village life, and exit. If I had stayed at a hotel and hired a translator and gatekeeper, I would have been able to keep it that way. However, since I stayed with family, a different set of ethics tugged at me, which brings to mind Wedel's (1986) keen observation that in Poland, 'one moral code is reserved for the private world of family and friends, another one for the public' (pg. 16). At the time, I was not aware that I had engaged in 'domestication'—a positively sanctioned process during the socialist and post-socialist periods that I later 'rediscovered' during my fieldwork. The 'Domestication' of research funds to pay for coal—which served my fieldwork goals and helped my family economically—was the 'right' thing to do in that code of ethics even though it would have raised questions in the West. Funds from mother's pocket went to giving gifts in order to 'pay off' people who would help me with fieldwork, although some wanted a reciprocated invitation to America which I could not provide! Local realities challenged ethics almost daily.

While mother helped situate my fieldwork in the 'social field', she helped me understand the 'habitus' or the set of skills necessary to navigate the changing field. By shadowing her on several occasions, I learned 'how to get things done'. When she was assembling documentation of her work history in the state factory towards her retirement application, she had to use her personal contacts and gifts to locate the exact household in Słupsk that during the 1990s had privatised the state's copies of pay stubs that proved her employment history. She walked into private homes where she sat at dining room tables with people who went into their drawers and took out her work history that had been recorded by the state and which she needed to get her retirement. Of course, once she was in these people's homes, she had to disburse gifts of gratitude (coffee, chocolates). These were private gate-keepers to the workers' histories under the previous state. I found it outrageous that middle-aged workers who wanted to retire in 2008 had to 'find' the privatised state archives (by asking people on the street) in people's homes. These documents were *necessary* for workers to prove their work-history to the state. 'Official' processes like securing a retirement pension required one to navigate through public and private spheres.

It was in joining her on these scavenger hunts for the remnants of the socialist state's bureaucratic footprints that I began to appreciate how boundaries of 'public' and

'private' had changed in the last twenty years. When conducting fieldwork in 1980s Poland, Wedel (1986) observed that 'Poles shape their lives to mesh with the varying demands of private and public worlds. They have developed a keen ability, not only to live with the contradictions of their society, but to manipulate them creatively' (pg. 16). She called this the 'art of adjustment', something which I failed at miserably and which mother excelled at in 2009. When I witnessed mother manoeuvre through people and sites, I saw her exert agency in such a way that I had never seen in Trenton. There—I was the translator and mediator—while in Dobra she was mine. Mother used her habitus, a keen sensory reception, to identify a changing field—which in this case were the fluid public and private boundaries of where the 'state' was located—and then adjusted her positionality to ensure that she secured the resources (documents) she needed out of them.

Unlike some native ethnographers who have a 'deep understanding' of local relations (e.g. Abufarha, 2009), I did not have the intimate historical knowledge and radar for sensitive topics in order to carry out the interviews alone. Not quite a native ethnographer and not quite a foreign one either, I was more like a diasporic ethnographer who had partial linkages to the people but with an incomplete box of linguistic and cultural tools to stand on my own. When mother left, Zuzanna took over full-time as mentor and collaborator. She had dreamed of being a geographer, so it pleased her to take on such a project that included visiting her friends and engaging in the exchange of gossip, gifts, resources (jars), prices, and personal histories. It gave her a chance to see villagers' homes, state farms, and state forestries for the first time since arriving to the territories in 1946. Instead of researching Zag, I would stay with her in Dobra until December 2009. I would open up my research sites to the villages within the Dobra commune (*gmina*). The coal money that was supposed to go to Zag would instead be used to buy Zuzanna her first electric stove. Zuzanna would be my main gatekeeper in Dobra and three lesser gatekeepers would help me conduct interviews in the smaller villages scattered throughout the commune.

My desk in Dobra was situated on the top floor of Zuzanna's old German-era home from the early 1900s. There, I kept my books and wrote all of my field notes while keeping an eye out for any informal exchanges and activities that were taking place on the farm. I bought a half-ton of coal to keep my room warm throughout my stay but

Zuzanna hardly ever used it. She rationed the coal and warmed up the kitchen only with the steam from her cooking pots. When temperatures dropped in October, I began to complain that I could not write with frozen fingers. Yet, she always danced around the subject of getting Roman to put coal in the oven. I respected Zuzanna's resourcefulness (*oszczędność*) as it was one of her character traits. So, without coal to heat the furnace, I learned to adjust by cutting off the finger-tips on my gloves and drinking hot tea (Figure 4).

A fine line existed between domesticating my research protocol and domesticating 'me' into village life. Studies on the feminisation of poverty in rural Poland show that women are unequally burdened by the multiplication of tasks inside the household—including household chores, money management (to protect household money from male drinking), making extra money through informal jobs throughout the year, engaging in trade relations, picking mushrooms and berries—that blended both their traditional and their worker roles during the socialist era. Women are strapped into 'time poverty' in which Polish women have little leisure time on an everyday basis (Tarkowska, 2002, pg. 429). Zuzanna was in a similar position. Her ordinary day was packed from when she woke up at dawn to the moment she went to bed. She explained that the body has to be in constant motion, like a machine (*maszyna*). Making time to go on interviews was about me helping 'make leisure time' for her.

Thus, I 'lived the part' of domestic life (Ring, 2006, pg. 30). There was no way that I could emotionally distance myself from family obligations and visits, such as going to church, and events. In the morning, her bachelor son Roman, suffering from severe alcoholism since the 1970s, performed some small chore, then harassed Zuzanna for money, and was out of the house. I would then see him drinking on what I termed the 'alcohol benches' and then either dragged in unconscious by the police at 11PM or he would disappear for several days at a time before returning, being 'good' for a week, and then fall into an intoxicated state once more. Saddest of all was how much he was destroying the farm and worked against Zuzanna's decisions. She put most of the labour into the farm and wanted to minimise production to lower the household's annual expenditures while he kept on ploughing the same amount of land which he did not work

Zuzanna was adept at filling in his chores when he was not around and preferred that I stuck to my own work when she did them. Nevertheless, as Roman's leg hurt and he could not go into the forest from August to September to forage for mushrooms, I went instead and became known in the family and the surrounding neighbourhoods as a bona fide *grzybowiara* (skilled mushroom forager), taking after my dad who was a fine *grzybowarz*. In this way, I found some way to connect to his legacy in the village. He would have been proud. I helped out with chores in the kitchen or vegetable garden to help free up time for Zuzanna to go out with me to access her social networks which she tapped for interviews as a favour. Rain or shine, we set out before lunch at 13:00.

Figure 4 Zuzanna standing with her half-ton shipment of coal I purchased to keep us warm during the winter. Author's photo (2009).

Zuzanna's participation (and that of the other gatekeepers' too) was critical in accessing interviews. Most villagers did not open doors to outsiders whom they suspected to be Jehovahs Witnesses or German tourists coming to look at their old family house. In addition, I did not know where people lived. She was necessary to carry out the interviews because, as she put it, I had to 'learn how to talk' to the villagers even though I spoke Polish. Like mother, Zuzanna was a bona fide *kombinatorka* (woman *kombinator*) who could expertly manipulate and manoeuvre through social grid-locks which was most often when I took out the consent forms and questionnaire, artifacts of Western formality. This was obviously a mistake, especially when people in the interviews were telling me about networks, access, *kombinacja* while I attempted to check them into boxes. The forms provoked tensions and Zuzanna was there to soothe them. Eventually, I picked up certain forms of street slang, started discussing food prices on the street, wore village clothing, gossiped, attended church, and conducted some interviews by myself.

We came home and ate supper at 19:00 with an intoxicated Roman at the head of the table. I was expected to set the table and clean his dishes if I did not want to put more stress on the household, but frankly, I was scared of Roman's unpredictability, vulgarity, and aggression when he was drunk. I felt that the Warsaw experience with her brother and his son was replaying in the territories. I locked my door at night and Zuzanna's door which she would reopen later because she was 'not afraid of her own son'. But there were just too many times where he came home late howling and yelling to himself in the kitchen before he fell and then slithered his way up the stairs to recover. The emotional connection to domestic life was related to the realisation that I was not as emotionally 'detached' from the village and its problems as I would have liked to be, and that there was actually a place in the village for me should I ever want to return permanently. Imagining the possibility that this alternative timeline might actually play out horrified me.

Fieldwork was an intergenerational gift bestowed upon me by mother and grandmother, who carved out the space for me to investigate the complex histories and realities of village life. With Zuzanna's extensive on-the-ground support and deployment of her skills to extract information from a variety of sensitive subjects, and mother's diplomatic skills in smoothing over relations with locals and connecting me to her

socialist-era networks, this dissertation has been an intergenerational project between me, my mother and grandmother. In a way, this thesis is in conversation with Caroyln Kay Steedman's *Landscape for a Good Woman* (2000) which brings the often invisible history and culture of working-class women to the forefront of historical investigation through her own relationship with her mother. Likewise, this dissertation would not have been possible if it were not for the support of the women in my family whose voices and experiences might have otherwise not been heard if it were not for this project. This project represents their hope that it will help me get away from the world of physical labour and the optimism that another world is possible for Polish women coming from the village.

Despite a 'debt' to the women of my family their gift of 'open reciprocity' 'keeps no accounts' (Graeber, 2001, pg. 220). I do not feel obligated to uphold my family's reputation or self-censor village history. At no point did anyone tell me to write 'good things' about them or the village. Mother, Zuzanna, and the family know that *kombinacja* is at the crux of this thesis. That *kombinacja* in itself has positive and negative sanctions is an important element that can help readers 'identify' whether they are 'good' or 'bad' *kombinators* or distance themselves from those acts. The Roman and Zuzanna story is well-known in the family, and since then, Roman has had a stroke that paralysed the left half of his body and he has since been in physical rehabilitation. Zuzanna lives in slightly less stressful conditions. My experience herein is now a past reality. Anything that I have written about uncle Alfred and aunt Kinga is quite well known in the family, that has been 'split' about supporting or not supporting my studies. In other words, I doubt that there are any major 'surprises'. Conversely, my mother is not aware of the extent that I have incorporated her into the thesis and there may be data that it would be wise to change if this thesis can published at a later date.I do not want her to be put into harm's way from her neighbours or suffer the attentions of the state. She has expressed some hesitation about me conducting future fieldwork on *kombinacja* in Trenton, which only sheds further light on Zuzanna's gift in helping me conduct fieldwork at the risk of her own reputation in Dobra.

3.5. Abandonment

All research was conducted in the Dobra commune (*gmina*)—population 9,422—which is spread over 300 square kilometres. It includes 48 villages (*wioski*) and many smaller

colonies (*kolonie*) usually connected to the villages. They are all connected by narrow, tree-lined roads—built by the Nazis—surrounded by a patchwork of expansive fields and forests. The settlements are economically diverse. Agriculturally productive villages—usually dominated by a single ethnic group like Belausians or Poles—are still engaged in peasant farming and even raise livestock and horses. Livestock are rare and only visible in either the most isolated villages in the commune or the ones that have had a long tradition of family farming. Ukrainian colonies—which used to be collective farms (*kołchoz*) until 1989—often lack basic amenities like internal plumbing and electricity and still use 'collective' *gmina* barns and land for their domestic production to live off the land.

State farm worker settlements converted into villages after 1989—are populated with the rural poor who receive state welfare, pay rent to the state or squat, and produce most of their food on their old worker allotment garden (*działka*) they received as state farm workers. These isolated islands are littered with the skeletal structures of state farms and surrounded by a sea of agricultural wastelands (*odłogi*) waiting for a buyer. In the middle of these settlements are gigantic deteriorating, 19th century, Junker mansions that were occupied by wealthy German families who were expelled or murdered by the Red Army and its collaborators towards the end of the Second World War and converted into Soviet state farms as early as 1945. Most abandoned mansions are still owned by the state. Other converted state farm colonies like Buda have a new 'master' who purchased the state farm, resides in the German-era mansion, and employs ex-state farm workers to work the land subsidised by European Union funds. These settlements are hostile to outsiders.

There were forest villages. These were once German villages converted into forestries after the *gmina* forced the peasantry through corvée (*szarwark*) labour to plant trees on a massive scale. These 'forest settlements' were then carefully managed by the state. Under socialism, they bordered, and sometimes were the borders of, state farms. Although they were given 'village' status after 1989, the forestries still remained nationalised to this day and the state provides partial employment to those forest workers and their families. However, today they are becoming increasingly isolated as the forests they once planted are spreading across the agricultural wastelands (Figure 5). This spread brings an uncanny 'national' presence in the form of wilderness—with wild

boar, mink, foxes, deer, mushrooms, and berries inching closer to the edges of the villages. This forested wilderness with Soviet roots is spreading across the commune, a trend seen in other post-Soviet states too (Schwatz, 2006).

Figure 5 Forests encroaching onto privatised fields in Dobra. Author's photo (2009).

Dobra—population 3,220—is the village headquarters of the *gmina*. It is the largest and most developed of all the settlements and formed the heart of my ethnographic work. It has a bucolic, post-industrial landscape. Ex-peasants and worker-peasants are concentrated near the fields (*pole*) on the northern and western edge of the village; ex-workers live in apartments near the tannery at the southeastern end; ex-officials and bureaucrats live in the homes along Reunification Street; and the ex-state forestry workers live along the forested peripheries that encircle the village. A sea of agricultural wastelands encompasses the entire village in places where the forests has not yet reached.

Reunification Street (*Ulica Zjednoczona*)—built by the Nazis and renamed by the Soviets—runs through the heart of the village and is populated by alcohol shops and

several family-owned convenience stores. Back in 1998, I remember that the street bustled with restaurants and bars with outside seating and umbrellas as well as a discotheque. By 2009, that initial flush of entrepreneurial spirit was gone. Everything is boarded up. There were no street markets[41] or informal vendors like in Warsaw where one could walk up to someone and start a conversation. Only the alcohol shops, convenience stores, and bakery are open. An occasional German family visiting their *Heimat* drives by and takes photographs of the houses; sometimes tour buses of Japanese tourists visit the meat shops to buy *kiełbasa*. A good portion of the middle-aged villagers who failed to secure jobs in the 1990s and almost all of the youth above the age of 18 have become migrant workers in Western and Northern European countries. (Gdańsk, 113 kilometres east, is a gateway to that world). With the exception of cars driving by, the village is mostly quiet.

Figure 6 Dobra's agro-industrial landscape from the window of an ex-factory worker's home. Author's photo (2009).

[41] Specialised foods like cheese, honey, and vegetables were sold from individual households. One had to arrange with the owner to access and buy them.

The elderly and middle-aged villagers who stayed behind survive off of remittances, welfare and retirement cheques, temporary agricultural, forestry and factory jobs on part-time, underpaid shifts with no benefits whatsoever, and free services they exchange with one another. These nostalgic Dobranians complain that under socialism the fields were once all harvested, the hotels and restaurants were bustling, and all the farms were spotlessly clean—because the state had cared about it. Yet under 'capitalism', where business is supposed to boom, state, capital, and development have all packed up and left behind an apocalyptic landscape of poverty. Zuzanna's neighbour Kornelia, a 97-year-old woman who still harvested her own potatoes in 2009, visited Zuzanna one day and said sadly that the youth do not have the 'will' (*chęć*) to work the land. Kornelia, like many of the elderly, expressed that they felt deserted by their daughters and sons who instead of carrying on the family tradition of agricultural production, chose professional lives or became migrant workers. Abandonment began in the 1980s when the elderly, who were not allowed to legally sell farmland, gave their children the option of taking it over. As in Zuzanna's case, no one wanted it so she and Konrad 'returned it' (*oddali*) to the *gmina* in return for a pension. It was not until the 1990s privatisation that people could both sell land and receive pensions. In 2009, there was only one *Gospodarz* left in Dobra village who worked only a portion of his land. Labour had left the village.

Alcoholism in the village has reached epidemic proportions (Zbierski-Salameh, 2013; Schneider, 2006). Public alcoholism is rampant among the older men who congregate daily outside the *gmina* headquarters in the middle of Reunification Street. This is no ordinary 'hanging out with friends over a drink' Local newspapers have covered alcoholism stories that included women pouring gasoline over their drunken husbands and burning them to death, intoxicated individuals murdering their lovers through defenestration and drunks setting others' genitalia on fire during libation. The saddest image of all was driving past villages and seeing *teenagers* falling over and urinating on the bus stops—filling the new ranks of public alcoholism. I later heard that in 2012, one of Zuzanna's neighbours whom I had taken a photograph of on numerous occasions during fieldwork had perished tragically in the forest after she went to cut trees with a group of intoxicated men and was squashed by a falling tree. Dobranians do not discuss 'what to do about alcoholism' but who is responsible for perpetrating alcoholism. They will blame the 'Other': a weakened police force, the lack of forced rehabilitation,

elderly women, the Polish People's Army, an incurable 'disease', etc. No one—not even the *gmina*—admits that this requires a 'collective' rather than a 'family' solution. In effect, everyone tiptoes around the passed out men on the village benches and in the ditches along Reunification Street (see Chapter 8). At night, the police make their rounds picking up the men and driving them home to their family.

Villagers are aware of this decline. A common complaint has been that since the end of communism, everyone has retreated into their household, life has become atomised, people do not talk to one another anymore, and there is no more communality or conviviality. This is not only the narrative of Dobranians. Similar narratives can be found all over the ex-Soviet bloc, such as on the streets of post-socialist Bucharest, as demonstrated in Alyssa Grossman's film *In the Light of Memory* (2011), where women discuss the loss of communication. One narrator explains that under socialism, the simple project of baking a cake was a community effort because one did not have all of the ingredients and needed to borrow them from neighbours with the promise of returning them later. Now, everyone has become 'self-sufficient'. Time was different in that everything was done in that day, whereas today, things are constantly left undone and spill over to the next. 'We experience time differently now', she said.

The church is not a beacon of morality in the village either. Ukrainian and Polish flags both hang over its entrance. Since 1989, the Ukrainian minority in the village demanded that Greco-Orthodox mass should be held on Saturdays, which continues to this day. When I visited another village called Niepoględzie in the commune, I spoke to a priest—who sported a mustache, smoked a cigarette, wore a Hawaiian shirt, and was served by a sexy, blonde secretary—who told me that the territories continue to be 'missionary lands' for the Vatican. During the Nazi era, their lands were owned by Evangelical Lutherans and Protestants. During the Soviet state-building and Polish nation-building after the Second World War, the Polish socialists planted regime-friendly priests into the ex-German congregations. The church and state were bedfellows. Even today, Dobranians who are devout to the Catholic faith are suspicious of the local priest. Villager gossip about how the priest drinks alcohol, sleeps around, and is misappropriating European Union redevelopment funds. The church has been 'under renovation' for years, and the villagers are increasingly calling for accountability.

Figure 7 Rusting socialist-era machinery on Zuzanna's farm. Photo by Neil Anderson (2008).

Dobra's dog problem affected fieldwork logistics on a daily basis (Figure 8). People train large dogs to protect their property. Even Zuzanna's mutt Puszek was aggressive. Many do not keep their pit-bulls, Rottweilers, and German shepherds locked up. If they do during the day then they let them out to prowl along the streets at night. I could not walk around the village without watching out for an attack and could not walk up to interviewees' properties without first setting up an interview on the street or asking the owner to take the dog away. Large dogs were contained by fences they could easily jump over. Colonies had to be accessed only by car because even locals were afraid to approach due to the dog problem. While out on a mushroom picking expedition with Puszek in a nearby forest, several dogs from nearby farms picked up our scent and chased us. I ran for my life and held my mushroom knife in my pocket. When I complained to a police officer who drove me around, he agreed that it was a problem, but he too had too large huskies guarding his property.

Violent geographies, Gregory and Pred (2007) write, are defined by their 'pervasive intimacy of terror, fear, and violence' (pg. 5). These unpredictable spaces, marked by masculinity and ferocious dogs, affected my movements as a woman. Granted, some women in the village would say 'I am not afraid of dogs' or would ridicule the intoxicated men, but I did not have that level of grit. I was too afraid to access masculinised spaces like the alcohol benches or the vodka parties held in people's homes or gatherings in the forest; too afraid to go door-to-door because of the dog problem; and too afraid to be dropped off in a little known village for several days to conduct fieldwork and then get picked up again. I had to be constantly vigilant and able to imagine threats before I inserted myself into those spaces. Violence affected my ability to meet up with other women as well. There were no comfortable 'public' spaces to meet and share stories. Zuzanna and I made special arrangements with women who had aggressive husbands to come to Zuzanna's house for the interview. I cannot imagine how much risk I could have put those women into if I had arrived unannounced. This was no ordinary method, such as 'get a local haircut' and 'buy clothes in the country', that other male anthropologists (e.g. Peritore, 1990) have cited as a way to minimise danger during fieldwork.

This paralysis in avoiding violent spaces affected the rhythm of the fieldwork and the actual structure of the project. Kovats-Bernat (2002) writes that 'dangerous fields are customarily approached and engaged through a broad but interrelated range of improvised field strategies' which have methodological effects that complicate traditional research strategies (pgs. 209-210). Reflecting on her ethnographic investigation of police practices in Uttar Pradesh, Jauregui (2013) argues that anthropologists working in violent spaces must engage in a 'strategic complicity', meaning being aware of one's complicity in witnessing those acts but using one's position in strategic ways to understand its complexity, questioning the actions of the individuals inflicting the violence, while simultaneously maintaining one's integrity and ethical responsibility as an anthropologist (pg. 16). I engaged with more of what could be called 'strategic avoidance', negotiating networks and deals around those spaces, usually at the expense of ethical integrity but at the benefit of my physical protection. Most interviews were planned well in advance so that the owners could put their dogs away and so that I could secure transport and a gate-keeper. This delayed the pace of interviews because I then had to wait until people could make time to see me. Personal

connections and bribes that helped me grant mobility and access were key to making me feel physically safer. They added some feeling of physical protection along with actual physical access to spaces that were closed off by multiple barriers of canine aggression, gates, and interrogations. The fact that I could not just 'walk around' and 'conduct' fieldwork without real physical risk was supremely frustrating. I had to improvise, and actually use *kombinacja.* Being part of the 'us' versus 'them' dichotomy began to matter.

Figure 8 A Rottweiler, without owner, at a fork in the road in Dobra.
Author's photo (2009).

Constant encounters with these gruelling and raw experiences wore me down. Intimacy is the key word because the most frightening realisation about Dobra's pervasive violence that I had was the blurry boundary where the ethnographic 'I' ended and the local 'I' began. In other words, it was the fear that I was being sucked into the fabric of local violence; an experience that an outside ethnographer would not experience if he (especially he) or she were in my place. My body as a local woman was being affected by the threat. I found it difficult to imagine a villager hurting an 'outsider', but women who were part of the culture were subjected to a different set of rules. The village

narrative became my narrative and vice-versa. This is where my voice as a 'vulnerable observer' (Behar, 1996) emerged because I began to see myself emotionally attached to village spaces and events *against my own will*. I did not want it to happen. It was the first time that the realisation that I was a 'woman of the border' began, stuck between worlds, when fieldwork began forming the roots of a sort-of *testimony*; being stuck in the middle of a village peasant girl and urban scholar (pg. 27). My 'objectivity' had become 'domesticated' by the village. Some type of blurring of the public and private boundary between my body and the outside village occurred. Rather than controlling the 'field', I had somehow become linked with it, 'embodied by the violence' (Kovats-Bernat, 2002, pg. 211).

3.6. Interviews

My partially reformulated research protocol was still focused on gathering information on the state-making project in the commune in the aftermath of the Second World War. I interviewed those individuals whom my gatekeepers and drivers could access on a day that they had some free time. Interviews were conducted in Dobra village, five ex-state farms (turned 'villages'), four other villages, and one colony in the commune. One villager was interviewed in another commune because she had moved there to be with family—but the interview was about Dobra. By that time, the comparative ethnography of two villages had collapsed. In some villages that had not been collectivised, only a handful of interviewees were still alive. There were not as many alive as in Zag. These two interviews could not balance out the compendium of stories from Dobra village. The ethnography would have to become a multi-sited one that investigated collectivisation in a single commune.

Relying on one gatekeeper for all of my access was limiting; the best strategy was to have multiple gatekeepers with multiple network types (i.e. peasants, factory workers, state farm workers). It would not be fruitful, for example, to bring a Pole to a discussion with Belausians about post-war repatriation. These logistics were complex. Different gatekeepers knew different secrets. 'Hidden' or 'invisible' sites such as desecrated German cemeteries in the forests were impossible to locate without a certain gate-keeper with a car. Adam, a police officer, drove me to interviews during his evening shifts and dropped me off at people's houses. He was of Prussian decent, thus he

showed me the hidden German cemeteries, but again, these had to be trusted people as I would have not have gone with a stranger deep into a forest.

When I went to other villages with Hela and Tadeusz, they established connections by first figuring out their common 'old origins' (*pochodzenie z starych stron*) prior to arrival in the territories. Then, the gatekeepers linked my family network to the interviewees by saying, 'Edyta is Arkadiusz's daughter—Arkadiusz who worked in the enterprise with X' or 'Edyta is Konrad's granddaughter—Konrad who operated the tractor with X' or 'Edyta is Franciszek's little sister—Franciszek who played the piano in church'. Frowns turned into smiles on the spot. Then, a transaction of some sort had to occur in the form of local gossip, local food prices, and information about America. No one particularly cared about London—they cared about the information that carried weight as gossip: 'How were the Materkas doing in *Ameryka*?'

Gatekeepers were interested in establishing economic contacts with the interviewees. They often piggy-backed on my interviews to villages to buy cheese from an an interviewee because they were the only ones producing real cheese, or to pick mushrooms in their backyards, or to acquire high quality apples from the allotment garden of an ex-state farm worker still living on the privatised state farm, to exchange potato and egg prices with another villager to get a gauge of what they are being sold outside of the supermarkets, or to receive raspberry jam jars. I never realised until now just how many economic relations were being established between my gatekeepers and the interviewees. The lure of helping me was that they got to travel to another village, scope out their resources, and acquire them for a cheaper price. It made perfect sense to help me out.

Gatekeepers were necessary for identifying signs of danger. We sometimes had to discuss what we would say to the locals as to why we were there and how they had never seen us before. Marek, my driver who was raised on a state farm and took me to the settlements, was cognisant of the danger levels. Usually, we first drove up to the German-era mansion that presided over the small settlement of workers' homes. One was filled with squatter families, but Marek wanted to enter it just to check if one of his old acquaintances would agree to an interview. We drove up to the mansion with car windows rolled up and Marek said that if anyone grew suspicious of our presence, we would have to feign nonchalance and say that we were called in by so and so and were

looking for her. The problem was that we had never seen that property before. When we walked into the large hallway and searched for the correct buzzer, a young man in worker clothing appeared in the doorway with his right hand in his breast pocket. I thought that he was just comfortably resting his hand, but Marek suspected something was amiss. The young man interrogated us about our business in that building and before the conversation continued, Marek said that his friend was probably not home and escorted us out. He later said that the young man could have been holding a weapon.

Squatters could have been suspicious of government auditing or German families 'touring' their *Heimat*. Ex-state farms in particular are populated by people who still have not privatised their properties and still pay rent to the state. The fear of a German owner coming back to reclaim the land and leave them homeless is a real one. These people are poor and marginalised. This type of encounter, however, highlights the importance of a local like Marek who owns a car and who knows the area and people's temperaments well. Marek was not only a gate-keeper to the interviewees in isolated settlements, but kept me protected on numerous other occasions. He displayed a similar hesitation when he and I observed—from afar—a massive potato theft occurring on privatised state farm fields (see Chapter 8). This distance was a sign of respect, not to give too much attention to people who were taking potatoes because they needed them to survive.

Some people lived in such impoverished conditions that it was better not to ask about their recollections of 'history'. When Marek drove me to an ex-state forestry settlement, we approached what looked like a dilapidated ruin. When we walked towards the rear, we found a small entrance that managed to stand in the middle of bricks lying around everywhere. We entered a dark kitchen and went towards the light of a room where there was a tiny woman with large glasses sitting on her bed, next to the furnace on full. She was the wife of the deceased state forestry director and told us that she was waiting for death and could not find the strength to answer even one question. Then her son arrived and ushered us out of the house as we pleaded just for any information about the forestry's history. Then we went to her neighbour's house who said that the old woman had a good memory! I wonder to this day about that space in the forest with this tiny

woman in her own post-socialist dystopia sitting next to a huge German furnace on full. I arrived at a bad time without the 'right' people.

Zuzanna was the main gatekeeper for most interviews—even those outside of Dobra. Her transformations made her an expert on village history and transition. As a little girl, she helped out on her family's and neighbour's farm in central Poland, survived the war, then migrated to the territories in 1946 where she was put into corvée labour by the state, then became a peasant farmer, then a *kułak*, then a sporadic collective farm worker (*kołchoznik*), then a peasant once again, then a sporadic worker-peasant, and then gave away her land to the state in the 1980s. She raised her four children and her grandchildren while running a productive worker-peasant farm. Now, she is living off her retirement cheques and exchange networks that she and Roman keep with neighbours, family, and acquaintances. Yet, I am grateful that she took time out of her busy schedule and eventful life to share her networks and spend some time with me. This was the only, and the last, time in my life that I had spent quality time together with her since we migrated to America.

Zuzanna and I found a way to use *kombinacja* to get information from the interviewees. The plan was this: I let her speak first and establish positive relations through a catch up of family events and good times. She knew exactly what to say and how to say it. Then, she would pause and provide a formal introduction where she asked if they could 'help' (*pomóc*) me in my school project. She framed the interview as something that the villagers should do for the village youth (me). I ran through the consent forms and she smoothed any rough edges to some sensitive questions like whether there were any 'problems' in the community in the early-time period. She usually said something like 'everything was good and we all lived in peace'. And the interviewees liked that because it showed she was on their side. Zuzanna always agreed with the interviewees to keep them talking. To get around ethnically sensitive subjects like postwar revenge that played out among families and groups in the village—Zuzanna would say diplomatically that 'There are people and there are barbarians' (*Są ludzie i ludziska*) within every ethnic group. In fact, Zuzanna was so good at dealing with people without giving her own views that it is no wonder she was recruited by the Party; she would have made a fine politician (Konrad did not let her). I eventually realised during the interview translation that I too could no longer keep track of Zuzanna's real views; she

would never divulge her true opinion to anyone, but rather adjusted to everyone else's. This was the art of adjustment, knowing how to agree with everyone.

Still, interviewees answered questionnaire questions nervously, like a test. There was the 'formal' answer they gave, and they then told me something totally different 'behind the scenes'. Some villagers refused to be interviewed and others were hostile towards the questionnaire. What I realised pretty quickly was that if I stated that I was responsible for creating this questionnaire and interview, I would get a negative backlash from the interviewees (and I even cried in one interview after an ex-Party official verbally attacked me about the 'stupidity' of the questions). Less information would flow. However, if it was inferred that 'London' had sent me to fill out this pre-designed questionnaire, I was then put into the 'local subject' position and would not be faulted for responsibility. So, now if I posed a 'stupid' question, informants would yell something out about London and professors while answering the questions respectfully to me, only the executor of a grander design that I could not control. While they protested to the questions, they consented to the interview *because* I was still considered a 'local' and they were helping me out due to a common desire to help a student from their village wanting to learn about their history.

The body, not a standardised questionnaire, was a better way to get people talking (McDowell, 2009). It was this portable museum of memories that opened the door to the history of violence, work, and resistance. They began by discussing and showing me wartime gun-shot wounds that had never fully healed, scars from puncturing feet and legs on sharp military ruins left behind on postwar fields, swollen hands from years of work in the factories and fields, chemical poisoning from working in poor factory conditions, cut-off fingers in freak mechanical accidents, various species of funguses from standing in chemical water on the factory floor, varieties of cancers attributed to Chernobyl, botched surgeries that made life worse, alcoholism that was the result of corruption in the Polish People's Army and forced rehabilitation programmes under socialism, and other life-long pains that were contracted during the Second World War, nation-building under Stalinism, unhealthy factory conditions under socialism, and capitalism. Wartime wounds were those from flight, postwar wounds were those of adjustment, socialist-era wounds were those of machine-like repetition of the same moves, late socialist wounds were those of shortages, and capitalist wounds were those

of anxiety (*nerwica*) from a sense of economic and social isolation. Body parts were documents of their physical presence in historical events[42].

These body narratives were co-implicated with the passage of time, or transition. Villagers often stated something along the lines of—'the human worked and worked, but now, everything is 'coming out' (*wychodzi*)'—meaning, that the illnesses that were bottled up during the socialist period were now seeking revenge on the body, as if punishment for living in this post-socialist era. Tarkowska (2013) writes that this health transition was how people narrated a 'social time' or 'joint expectations, mindset and symbolised phenomena of change and duration, of succession and simultaneity, common notions of the past, present and future'. Social time, especially through the body, helps balance both collective and individual experience. I like Skultan's (1998) description, that narratives are constructed around 'dialectic between the accidents of time and timeless truths' (pg. 31). This helps explain the body as entering 'social time' because everyone uses their body to enter history, but the wounds themselves are different, signaling individual experience. This idea of illness 'coming out' (and history thawing along with it) may be attributed to the suppression of pain during the socialist period. Narrating history through the body exposes the former and present state's biopower (Foucault 1978/1990). What these stories began to reveal is that biopower leaves actual physical scars that do not fade, long after the state apparatus that imposes it does. The body does not forget biopower, past and present, rather it domesticates it, merges it with personal experiences, and then critiques biopower itself.

Their personal histories were unravelled in bodily pains, family events, encounters on the farm, and the way that families assembled networks of resource flows that evaded the state's gaze. People knew the in-depth historical relations between other families in the village, their economic and political relations, etc. Zuzanna, for example, often spoke about how she saved several families' lives that had arrived in 1946 from Siberian gulags and had nothing to eat in Dobra. A Ukrainian interviewee who was forcibly resettled in the Vistula Action from southeastern Poland by the state in 1946 claimed that she introduced the best species of garlic to the villagers. When Kacper refused an interview and said that he did not 'remember history', Zuzanna went into a

[42] See Behar (1998), Skultans (1998), Petryna (2003) for more about body and memory.

flurry of spreading gossip about how much pain his family had caused the community but that he himself had no recollection of the problem. Although I had discussed the confidentiality of the interviews with Zuzanna, she could not help but spread that piece of gossip around and my relationship to her as her granddaughter, not manager, meant that she held higher authority. Her gossip about Kacper to her friends usually opened up some debate about the issue of 'rehabilitated' Communists who had 'admitted' their false consciousness and could live peacefully without accountability in the post-socialist period. The second time around, I went alone and Kacper was helpful. Agreeing to an interview with me became a public declaration of 'I have nothing to hide' among the villagers—itself an act that would be footnoted in villagers' familial narratives.

Each informant received a box of chocolates at the end of the interview. The decision to give chocolates came from Zuzanna. She said that one box should be enough and that it should be given after, not before the interview. The usual response was a rejection of the present and then once I insisted, they accepted. Timing mattered. In some interviews especially with ex-officials or other members of the nomenklatura, I must admit, I gave the chocolates first so that they could then feel indebted to open up. If I detected in the 'network' introductions that the person would not be talkative or was reluctant, I took out the chocolates. In a way, I was acting on their old socialist-era practices. But then I stated something like that it would be nice to have the chocolates during the interview, so it was treated as a form of sharing their hospitality. Over time I realised that people were more open to the interviews and it is possible that they were enticed by the chocolates at the end. While available at the local supermarket, the chocolates were a bit more expensive than what many of these people could probably afford, so it made logical sense to spend some time being interviewed and then have a nice box of chocolates at the end. In actuality, giving chocolates instead of money reinforced the resource flows going on in the village at the time.

After several weeks of interviewing, I mustered up the courage to canvas people door-to-door for interviews without Zuzanna's help (she suffered from a bad knee and lupus). I knocked on one door and explained in plain Polish my reason for being there but the man at the door just gave me a blank look. It was not until a woman's voice from inside of the house yelled at him 'Let her in! It is Cecylia's daughter!' and then I was granted immediate entry with coffee and cake. It was amazing how antagonistic people were to

any outsider and conversely how warm they were to any insider. Only in one village populated with Belarusian peasant farmers was I able to cold-knock on people's doors and get a warm reception. Even there, the intoxicated men on the side of the road explained to me that the small supermarket stood on a desecrated synagogue and were helpful in taking me to some of the original settlers without seeming to want anything in return for their service.

I conducted over 60 interviews with the original settlers. Poles made up 41% of my interview sample—the other 59% were Ukrainian (27%), Kashubian (12%), Belarusian (10%), German (8%), and Lithuanian (2%). My sample population is ethnically diverse because the Polish state forcibly expelled the German population, Polonised the Kashubian ethnic group in the region, forcibly resettled Ukrainian populations from southeastern Poland, repatriated Belarusians from eastern Poland's old eastern border, and allowed for the voluntary migration of ethnic Poles from central Poland into the territories. Often their children joined the interview to add background information, thus the interview data includes many more voices than just those on the 'official' informed consent forms (see Figure 9).

Name	DOB	Self-identified Ethnicity	Origin prior to Recovered Territories	Migration type	Occupations under socialism
Zuzanna	1923	Polish	central Poland	voluntary migration	kulak/kolchonik/worker-peasant
Jagoda	1924	Polish	present-day Belarus	repatriated	kulak/kolchonik/worker-peasant
Kornelia	1912	Polish	present-day Lithuania	voluntary migration	kulak/kolchonik/worker-peasant
Henryka	1926	Polish	eastern Poland	repatriated	Siberian gulag survivor/factory worker
Stanisław	1929	Kashubian	former Germany	repatriated	state forestry worker
Czesława	1938	Kashubian	former Germany	repatriated	state forestry worker
Fidelis	1920	Kashubian	former Germany	repatriated	state forestry worker/activist/ state forestry Director/bureaucrat
Irena	1930	Polish	present-day Lithuania	repatriated	Siberian gulag survivor/ seamstress/ factory worker
Walentyna	1923	Belarusian	present-day Belarus	repatriated	state farm worker
Władysława	1928	Polish	central Poland	voluntary migration	worker
Jadwiga	1927	Kashubian	former Germany	repatriated	state farm worker
Mychajlo	1929	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	forcibly resettled	kulak/kolchonik/worker-peasant
Anna	1934	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	forcibly resettled	kulak/kolchonik/worker-peasant
Janina	1932	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	forcibly resettled	kulak/kolchonik/worker-peasant
Stasiek	1921	Polish	central Poland	voluntary migration	gmina official
Janusz	1927	Ukrainian	present-day Ukraine	forcibly resettled	gmina official
Weronika	1930	Polish	central Poland	voluntary migration	worker
Stefania	1925	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	forcibly resettled	kulak/kolchonik/worker-peasant
Stefan	1931	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	forcibly resettled (Siberian gulag survivor)	kulak/kolchonik/worker-peasant/ deceased
Anna	1931	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	repatriated	state farm worker
Kazimierz	1915	Polish	eastern Poland	repatriated	gmina official/deceased
Irena	1929	Polish	eastern Poland	voluntary migration	seamstress/worker
Franciszka	1937	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	forcibly resettled	state farm worker
Helena	1927	Polish	eastern Poland	repatriated	postwoman
Józefa	1928	Belarusian	present-day Belarus	repatriated	kulak/kolchonik/worker-peasant
Radosław	1943	Belarusian	present-day Belarus	repatriated	kulak/kolchonik/worker-peasant
Maria	1930	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	forcibly resettled	factory worker
Leonid	1931	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	forcibly resettled	state forestry worker/peasant
Aneta	1931	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	forcibly resettled	state forestry worker
Marian	1935	Polish	central Poland	voluntary migration	factory brigadier
Małgorzata	1937	Polish	central Poland	voluntary migration	factory worker
Arena	1926	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	forcibly resettled	kulak/kolchonik/worker-peasant
Elimia	1935	Polish	central Poland	voluntary migration	state forestry worker
Janina	1927	Belarusian	present-day Belarus	repatriated	state farm worker

Name	DOB	Self-identified Ethnicity	Origin prior to Recovered Territories	Migration type	Occupations under socialism
Zygmunt	1938	Polish	central Poland	voluntary migration	kulak/kolchonik/ worker-peasant/ EU-funded farmer
Edward	1938	Belarusian	present-day Belarus	repatriated	kulak/kolchonik/ worker-peasant
Jan	1928	Kashubian	former Germany	repatriated	state farm worker
Elżbieta	1930	Kashubian	former Germany	repatriated	state farm worker
Lore	1935	German	former Germany	repatriated	state farm worker
Bożena	1915	Belarusian	present-day Belarus	repatriated	state farm director's wife
Bernard	1929	Polish	central Poland	voluntary migration	factory worker
Weronika	1928	Polish	former Prussia	repatriated	factory worker
Helena	1917	Polish	central Poland	voluntary migration	state farm worker
Trauta	1925	German	former Germany	repatriated	bakery worker/ Polish commander's wife
Jawoda	1931	Belarusian	northwest Poland	repatriated	state farm worker
Julia	1933	Lithuanian	repatriated	Siberian gulag survivor	state forestry worker
Iryna	1929	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	forcibly resettled	factory worker
Ivan	1929	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	forcibly resettled	factory worker
Renata	1920	Polish	central Poland	voluntary migrated	peasant farmer (never collectivised land)
Matylda	1943	Polish	unknown	unknown	treasurer of mechanical enterprise
Andrzej	1919	Polish	unknown	unknown	state farm Director
Benedykt	1918	Silesian	former Germany	repatriated	priest
Kacper	1920	Polish	unknown	unknown	PZPR President/gmina official
Gosia	1950	Polish	unknown	unknown	factory worker
Roman	1947	Polish	born in commune		mechanical enterprise worker/state forestry worker
Cecylia	1951	Polish	born in commune		factory worker
Cobra	1960	Polish	born in Gdansk	unknown	migrant worker/ large-scale private farmer
Kamila	1960	German-Polish	unknown	unknown	teacher
Danuta	1950	Polish	born in commune	unknown	librarian
Franciszek	1970	Polish	born in commune	unknown	pianist
Sylwia	1950	Belarusian	born in commune	unknown	state farm worker
Sylwek	1950	Belarusian	unknown	family was repatriated	state farm worker
Marek	1947	Polish	eastern Poland	repatriated	state farm worker
Lech	1949	Polish	unknown	unknown	state farm director's son/ warden to Danish farm

Figure 9 Interviewees

3.7. Fidelis

The villagers told me that they knew nothing about 'history' (*historia*) and its 'structures' (*struktury*). They directed me to Fidelis, a brilliant 90-year-old Kashubian. He lived with his wife down the street from Zuzanna in a small house with an unusually clean yard. He was certainly one of the most intelligent people I have ever met in my entire life. He spoke Esperanto, Polish, German, Kashubian, and Russian—and I believed it when he boasted about it. However, there were several other facts about him that made me uneasy. He mentioned that after the Second World War, the Communists in Poland had seen him as an 'uncertain person' (*nie pewny człowiek*) after they had seized 'his documents from the Gestapo' (*moje dokumenty z Gestapo*)—he then described to me in an abnormally light and diminutive voice that it had once been 'the German security service'. Did he mean that the Gestapo had kept documents on him that the Communists seized, or did Communists get the documents stating that he was in the Gestapo? Nevertheless, the Communists stripped him of his rifle and threw him into jail. When I began to ask him 'why', he cut me off, said it was irrelevant, and changed the subject.

Nevertheless, Fidelis became my mentor who explained to me the broader structural politics in the village, in the factories, bureaucracies, state forestry divisions, state farms, etc. After he got out of prison, he became a state forestry worker, then a Party official and state forestry official in the village, and then worked in the local *gmina* office. He became the nomenklatura! He provided a perspective of Polonisation and Sovietisation from an insider-outsider, 'Kashubian' perspective. He was the first to isolate the term '*kombinacja*' with a capital 'K', something that I myself had been blind to identify on my own[43]. Fidelis's greatest contribution to understanding *kombinacja* was that it was a process that 'outsiders' could understand and appropriate for their own use. Through his narratives, he helped me locate the contexts in which the balance of power between the villagers and the nomenklatura was waged during the various transitions in and out of socialism. Zuzanna helped me fill in the 'peasant' side of

[43] After Fidelis explained the concept to me, I still continued conducting interviews around the original questions. It was only after I returned to London and discussed my general findings with Professors Gareth A. Jones and Sharad Chari that I began to focus on *kombinacja*.

kombinacja as well to 'show' me how *kombinacja* worked. Thus, their joint 'insider' and 'outsider' narratives about *kombinacja* are at the core of this thesis.

My newfound knowledge of *kombinacja* connected me to the field of discourse about the state shared by the villagers. Once I became aware of it, I realised how often the interviewees were using the term to explain their property relations with other families in the village, state farm, or forestry. Or, when I asked informants to explain *kombinacja* to me, their eyes and smiles widened and they would say something along the lines of 'Ah! *Kombinacja*!' and went straight into their myriad of personal experiences and state encounters. These stories simultaneously transmitted 'know-how' about the contexts in which *kombinacja* could be used and villagers' narration of their local history produced within and by this 'shadow world' (Watson, 1994, pg. 4). Villagers explained *kombinacja* through contexts and vignettes drawn from personal experiences rather than via a standard definition. It appeared to be a counter-narrative device that marked 'private time' (Verdery, 1996, pg. 40)—outside of the linear progression of the state-produced 'official' history. Yet, it was tied to the official history. For example, in cases where informants entered history through their body, they used their body as a field to describe hunger, needs, wants, which then justified their *kombinacja.* Villagers used the term *kombinacja* to tell their story of the state through a series of struggles over scarce resources between village families. *Kombinacja* itself was multi sited and practiced by everyone in the village; peasants, workers, and nomenklatura alike towards multiple ends.

During their discussions of *kombinacja*, several elderly men had independently referred to the Czech literary character Švejk, from anarchist novelist Jaroslav Hašek's *The Good Soldier Švejk* (1923), a satirical novel about the educated Everyman during the First World War who travels as a local Czech soldier of the Austrian army from (Czech) Bohemia to (Polish) Galicia (both in the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the time) to reach the battle front with the Russian Empire across the Bug River. However, while in uniform, his cunning wordplay (or 'double-talk'), drinking, ability to act like a fool, and general resourcefulness enable him, in some way or another, to get away from the battlefields where he would have to 'fight on the wrong side'. One of Švejk's characteristics—which mirrored Zuzanna's interview tactics—was agreeing with everything that the other individual said (Parrott, 1973 pg. xv). His trick was irony, and

being able to proclaim to do one thing, when that action subverts the objective. Švejk was the Everyman, 'who gets caught up in the wheels of a big bureaucratic machine' (pg. xv). He was the 'Ostap Bender' of Central European literature, in that while Ostap's actions were against the Soviet command economy and ideology, Švejk was the *kombinator* who emphasised the small man's resistance against the organised forces of bureaucracy, foreign occupation, war, and the church. That Švejk travelled across the Austria-Hungarian empire and had contact with many nations, like Poles, under that occupation, meant his story connected with the nationalist visions that still evidently had an effect in serving as the template for the everyday man in the postwar period, to the point that he came up during our discussions of *kombinacja*.

When I consolidated the interviews together, I noticed a collective pattern which showed how *kombinacja* was 'etatised' (Verdery, 1996, pg. 40) into some eras while not others. Most villagers did not recall using *kombinacja* in the interwar period (1919-1939) because there was supposedly no need or scarcity. Most said that *kombinacja* emerged as a survival strategy under Nazi occupation in 1939-1944. However, when I looked at their postwar recollections from 1945-1949 when there was undoubtedly scarcity and a need to acquire food and resources for survival, traces of *kombinacja* as a narrative device were difficult to find. Villagers only began to use the term again starting with the Stalinist period (1949-1953)—when, coincidentally the term appeared in the state archives. This fragmented historical narrative of *kombinacja* weaving into 'remembering' and 'forgetting' appeared to be too symmetrical. Skultans (1998) writes that memories of Soviet Latvia were often 'conflicted with official versions of history' (pg. 28). It therefore became far from straightforward to position *kombinacja* comfortably at the centre of the research, simply attributing an activity as *kombinacja* when the villagers had not narrated it as such. Tarkowska (2013) writes that 'social time' can have 'empty periods' (pg. 291), can 'stop' and 'speed up', and 'does not flow in one direction, but is reversible', can be 'cyclical, like a pendulum' rather than 'linear' (pg. 291). I began to wonder whether *kombinacja* represented 'memories of the state or memories of the people?' (Davis, 2005, pg. 227).

Villagers painted a complex portrait of *kombinacja.* It was a concept that occupied a multiplicity of spaces (Massey, 2005) and resided in social, cultural and economic fields (Bourdieu, 1990). It could be told from a bodily, archival, or a literary standpoint. Every

kombinacja story demonstrated how property was contextual and defined through relational encounters between agents who struggled on some field or another over certain resources. It was understood by outsiders, exercised by peasants and nomenklatura alike, and was straddled between state, body, and literary narratives. Reading through the *kombinacja* narratives paved a multi-sited skeletal framework for this thesis where I have spent years filling in and reconstructing the histories, people, and places in which it dwelled and created alternative ways of living life. This thesis outlines the types of possibilities *kombinacja* provided in different points in time to different types of people. The more I learned about it, the more I too began to 'remember' *kombinacja* in my own life and began to dissect my own fieldwork experience through its kaleidoscopic vision.

3.8. Methods

I did not 'finish' fieldwork. Rather, I fled the field. When I returned from fieldwork in December 2009, I spent the next year translating and transcribing the interviews into a 500 page, single-spaced document. Although this was back-breaking work which I will never do again for as long as I live, I did not let anyone else touch the recordings because I suspected that there would be certain words (like kombinacja) that would be translated into English rather than kept intact. I would be the only person who would know which words to identify. Furthermore, I needed to 'know' the village history. My mother helped me to untangle the old Polish and Slavic dialects in the commune, which was a language lesson in itself. I asked many follow-up questions to Zuzanna, mother, uncle Ludwik, and my brother Franciszek to check up on whether I was getting a good sense of what life was like under socialism from multiple generations. Analysis, therefore, was a family effort.

In October 2010, I took a short, one-week trip with my mother back to the village to conduct some follow-up interviews with Zuzanna, Fidelis, and Kacper in order to verify some thematic holes about *kombinacja.* I have spent years just trying to figure out 'what' *kombinacja* is*,* how it acts, and how to explain it to a broader academic audience. The most enjoyable part was breaking the language codes. Once I was aware of *kombinacja* I could engage in a certain hidden transcript or dialogue with the interviewees and perceive the world through their eyes. After a while, mother and I began sharing a similar language and an understanding of village life. I knew the locals,

their stories, and the gossip, which created a cultural field of discussion with my mother in Trenton.

I organised the narratives through code words like *kombinacja, kołchoz, szarwark,* and *daniny* in order to bring together those narratives and form a cohesive whole along with background information. Most villagers' narratives were hazy and did not include important dates such as when the collective farm opened up, when the property was decollectivised, how workplaces were structured, etc. Thus, along with the translations, I had to read a lot of the local historical literature that I gathered in the library in Dobra, the Akademia Pomorska (Pomeranian Academy) in Słupsk, and generate my own translations of German literature that I had acquired from the native German women. Unfortunately, much of the Polish literature on the territories had been plagiarised. Masters' theses from the academy had entire passages cut and pasted into others' work. Many lacked proper citation. Furthermore, they were 'fact-driven' and provided no critical or analytical information about the territory's transformations. In fact, I was able to link much of that history to the state censored literature that I had read about the territories. The language was emotionless, and stiff, as if reciting orders, rather than thinking critically about the processes in the territories. Other passages possessed an optimistic tone concerning the history that read like residual propaganda still taught in the classroom by socialist-era-educated teachers.

While I found some dates useful, I conducted a lot of background information for each historical period that included an exhaustive excavation of Polish law (*Dziennik Ustaw*) and the national legal journal (*Monitor Polski*) from the 1930s to 1989. Following this, I overlapped the laws with the archives as well as any other relevant historical literature to get a scalar sense of what the national-level processes were at a given time and how the local state deviated from them. The archival material is picked up in Chapters 4 and 5 while the laws and other literature is usedin the latter part of the thesis.

The physical composition of Dobra's archives revealed a lot about regime change in the postwar period and the state's ambivalence in preserving its legibility. The socialist-era cover of each booklet was written out by hand, which described the name, type, and date of the archives inside. At the bottom left of each cover was a stamp that gave the name of the national archive branch, the title of the archive, page number, and number. Inside, the archives were disheveled. Archives from 1947 were stuffed into the 1946

folders and there were many loose, hand-written notes (‘exceptions to the rule’ perhaps) that were haphazardly inserted into the booklet. For example, in an archive from 1945 to 1950, we find that there was an archival fire in 1955. Citation would later become quite confusing, especially when referencing events that did not ‘fit’ into the date or name of the title of the archive. I found no pattern of legible order in the archives.

Inside the physical Dobra archives, those between 1944 and 1946 displayed a fascinating historical capsule of regime change in the village. When the Communist powers took over, they still used Nazi administrative paper that had been produced in the German paper factory in Dobra. On the Third Reich page, one would see German language printed in a gothic font, official swastika stamps, and ‘Heil Hitler’ signatures referring to one farmer’s transfer of property. Official correspondence had dates, identification numbers, graphics, neatly-printed underlines, etc. On the People’s Republic of Poland page, there were cryptic, faded type-written paragraphs written in Polish by Władysław Gomułka, the Minister of the Recovered Territories, about the historical meaning of the socialist revolution and the state’s role in reopening hospitals and taking care of the postwar survivors. There were no dates, stamps, or numbers, just the distanced ‘voice’ of an official spewing general propaganda to the citizens. There were many such archives, revealing the hybrid period when one modern state apparatus took over the formal functions of another modern state apparatus; even using its old paper documents. Although the Communists were bringing a socialist revolution, they still needed the same materials like any other modern state—a headquarters, paper, typewriters—to pronounce their grasp of power. I wondered whether the German archives were retained as a template for the new Communist state officials.

The archives of individual edicts, handwritten and typed by commune and country-level officials from the mid-1940s, tell bits and pieces of a turbulent period in which the new state struggled with out-breaks of tuberculosis, measles, diphtheria, typhoid fever, scarlet fever, massacred 137 dogs infected with rabies, settled newcomers, conducted property surveys, rounded up German livestock and put it under the ownership of the Red Army, redistributed German livestock which caused struggles between the new settlers and the state, struggled with famine and shortages of clothing during the winter, had struggles with armed bands of Germans in villages, had to find common ground between the settlers and their distrust of the Red Army, dealt with coal shortages,

received letters written by settlers begging for help, resettled random people such as Italians, arrested Germans, carried out land reforms, dealt with crop failure, and so forth. It is in these archives that I discovered the use of forced corvée labour on people, and record of peasants standing up in *gmina* meetings and voicing their argument against the state. The budgets were empty or filled with rounded-up numbers without much explanation for how expenses were calculated. Dispersed among these local happenings were copies of laws and propaganda from higher echelons of the state. All of these local, regional, and national documents helped create the 'voice' of the state.

By the late 1940s, many familiar names began to appear in the archives (including my grandfather's name). The bulk of the archives took the form of the commune meeting which was dated, laid out the plan for discussion ahead of time, included the discussion comments, and provided a plan looking forward to solve the problems mentioned within. Participants were commune officials *and* authorities from other places in the commune which did not share budgetary and plan goals with the commune (e.g. state farms). Yet, the authorities all discussed the plan shortages within the entire territory of the commune (not just its budgetary boundaries) and planned across those budgetary boundaries in order to meet the plan as a territorial entity. In the 1950s, we begin to see another addition to the commune meeting. An open floor emerges at the end of the meeting for anyone who wants to speak about the conditions in the commune. These were platforms for peasants to vocalise their opinions—and usually to be shunned by the officials—but nevertheless preserved their voices and the dynamic between the officials and village peasants. In the early 1950s, many peasants came to beg the officials to relieve them of their forced state agricultural quotas because their children were dying of starvation. Indeed, in Dobra's cemetery, there were many newborns that died in the early 1950s.

Some of my interviewees in 2009 were the officials from that time who actually wrote the archives. I could detect the linguistic similarities between their colloquial and written language. Their role in the archives, and locals' stories about these characters, helped shape the narrative frameworks of Chapters 4 and 5. It helped visualise the idea that the people in the village 'were' the local state and moulded it to their own 'voices'. Many colloquialisms and processes like '*kombinacja*' and '*szarwark*' (corvée) and '*daniny*' (tithes) appeared in the *gmina* archives that did not appear in the national laws

or other official edicts. Then progressively, they were substituted with the 'official' state term for those processes that linked them to the rule of law. Linking these processes to national laws was in itself a process of readjusting the state narrative (which itself seems to be multiple on various scales of governance) as well as of investigating how 'official' terms for forced labour and taxes were euphemisms for the more oppressive and exploitative 'tinge' of using the colloquial terms for those processes.

Reading through the archives and reconstructing a historical narrative of the commune took months, partly because growing up I had not learned to read and write formal Polish. I only finished a month of first grade in Poland and the rest of my language skills were colloquially learned in the household. I had to learn how to read Polish. I asked my mother to help me decipher many of the archives—especially ones that were written in cursive, not typed, and ones in which I just did not understand the colloquial terms like *szarwark* and *daniny.* She helped to explain those terms. In the process of reading archives, I learned the very structure of how the commune functioned, who the main players were, and how they tackled economic and political problems. I learned a side of history that I had never learned in an American classroom. Lastly, I overlapped the 'official' with the 'narrative' histories to get a full sense of the economic and political arenas in which villagers used *kombinacja* in various workplaces. This is where, essentially, the narrative of informality lurks: when we know the 'official' voice of the state on multiple scales we can then identify how *kombinacja* manipulates those blind-spots of surveillances in order to extract the resources from under the state's nose. The interviews, matched with the archives, produced an uneven amount of information about the postwar period than in the late socialist and post-socialist periods.

3.9. Conclusion: reflections

This ethnography has been through many internal reconceptualisations. There was no 'lightbulb' moment per se that helped me to arrive at the topic and my newfound research questions. Rather, a confluence of events, terms, and contexts pronounced themselves in the data. In order to find out the broader trajectory of meaning and practice of *kombinacja,* here I investigated how my initial research protocol was transformed through a process of informalisation as my Western expectations towards transparency, 'location' of historical information, and access to it differed from the lack

of transparency and need for social networking to access information. As I became more entrenched in local networks through the process of fieldwork, a different 'voice' of positionality and subjectivity began to emerge in my own historical narrative of *kombinacja*. While this voice developed further in the course of my write-up, I wanted to share it first because it explains the identity struggles involved with writing about *kombinacja* as an ethnographer versus as a 'subject'. My experience with this dissertation is a testament to the powerful forces of informality, social networks, and subjectivity that dictate the social reproduction of the domestic in post-socialist Poland.

Still, I would have planned fieldwork in a totally different way. I would have created a research protocol that asked for life-histories of the interviewees rather than abiding by the questionnaire; read more about how to conduct ethnographic fieldwork rather than relying on my instincts; taken some Polish classes to brush-up on my language skills so that I could relay my research in the native language of the locals; relied less on my family contacts and would have established more English-speaking academic relationships with scholars in Berlin and other major Polish cities rather than just from Warsaw and Słupsk; would not have gone to Warsaw but to one of the major cities like Wrocław or Stettin in the territories; taken ethics standards more seriously given that there were ethical issues that I came across; gathered more resources on the history of socialism in Poland rather than just on the territories. During fieldwork, I shot over 5,000 photographs. I did not realise until I had the photographs in hand, how much of the present I had been missing. *Kombinacja*—the process I studied—had been all around me.

Chapter 4

Domesticating the state: 1944-1949

4.1. A 'quasi-government'

In his portrayal of how German Breslau became Polish Wrocław from 1944 to 1949, Kenney (1997) writes that the postwar period in the territories was one of 'negotiation' between the settlers and those who represented the state. The identity of the 'authorities' was unclear; compliance 'was not automatic'; and 'control was incomplete'. The 'state's search for legitimacy and control' was continuously subverted through 'social resistance, pressure, and accommodation' (pgs. 29, 344). Villagers who had arrived in Dobra after 1944 recalled that the state was negotiated. Janusz, a *gmina*[44] official, defined it as a 'quasi-government' (*pół-rząd*) structured by family interests. Irena, a Polish seamstress, echoed the view that the state was 'like one family'. So too Anna—a Ukrainian repatriate who was forcibly resettled in 1947—who defined it as a 'couple of families'. State resources were scooped up in a winner-takes-all game. 'It was a government, but it was nothing. Whoever won, lost', said Weronika, a Polish repatriate from East Prussia. Settlers struggled with state power to recreate the territories in their own image.

This chapter shows how the process of 'domesticating' was critical to securing state power. It reveals how the Polish state secured German territory through Soviet-backed military power, propaganda, and agrarian reform, and how the settlers further domesticated that space for their own private needs. An emergent nomenklatura[45] domesticated capital, labour, and use of state power for private gain to help the state secure political and economic power on the frontier but at a cost to its legitimacy as a state apparatus. Both the state and settlers secured cheap German labour for agricultural production and how the state later secured peasants' and workers' labour towards *gmina* and domestic goals. It was this bifurcated, family-based division of state power that

[44] *Gmina* and commune are used interchangeably.
[45] A ruling class of administrators in bureaucratic, managerial, and party positions who exercised economic and political power over the working and peasant classes (Voslensky, 1984, pgs. 70-74).

formed the family and class-based 'us'/ 'them' binary between villagers that later defined the 'masters' and 'workers' groups who subsequently used *kombinacja* against one another. Weber's (1946/1958) definition of the state as a 'relation of men dominating men' (pg. 78) accurately describes this early socialist state-making and Polish nation-building projects in the Recovered Territories.

The state-making process in Dobra from 1944 to 1949 encourages us to look beyond classical definitions of the state or the image of peasants, workers, and nomenklatura located neatly within their own niches and economic functions in a Soviet society. Residual institutions of serfdom were co-opted by the state and exploited by the new authorities in the state-making projects. The entitled nomenklatura 'pulled' themselves into state positions, *gmina* officials granted themselves landed estates and secured cheap German labour on them, forestry division directors treated workers as their own domestic labourers. In doing so, the state was defined not by the rule of law from Warsaw, but in the networks that formed between families in Dobra. Party officials did not always carry out state policy and peasants who resisted state law were not always acting against the spirit of the socialist revolution.

4.2. 'Recovering' territories in the Polish imagination

On its eastward march toward Berlin in March 1945, the Red Army equipped the Soviet-backed Polish state with the military presence to Polonise and Sovietise the German territory east of the Oder and Neisse Rivers (Figure 10). The Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN) divided the territories into four administrative regions and populated each with appointed ministers of reconstruction, agriculture, finance, and economic aid; the Polish Worker's Party (PPR) set up political cells and rural offices; and the Red Army transformed German estates into Soviet state farms (*sovkhozy*) and jumpstarted agricultural production. These lands, ceded to Poland as a 'prize of war' by the Potsdam Conference in July 1945, became known as its 'Recovered Territories' (Dulczewski & Kwilecki, 1963, pg. 7; Davies, 1982, pg. 562; Pagel, 1989, pgs. 800-811).

I. The Red Army in western Poland, 142 kilometers from Berlin, March 1945

Figure 10 The Red Army in western Poland, 1945 (Applebaum, 2013, pg. 125).

Stanisław Mikołajczyk, Prime Minister of the London-based, Polish Government-in-Exile, rejected the cession on the grounds that a third of Poland's eastern territories, including cities like Lwów and Vilno, would be ceded to Soviet Russia (Mikołajczyk, 1972, pg. 41). The Federal Republic of Germany disputed the Soviet land grab—'the Potsdam solution is not a German, not a Polish, not even a Russian solution; it is a Bolshevik solution. What we need is a European solution', one politician claimed (Szaz, 1960, pg. xiii). Dobrzyski (1947), a state censored scholar, wrote that the territories were the 'ideological battle ground between eastern socialism and western capitalistic Europe' and a 'political test of the sturdiness and the resilience of leftist politics against those of the West' (pg. 190). Whether the transfer of the territories was legal under international law, and how international law ought to be interpreted in the first place, continued to be the subject of debate between the Soviet bloc and the West for the duration of the Cold War.

As the Iron Curtain descended upon Poland, the PPR worked steadfastly with the Soviet military to swap the German population for a Polish one in what became one of the

'greatest demographic upheavals in European History' (Davies, 1982, pg. 563). State-censored literature referred to this as a physical and historical 'cleansing' (*podporządkowanie*) of the territories for the Polish state (e.g. Pollak, 1946). The PPR advertised itself as the only candidate with the resources and organisational capacity necessary to carry out such a massive resettlement campaign. It sent settler crews to occupy German villages, cities, and landed estates, to scout terrain, to measure war damage, establish resettlement arrangements, organise local administrative units, and to fill militia, medical and transportation posts for population control. The Polish Repatriation Bureau (PUR)[46] organised free transport, food distribution, shelters, pharmacies, medical care, and train tickets. The Polish Western Committee (PZZ)[47] took care of educating settlers and government helpers on the 'political, societal and economic *meaning* of the resettlement'. By November 1945, the Ministry of Recovered Territories (MZO)[48], headed by Władysław Gomułka—First Secretary of the PPR, officially centralised the administrative, technical, and political apparatus in the new territories (Dulczewski & Kwilecki, 1963, pgs. 6-9).

The territories were the PPR's opportunity to create 'state-sponsored historical memory' or a 'collective understanding that a specific group shares about events in the past' (Davis, 2005, pg. 4). Propaganda advertised the myth that the territories were where the birth of Polish nationalism had occurred in the 10th century and thus had to be 'recovered' from centuries of German colonisation. One state scholar, Kolpiński (1959), wrote that 'This territory was the cradle of the Polish State and here, one thousand years ago, a consciousness of Polish nationality was born' (pg. 211). 'Recovery' meant restoring repolonisation in the 'rightful' geographic location. Barcikowski (1946), another state scholar, wrote that 'we are not here to colonise but to return to the fatherland based in historical traditions' (pg. 7). Anthropologists worked with Slavic archeologists on sites in the territories; linguists related the Polish roots of German village names; historians claimed that 'recovering' simply formalised the Poles' westward migratory patterns and high reproductive rates of the Polish 'rural proletariat' that had 'strengthened the ranks of the Polish autochthonous population in the German eastern provinces' since the 19th century; political writers critiqued 'mistakes' in pre-

[46] Państwowy Urząd Repatriatyjny.
[47] Polski Związek Zachodni.
[48] Ministerswto Ziem Odzyskanych.

war, capitalist, Polish policies that focused on eastern colonisation rather than embracing this westward expansion (Barcikowski, 1946; Chojanski, 1946; Kiełczewska & Grodek, 1946; Ziółkowski, 1959).

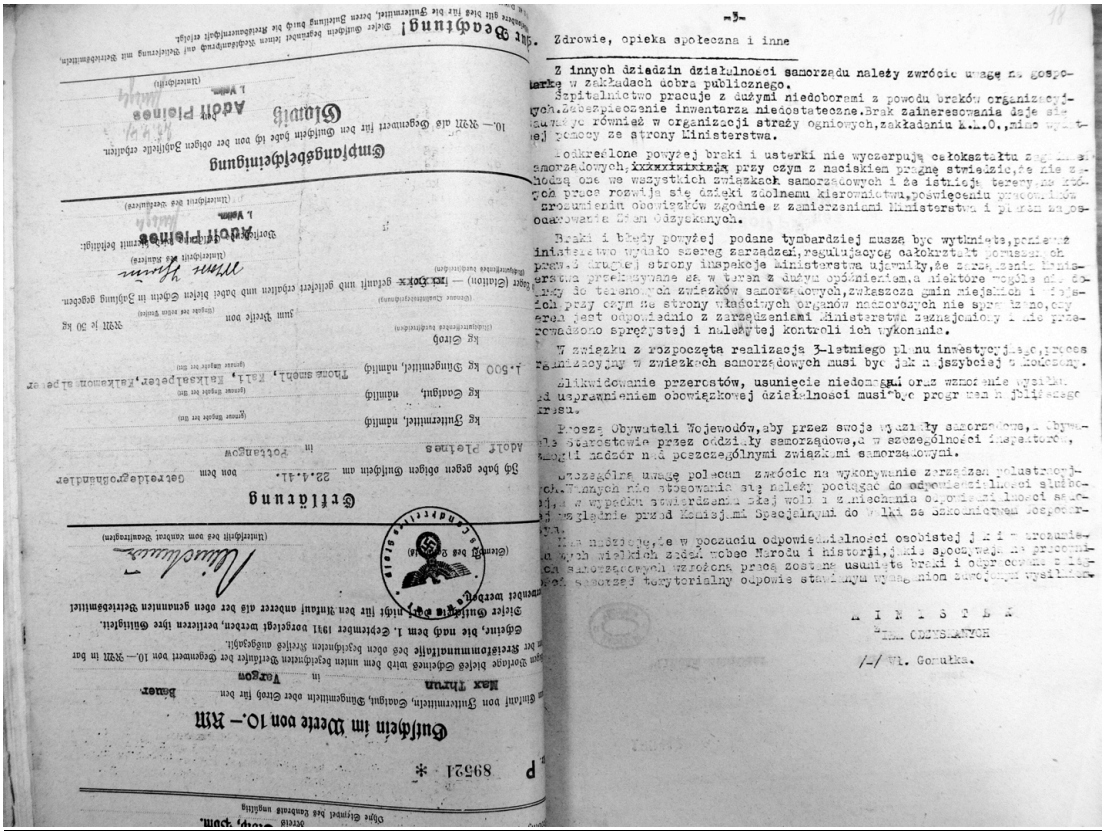

Figure 11 Nazi administrative paper recycled by the new Polish state found in *gmina* archives. (Nr. 5, 1945/1946, pgs. 20-21).

The war ravaged nation needed an imaginary paradise and the German lands filled with riches satiated that vision. Propaganda posters depicted quaint German homes (see Figure 12) and PPR-censored memoirs advertised them as a western escape, the land of beautiful landscapes, a 'new world of objects and phenomena' to be studied for the purposes of education, understanding new problems, and new possibilities. The physical openness of the territories, with greater access to the Baltic Sea, would inspire a generation of Polish artists. The PPR invited Poles to become citizen 'pioneers' (*pionierzy*)—an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983)—that would populate the German lands and return Poland's cities, churches, and castles back to the mother country (Dylik, 1946, pg. 248). The PPR created a Soviet state-making project in which migration to the annexed German territories would become an act of reclaiming the

lands of Polish consciousness through the specific action of colonising its natural and man-made beauty, without it being actually called colonialism.

Figure 12 'To the Oder river border for our fathers' land and prosperity'. Pioneer steps from ravaged homestead onto German property (Oracz, 1946).

When settlers arrived to the territories, they were overwhelmed with the widespread devastation: 54% of the cities were destroyed; 78% (3.8 million acres) of agricultural lands lay fallow; 73% of equipment and machinery has been looted; 27% (123,800) of farms were damaged (Kruszewski, 1972, pgs. 115-123). War trenches and artillery littered the fields, livestock and animals were missing, homes were looted, and buildings were bombed. In order to differentiate the myth of the territories from the reality, settlers renamed them the 'Wild West' (*Dziki Zachód*). German colonists had once referred to lands east of the Elbe River—Pomerania and Prussia—as the German

'Wilderness' (Carsten, 1947, pg. 155). Evidently, German influences were still strong in the territories after the war.

The territories were far from an ethnic Polish paradise. The actual migration and settlement policy was to 'Polonise the west and pacify the east' (Zielinski, 2009, pg. 194). German and East Prussian expulsion suffered delays and the Kashubians, an ethnic group native to the region, were repatriated as 'Poles' (Ahonen & Stark, 2008). The PUR repatriated politically active Ukrainians from the southeastern border; Belarusians who rejected Soviet collectivisation in the east (Brown, 2004); Jewish Holocaust survivors; Siberian gulag survivors; and Roma, Czechs, and political refugees from the Greek civil war of 1944-48 (Gatrell, 2011; Kruszewski, 1972). Different nationalities were settled into the same villages; neighbours spoke different languages on the street and practiced different religions. Thus, the irony of this state-making project was that its goal was to reclaim Polish consciousness but it would be a multitude of nationalities reclaiming it. In the process, they would become not a Polish, but a Soviet, society.

4.3. Germans, the first proletarians?

The influx of skilled Polish labour was slow in the territories. Many Polish arrivals who saw the poor living conditions without water, electricity, gas, or public transportation, returned home (Thum, 2011, pg. 83). Faced with labour shortages in newly nationalised state farms and factories, local governments delayed the German expulsion (Figure 13) as a strategy to secure a cheap labour pool. Thus, German labour became for the communes what Humphrey (2002) would call 'manipulable resources'—labour or goods that were the surplus product beyond the amount supplied to the state under the planned order (pg. 11). In the first months after the war, Germans were forced to give reparations in the form of forced labour. In late 1945, expulsion was delayed across the territories so that the Soviet-run state farms (*sovkhozy*) could use German labour to complete the spring sowing in 1946 (Korbonski, 1965, pg. 83). Germans became the 'first wave' of workers who worked for this new state.

Figure 13 German expulsion, 1945 (Kirschbaum, 2006).

When Władysław Gomułka—Minister of the Recovered Territories—was asked in March 1946 how the effort to 'cleanse the Recovered Territories of German elements' was proceeding he responded, 'We evacuate the "nonproductive elements" first. In the late phase, it is the German workers in our employ who go. There is also a possibility of retaining a small number of qualified specialists whom we cannot replace'[49]. The state formalised this classification system of German labourers and offered them pay, legal status, and protection. White 'category 1' were low-skilled German workers who would be quickly replaced with Polish workers; Blue 'category 2' were German workers who had to train Polish workers first in order to qualify for expulsion; Red 'category 3' workers were specialists whose expulsion would have to be permitted by the authorities. While the first two categories were granted personal security and the right to retain their residences, private property, and good working conditions, the last category became 'an odd kind of forced labourer' who 'lacked freedom of movement but enjoyed relatively

[49] 'Nonproductive' workers were the elderly, children, and disabled (Thum, 2011, pg. 84).

good pay and treatment' (Thum, 2011, pgs. 84-85). The state retained an estimated 65,000 German specialists in the (re)construction of the territories and state economy (Kruszewski, 1972, pg. 67).

Delaying or manipulating the German expulsion in order to secure a cheap labour pool for the state-making process was practiced by Soviet, regional, and *gmina* authorities. The use of this method to cut production costs, grow *gmina* budgets, and secure capital and labour for one's farm shows how market socialism—defined as the process through which the market becomes the 'basic coordinator of the socialist economy' (Kornai, 1992, pg. 474)—already expressed itself at the onset of the state-making process in the territories. If authorities distorted the socialist economy or message of proletarianism and Polonisation, then it sent the message that the state-making process was a free-for-all enterprise based on a first-come-first-serve basis.

Krystyna, one of the handful of German women who still live in Dobra, told me about her family's experience during this transition period. She was born into a German peasant family who lived, owned property, and worked on a German Junker Estate right next to Dobra (then 'Rathsdamnitz'). When the war ended, Ukrainians—who had been caught by the Nazis and enslaved as forced labourers on the estate—rose up against the estate owner and awaited the arrival of the Red Army. When the Soviets arrived, they murdered the owner and transformed the estate into a state farm (*sovkhoz*). Instead of expelling her family, the Soviets used her father's specialist role as a tractor operator to work on state farms while she was transferred to a bakery in Dobra.

> **K:** Then, you had to work. So then, we all received this cup of soup for dinner and a piece of bread. Everyday we had to. We only worked and those who did not work, got nothing.
>
> **Self:** So it was forced labour?
>
> **K:** It was forced, yes. But I am not saying anything because father had it good. He was a tractor operator and he knew how to do everything, whatever it was. So once, when we were on the fields, we look and the Russians are coming after my father. Everyone says, "Look, they are taking your father now. They will kill him"! But they took him to Lipowo (state farm) because there was no tractor operator there and they gave him a horse so that he could go everyday on the horse to Lipowo to work and there were Russian women there. One Christmas Eve, the Russian woman came and brought my father such a huge circle of butter and there were pirogues which we had never seen. Inside the pirogues was cheese. I say that when father was with us the entire time, we had it

> good. Then in 1948, that one Russian said that I have to go to the barn to milk the cows. I say "I don't know how to milk the cow" and he says, "How do you not know how to milk a cow? Your sisters are younger and know" and I said that "I did not know how to". So he gave me a note and said "Go to Dobra to the Russian bakery and give them this" and so I went. We had to bake bread for all of the estates all night. We transported it in the morning. And so I say, I had it very good—this was until the Russians moved out of here (in 1949).

State farms produced for the Soviet Union, so cheap German labour decreased production costs. Germans received 75% of the standard food ration and their wages were often deducted to support *gmina* reconstruction funds (Thum, 2011, pgs. 85-86). Between 1945 and 1946, *gmina* archives reveal that German families 'donated' 149,949 *złoty* to its budget. In 1947, they paid an additional 50 *złoty* per household[50]. Hiring Polish workers—who were entitled to a special bonus for coming to work in the territories—became secondary (Ibid. 86). Jan and Elżbieta, a Kashubian couple who in 1946 sought employment on the state farm where Krystyna's father worked, said that the settlement of Polish workers did not begin until after the Soviets transferred the farm over to Polish administration in 1949. Even then, the German specialists were allowed to relocate to a smaller state farm nearby and set up their own colony equipped with a German school-house that lasted into the 1950s (Pagel, 1989, pg. 660). The *gmina* and the Soviets cared less about giving Poles entry into the socialist revolution and more about cheap German labour.

Some *gmina* officials took this a step further by blurring 'state' and 'private' work. When Janusz—a founding Party official who organised Dobra's resettlement process—arrived to Dobra in 1944, he acquired a 40-hectare German farm that rested between the village and a (new) state farm. As a Party official and a proprietor (*Gospodarz*), he employed both the German owners and other Germans on 'his' new farm. When I interviewed Janusz in his house located along Reunification Street, his daughter Danusia had to repeat some of the questions because he had lost his hearing at the age of 94 (he passed away in 2012):

> **J:** I lived with Germans.
>
> **D:** And you ate together.

[50] Archives: Nr. 5, 1945/1946, pg. 20 and Nr. 1, 1947, pgs. 11, 29.

J: And why not!? They (Poles and Germans) ate together.

D: Together they ate, together they worked. They (Germans) helped (*pomagali*) you out too.

J: They worked for me—the *Gospodarz*—all the Germans.

D: They worked for money or for food or a bit of both?

J: There was no money, only food. We had cereals (*zboże*). The Russians gave us cereals. There were entire fields filled with potatoes. In mounds, we took the potatoes. There were potatoes and later, we planted potatoes. We gave milk to the Germans. And to them all, we gave potatoes. One had to give them food. The Germans who were living with us, they had two children. One had to feed them.

Janusz used his state authority to fulfill his economic needs as a proprietor and his Germans' subsistence needs. Was he acting as a bourgeois proprietor or the nomenklatura—or both? He treated his new farm as a quasi-state workplace through which he negotiated Soviet resources towards potato planting projects, employing Germans, producing food, and feeding his workers. In doing so, he secured free Russian cereals and unpaid German labour!

Settlers benefitted from German labour to jumpstart agricultural production. Domestic arrangements varied on a case-by-case basis. There was no rubric on how to renegotiate labour and resources between two peoples who had just fought through a brutal war. Zuzanna and Konrad, for instance, took over the executive authority of Frau Agathe's farm. During my interview with Krystyna, Zuzanna explained how she supported Frau Agathe and employed Heinz as a farmhand:

> They were poor. They had huge poverty. We came here, then my husband brought a cow because two children had already been born. Upstairs lived Frau Agathe. She was such a good woman. How much I liked her! She said that she worked in a hospital in Słupsk in the children's division and she came to me, I had a cow, and we helped her out a lot because I felt bad for her children. She had a son, Heinz, he milked our cows, and he said that "Frau Zuzanna" that he will sleep here and I said "good". I always gave them milk, about 3 liters a day.

Others imposed their own regimes upon their German co-habitants. Mimicking the state that collected its 'reparations' in the form of forced labour, some—who had suffered Nazi atrocities—were thirsty for their own revenge. Jawoda, a Belausian who had been repatriated to the village of Podwoda (10 kilometres south of Dobra) in 1946, recalled

that one of her Polish neighbours enslaved the German women with whom he shared his new farm:

> There were the types who lived here three houses from ours. When the Germans were around, they came from Toruń so they harnessed the Germans to the plough, to the wagon, and worked with them! And they dragged them and tortured them! Poles! Yes! It was not everyone. And those young German women were innocent! They did not murder people. They tortured those women.

Of course most Germans did not wait for the new Polish settlers to decide what to do with them. Many took an active role in searching for jobs and strengthening reciprocal labour arrangements. Trauta, another German woman in Dobra who still lives in the house in which she was born, explained to me how the women in her family worked at Polish and Russian settlers' homes:

> Later, I went to work to a Polish household. I cleaned there and worked there in the house. I received food for it. And my father later worked in the forest for the Poles when they took people into the forest. My mother and sister worked for the L. family, in the house. L. family had a store. Sister took care of their children and mother cooked. So that was something. My grandmother went to one woman because she always had to sew for those Russians. She said to grandmother, "Come cook for me. I will give you food and you can take some home with you".

As the state delayed expulsions, domestic labour arrangements between Germans and settlers became embedded into everyday life. Fictive kinships and friendships formed among this caste system. As networks strengthened over the years, Poles and Germans got over some of their prejudices through the realisation that they had to work together to survive—and that kept the relative 'peace' in Dobra. This experience highlighted the important role of exchange networks as key to survival.

4.4. 'Working off' corvées

The state tried to keep peasants locked into their land grants and to immobilise them from seeking other sources of income outside of the village. One effective mechanism, which many peasants like Zuzanna who lived along the same street in Dobra all claimed to have shared, was 'working off' (*odrabiać*) corvées (*szarwark*) for the state. There was only one *gmina* archive from 1947 which recorded that authorities 'unanimously agreed' to 'rally Germans into *szarwark* labour', to shovel snow and ice and for other

urgent *gmina* projects[51]. Yet the peasants who shared this experience were Polish and Ukrainian. Even Kacper, the son of the *gmina* official who ordered the corvées in Dobra, confirmed their existence:

> There *were szarwarks*. The peasant farmers were burdened with the *szarwark*s, if one had to go somewhere, or something, one had to bring one's wagon and horse, and they (authorities) were taking advantage of it, there *were szarwark*s. (emphasis his)**.** It was written out, that this many had to be done within a year, and how many times one could take advantage of it [...] And we took advantage of it.

The term *szarwark* originates from the German *scharwerk* ('*schar*' meaning 'crowd' and '*werk*' meaning 'work') that magistrates and municipalities had imposed upon the peasantry from 1280 to 1848[52]. Peasants (including children) were forced to provide unpaid, statutory labour for dignitaries and the state such as ploughing, harrowing, transport of grain, wood, hay, manure, building material, cutting grain, mowing grass, chopping wood, running errands, fixing bridges and roads, hunting harmful animals, constructing fortifications, military service and being border guards, feeding and managing hunting dogs during dignitaries' hunts in the forests, and so on. The only way to get out of compulsory labour was by paying a fine *and* finding a replacement. This was a major cause of disputes between subjects and authorities because the *szarwark* was constantly updated by the authorities based upon the work-force ratio. Less labour meant more unpaid obligations imposed upon the peasantry (Blickle, 2014; Cinnirella & Hornung, 2013, pg. 8).

Chodakiewicz (2004) writes that, beginning in September 1939, the Nazis imposed *scharwerk* labour upon the Polish citizens of Janów Lubelski County, in central Poland, instead of throwing them into concentration camps. Poles had to deliver goods, ferry people, do construction work, clean, tend German graves, repair roads, clean snow and railway tracks, deliver construction materials, be night watchmen, and so forth. Individuals could only 'legally' opt out on the condition that they put forward their neighbours in their place; however, foot-dragging, feigning illness, and choosing to do lighter *szarwarks* like transportation instead of road repair were common. Men

[51] Archives: Nr. 2, 1946/1948, pg. 16 and Nr. 4, 1946, pg. 1.
[52] The Polish *szarwark* and German *scharwerk* have each been compared to the French corvée (Cinnirella & Hornung, 2013, pg. 8; Chodakiewicz, 2004 pg. 50).

delegated women and children to do their work for them as they did fieldwork. Nazis fined, beat, expropriated, and arrested those suspected of sabotaging the *szarwarks*. Chodakiewicz estimates that about 75% of the adult Polish population had 'toiled involuntarily on various official projects' at one point or another during the Nazi occupation (2004, pg. 117). Wartime *scharwerks* were a method of ethnic and class domination.

How could there be only one *gmina* archive about this entire institution of serfdom? I searched without success for the term '*szarwark*' in Poland's laws passed after 1944. It was not until an extensive investigation into the Polish legal journal *Monitor Polski* where I found the phrase '*świadczeń obowiązkowych w naturze* (*szarwark*)'[53] that decoded the state's 'formal' term for the colloquial term[54]. When I returned to Dobra's archives, I saw that indeed, aside from that single slip-up in 1947, the *gmina* used the formal state term. In November 1946, the regional administrative level (*powiat*) of government sent an order to the *gminas* notifying them that they could enforce 'payment-in-kind' (*świadczenie w naturze*) upon their citizens based on the legal precedent of the 1935 law, that authorised the state to enforce 'straight-forward labour on foot and with machines'; including the building and upkeep of roads, water repairs in the public interest, building government structures, cultivating wastelands, and planting trees in fields.

In Dobra, *szarwarks* were a form of labour tax paid by non-wage earners, for Germans and peasants even though they already had to pay other taxes for their land grants from the agrarian reform. Peasants who received more German land from the *gmina* during the agrarian reform were burdened with more *szarwark* labour, even though they had no choice on how much land they received, did not use all of the land, and could not legally abandon, rent, or sell it (this is a major characteristic of serfdom, see Blum, 1957). Presented below is the *gmina*'s breakdown of how much peasants with a certain amount of land had to give in labour[55]:

[53] 'Performance of payment-in-kind (*szawark*)'.
[54] Legal journal entry: M.P. 1956r. Nr. 18. Poz. 253. Art. 4. Nr. 6. Pt. 1. pg. 280.
[55] Nr. 1, 1946-1947, pgs. 5-6.

Category A: < 5 hectares: 1 day/year with wagon and pair of horses; 3 days on foot.
Category B: 5-10 hectares: 2 days/year with wagon and pair of horses; 6 days on foot.
Category C: 10-15 hectares: 3 days/year with wagon and pair of horses; 9 days on foot.
Category D: 15-20 hectares: 4 days/year with wagon and pair of horses; 12 days on foot.

The *gmina* could mobilise *szarwark* efforts towards fixing bridges and clearing shrubs around them, fixing roads and sidewalks, transporting rubble to bridges, or transporting sand to build a road to the city. Zuzanna, who worked in *szarwarks,* explained that Hektor's men from the *gmina* went door to door telling peasants—'Tomorrow you have to go to the *szarwark*'. Usually, pregnant women, children, and the ill were exempted, but when there were severe labour shortages, they even 'rallied the women'. She added that these were 'orders' (*nakazy*) and thus, 'every person had to go and to work it off (*odrobić*)'. When I asked Zuzanna what would happen if one resisted, she responded 'You know, *he had to* [...] If they ordered it, people went. A peasant paid 300 *złoty* per missed *szarwark* day and a 100 *złoty* penalty for renting a labour substitute[56]. 'They did not care where you got the money from, what they cared about is that you had to work your's off (*odrobić*) and that is that', Zuzanna explained.

Winter *szarwarks* were the grimmest. Anna, a Ukrainian peasant, explained some of the awful conditions—'There were *szarwarks*, because back then, when there was winter, they shoveled by hand because there were no ploughs. No! To Słupsk itself there was a *szarwark* and people shoveled snow, working the road. And how? For free! We worked. Yes!' Peasants received a shovel, lined up, and were presented with a state warrant (*nakaz*) that explained the work had to be completed from Dobra, past the state farms, and into the edge of the commune boundary eight kilometres northwest. The brigadier then outlined the plot to shovel for each peasant. No food was provided. 'They gave us nothing! No food, no drink, because when one went to work it off (*odrabiać*) then he took a sandwich of some sort'. A *szarwark* day lasted from 8AM-2PM, but when more ploughing was involved, the day was extended. If snow fell the following day, the *szarwark* was repeated.

[56] Nr. 14, 1953/1954, pg. 43.

Hektor organised the *szarwarks* and his men patrolled the peasants. Zuzanna recalled that Hektor 'observed everything and walked around and looked' over the whole operation while brigadiers patrolled individual peasants to ensure no one fell behind or imposed extra hardship on other peasants. Her recollection suggests some signs of resistance against these gulag-like conditions:

> And sometimes if someone did not want to work, then, they had this measuring stick, which they traced out the metres and "You *must* do it". Oh. Because there were some who even were tricking around in the *szarwark* because, "You work and I will stand!" and "I will bounce around and will not do work, but I will bounce around because I do not feel like working—but *you* work!"

It was only in this singular moment when Zuzanna discussed Hektor's role in the *szarwark*, that she said that he was a '*kombinator*' and 'liar' but did not provide much detail concerning his role. It shows the crystallisation of the idea that *kombinacja* was being used by Hektor who corrupted state power towards his own advancement. It may have stemmed from the stark image of certain villagers in Dobra using such an exploitative institution to force other villagers—with whom they shared village streets and neighbourhoods—into such grizzly conditions. Such experiences set the stage for the peasants' later retaliation through *kombinacja* against Hektor.

Once each peasant had signed the list to say that they had 'worked off' their *szarwark* day, the list was taken to the *gmina* and obligations deducted from the peasants' balance. To me, it looks like the values for how much each *szarwark* 'saved' in the *gmina* budget were chosen arbitrarily. They represented relative values—like a gift. In 1947, a peasant who worked a full day with only a wagon and one horse 'saved' the state 240 *złoty* but 400 *złoty* if worked with two horses. In 1948, 619 *szarwark* days on foot saved 123,800 *złoty*. In addition to the peasant *szarwark* labour, the accounts recorded that the state forestry volunteered a whopping 7,760 *szarwark* days at a value of 1,552,000 *złoty* to the state[57]. Here we see some differentiation to the rule, as state workplaces entered into some patronage relations with the *gmina.* These were forced

[57] Nr. 1, 1946-1947, pg. 72; Nr. 3, 1948/1950, pg. 3.

'gifts of unpaid labour' to the state—a symbol of their accommodation to the socialist revolution[58]. The state had become the new 'master'.

Even though peasants had been subjected to 'payment-in-kind' during the interwar period, they still used the colloquial, Germanised word '*szarwark*' in order to emphasise the feudal and oppressive tactics used by the postwar state to coerce their labour. In 1905, Lenin critiqued the Polish Socialist Party's agrarian reform programme that sought to abolish the '*szarwark*' and obligatory cartage for simply adhering to the 'minimum demands' of Marxism that embraced 'the struggle against remnants of serfdom as the basis and content of the present-day peasant movement' (Polish Socialist Party, 1905, clause 6). Elimination of feudal institutions was the bare minimum of a socialist revolution. Yet, the *szarwark* was being used by the Soviets to help in their postwar, state-building projects. *Szarwarks* marked the continuity between Nazi and Soviet occupation. A similar trend occurred in Hungary. Lampland (1998) writes that cadastral maps from the 1850s that had determined the taxation of the peasantry were used as a basis for taxation during the Second World War and used to determine class enemies (*kulak*) during the Stalinist period in the 1950s (pg. 17). Although each of these state apparatuses attempted to install a new regime, they were all using the same tools.

4.5. 'Neighbourly help' for the state

According to Zuzanna's recollections, peasants in central Poland during the interwar period pooled their labour under a reciprocal, agrarian labour arrangement called 'neighbourly help' (*pomoc sąsiedzka*). Due to labour shortages during harvests (*omłoty*), peasants voluntarily pooled their tools and reciprocated labour on each other's private farms. Terms were negotiable—a peasant could send labour to another farm in return for permission to rent that farm's horse. Usually, however, the hosting family would reciprocate with the same amount of members from their family on the other's farm the next time around. At the end of the working day, the host would throw a party with food and drink for those who helped. Through neighbourly help, peasants secured labour, could own more land than they could physically harvest with their family unit,

[58] The *szarwark* was phased out in a series of laws between 1957-1958 that overhauled the tax system and introduced the contract (*umowa*) as a standard of service relations between the local state and peasantry. See: Dz.U. z. 1958. Nr. 31. Poz. 136; Dz.U. z. 1958. Nr. 17. Poz. 72; Dz.U. z. 1958. Nr. 6. Poz. 17; Dz.U. z. 1958. Nr. 3. Poz. 7.

and were able to produce enough for family consumption and surplus to sell on the market. Antonina, another Polish peasant from southern Poland, mentioned that when the men went off to war, neighbourly help continued among the women during the Nazi occupation in her village as an important way to get through the crisis.

The similarities between *szarwark* and *pomoc sąsiedzka* is that the peasantry were bound by an obligation to engage in unpaid labour. In the former, they were obligated to do so under law and for a higher authority like a lord or *gmina*; in the latter, they were obliged to do so by familial authorities (i.e. in-laws, family guardians, fictive kinship). Polish neighbourly help had a German variant called *Bittarbeit* (neighbourly help) in which neighbours reciprocated unpaid labour during harvests and then celebrated with food and song at the end of the working day (Bücher, 1901, pgs. 268-269; Kelen, 2010, pg. 1296; Malinowski, 1967, pg. 72). Weber (1972) argued that *Bittarbeit's* flexibility was problematic—at one point it could take the form of the genuine support of mutual help between community members, and at another point swing into the domain of oppression especially in contexts where unpaid labour would be given for 'protection' that would not be reciprocated in like form by the receiver (see Kelen, 2010).

Indeed, in 1947, the Polish state passed its 'neighbourly help law' that forced peasants to pool labour and machinery during major sowing, ploughing and harvest periods as a form of neighbourly help, both to their fellow neighbours and to the state[59]. Neighbourly help was no longer voluntary. Strikingly, while many informants knew about the exploitation of their labour by *szarwarks,* I do not think they knew that neighbourly help was an active project propagated and clandestinely patrolled by the state. Second, when the *gmina* needed a supply of cheap labour to harvest newly nationalised land in the state farms or on the *gmina* estates, it co-opted peasants' arrangements of neighbourly help to aid state goals (Żurawski, 1985, pg. 51). So, the state became a 'neighbour', but the state did not 'reciprocate' that labour as peasants had once done in their pre and inter-war arrangements. Thus, while *szarwark* labour applied to labour around public projects as a way to 'pay' taxes, neighbourly help was a more direct form of unpaid labour that could be adjusted by the state depending on the work ratio. By enforcing neighbourly help, the state allowed *gmina* authorities to tap

[59] Dz.U. z 1947r. Nr. 59. Poz. 320. Art. 1-2.

into the peasants' communal labour arrangements and force them to become the state's agricultural workforce as an obligation to the state and the revolution. The state exploited this form of servitude—that normally would take place during harvests and emergencies—to fulfill command economy quotas! This is exemplies the state's active interest in co-opting informality towards its own formal goals.

In autumn 1947, *gmina* archives reported that villagers fulfilled their neighbourly help obligations by planting 1,000 hectares of grain on *gmina* land. The law authorised *gmina* and *powiat* authorities to mobilise neighbourly help across administrative lines—meaning they nominated their peasantries to work other *gmina* harvests. This move ended the competition between state workplaces that struggled to secure migrant peasant labour; rather, they could ask the *gmina* to get its peasants to work for free. Blum (1957) writes that a common misconception of serfdom is that the serf was bound to the soil. Rather, he writes, 'the deepest and most complete form of serfdom was precisely when the lord was able (as he often was) to move his peasants about as he wished, transferring them from one holding to another, converting them into landless field hands or into household servants, or even selling, giving, or gambling them away without land' (pg. 808). Those who held state power in the *gmina* legally exploited these tools of serfdom—moving peasants around—in order to meet the command plan across workplaces and administrative lines.

In 1948, the state passed another law that *exempted* military personnel, *gmina* officials, administrators, and other Party authorities from the practice of neighbourly help—creating a caste system of those whose labour the state co-opted to 'help' the state and those who were exempt from giving unpaid labour[60]. The *gmina* recorded which groups of peasants in Dobra exercised neighbourly help among themselves and which did not[61]. Blum (1957) writes that one of the features of serfdom all over Europe was that 'the lord had legal jurisdiction over his peasants to the complete, or nearly complete, exclusion of the state, so that to all intents and purposes the only rights the peasants had were those that the lord was willing to allow them' (pg. 809). In the *gmina,* the peasants were promised permission to *buy* limited resources from the nomenklatura in return for

[60] Nr. 40, 1947, pg. 66; Dz.U. z 1947r. Nr. 59. Poz. 320. Arts. 2-3; Dz.U. z. 1948r. Nr. 11. Poz. 89. Art. 1.
[61] Dz.U. z 1947r. Nr. 59. Poz. 320. Art 2; Nr. 14, 1953/1954, pg. 86.

their unpaid labour. The archives later reveal peasant resistance to these 'deals' in which the nomenklatura never met their end of the bargain. When the peasants complained in the archives, they seemed to have no legal avenues to take their cases to court. Rather, their complaints were shut down by the nomenklatura. That the nomenklatura were exempt from this tribute of unpaid labour to the state to fulfill the quota meant that the nomenklatura had become the new 'lords'. They used neighbourly help to fix the *gmina*'s labour problem and *szarwarks* to fix its taxation problem.

Gmina authorities began domesticating the labour arrangement into their private households. Aneta and Bohdan, a couple from Ukraine, worked and lived in a forestry division settlement of about a dozen homes located on the outskirts of Dobra. It was populated by Polish, Ukrainian, and Kashubian workers. Cezary, a Kashubian who had lived in Germany prior to the border changes in 1945, was the Forestry Director (*Leśniczy*) who lived in the settlement with his wife Anna, a seamstress who worked on site and sewed for private customers. As state forestry workers, each settler family was allotted a German home and worker garden (*działka,* <1 hectare) on which they grew their crops and livestock to supplement their wages[62]. They were entitled to material goods (*deputat*) like wood, clothing, and food from the state forestry on a monthly, biannual, and annual basis. Men worked full time in the forestry while the women usually stayed home to take care of the farms and worker gardens[63].

Cezary treated his farm as an extension of the workplace. Aneta explained that *in addition* to working in the state forestry division, both men and women in the division were expected to work the director's worker garden and offered domestic services to his wife *in order* to get their wages and material entitlements which they had already worked for on time. Aneta explained the experience of 'helping out' (*pomagać*) as the 'Director's worker':

> **A:** The human back then had to fucking work one's ass off—children, cow, house. And one even have to work at Mr. Sz.'s house, for our good health, for free.
>
> **Self:** Why? What was that?

[62] Workers did not have to supply agricultural quotas to the state.
[63] Pregnant and child-rearing women opted out of compulsory labour.

A: The Director's worker! The worker had to work one's off (*swoje odrobić*) at the Director's (house). He did not pay!

Self: Meaning, that one worked in the forestry, but also had to plough his land?

A: One worked (*uprawiał*) the land which the Director had just like us and one helped him, worked it and every woman helped (*pomagała*)

Z: Hmmm. [pensively]

Self: So it was privately done—

A: Just Paluch did not help out, she did not help out.

Self: And so one *had to* help?

A: Well, you *know*. If one did not want to, then one did not want to—

Z: Yes.

A: But if one wanted to live well with them, one went to help because back then one disseminated seeds by hand and one planted by hand the potatoes and barley one dug, and today there are ploughs, but back then it was by hand.

It is interesting to see how Aneta switches between describing the arrangement as an obligation to 'work one's off' and as a form of 'help' in the field. Bohdan, Aneta and the other workers eventually 'broke free' of these obligations after a series of events in which Cezary and Anna showed bourgeois inclinations and bragged about having workers as servants on their settlement:

A: Anna was always like something that I was not. She was like this. I, in the beginning, helped out. I will not say. I went over there to milk her cows because she did not know how to milk the cows so I milked the cows. My husband also went there. But when Beata in holy memory, Anna's sister came, Ala went there to throw out the (livestock) dung for her. Ala went in rubber boots because she would not go in nice shoes to throw out the livestock dung. And Anna said this (to Beata) "My God, Aneta has five children and she comes always over here so clean, nicely dressed—"

Z: She was like that.

A: Yes. And she said, "—but Ala smells". And you know something threw me inside here (points to her chest).

Z: Yes.

A: I thought to myself. "*You tight-arse. I will not come in rubber boots because I do not throw out your livestock dung. I will put on regular shoes, get dressed, and walk over to your place. But when Ala comes over to throw out livestock dung, when Anna calls her over into the kitchen, then she has to have rubber boots*" No?

Z: Of course!

A: When I heard that, I said, "Enough!" and I told my husband, "I will no longer go milk her cows". And when Cezary had horses that belonged to the forestry—because at his place there was a barn which he built for himself because he raised horses. And Magda's husband Tomek worked with those horses—because they belonged to the state—and he fed those horses at Cezary's because if he worked with those horses, then he feeds them. Cezary drove over to Z. (village) and began to brag that he has horses and Tomek is his groom and works for him—and in the beginning they lived upstairs at Cezary's—and Magda is his cook! Cleaning maid! That she cleans the house! When Magda went to Z., and people were asking "What are you doing!? You are working as a cook for Anna?" Magda came back home, she began to cry and began to tell it to Tomek and *that very night* they moved out of the house. There, there were no windows (at the new place), so Tomek took some tar and nailed the windows shut and he moved out there and renovated a bit of it himself and there he lived. They went their separate ways and Cezary moved out and from that hour everyone lived in peace.

Anna's story shows that her and her fellow settler's resistance was not caused by any specific problem about the arrangement of helping out a local official on his farm, but because he had expressed the relationship in decadent and bourgeois terms. In the previous section, it was reported that Janusz the *gmina* official kept a cheap labour force—Germans—on his large estate and manipulated the boundary between 'work for proprietor' versus 'work for the state'. Granted, the Germans had less of a choice than the workers who eventually abdicated the neighbourly help arrangement. However, both examples show how the *gmina* officials 'domesticated' the state and established neighbourly help relationships with workers for their own private benefit.

This labour arrangement is similar to German *Gesindezwangsdienste* (servants' forced services) wherein the employees were forced to provide extra unpaid services for their employer in their employer's home (Blickle, 2014). This practice was abolished along with the *scharwerk* in the 19th century, but evidently it made a comeback in Dobra in the postwar period. The overlaps between serfdom and socialist state-building were staggering. Party officials subsequently became the largest landowners who did what they wished with the peasantry and imposed labour and tribute obligations on the populace as a way of solving labour shortages. They switched between the socialist revolution when they were politically pressured to do so by the state apparatus, but delved deep into the tools of serfdom to keep local control of the peasant population to suit their private needs. There was not much deviation from this serf-like structure of

life, except that the new state power was the socialist state, serfdom was adapting to the state, and the state was co-opting it to gain control over the territories and build the state.

4.6. Involuntary gifts to the state

Reciprocity was built into the formal function of the state on multiple scales. Population transfers in the territories were based on the 'principle of reciprocity' between modern states (Gousseff, 2011, pg. 94). Poland lost 180,000 square kilometres of its eastern territory to the Soviet Union, but gained 103,000 square kilometres of territory in the West (Yoshioka (2008) pg. 274). Belarusians who were repatriated to the territories and left all their property behind, received property 'in exchange' in the territories. Peasants and politically suspect groups were forced into involuntary labour in return for settling on the new territories and not paying 'monetary taxes' (even though many did anyway). 'Reciprocity' is how Poland and the Soviet Union 'exchanged' territories and peoples (although to the benefit of the Soviet Union), and how the Polish state organised economic and political life in the territories (at the expense of the settlers).

In postwar Dobra, a blend of feudal *szarwark* and '*pomoc sasiedzka*' (neighbourly help) was used to secure socialist state power. The 'state' fulfilled the 'master' role and the 'peasants and workers' fit the 'serf' role. Gifts and reciprocal labour arrangements—although treated by anthropologists as different from 'compulsory labour' (see Algazi, 2003, pg. 13)—were co-opted by the state and imposed upon certain groups of people to subsidise the state-making project. While the socialist state advocated a socialist revolution, its adoption of prewar and interwar institutions showed signs of *continuity* with the past. What we see is a blurring of the boundary between reciprocity as an informal relationship and reciprocity as a way of establishing a hierarchy between the state and the peasantry and workers in the village.

Strathern (1992) writes that 'Coercion is essential in which the "gift" is created' (pg. 177), in that the giver has to persuade the receiver to accept what is offered. Villagers were forced to carry out labour without any reciprocal return from the state. Scott (1976) writes that 'The claims of the state (taxes, corvée, conscription) speak for themselves and it is questionable whether the peasant ever sees these claims as a repayment for services received (law and order? peace? religious functions?)' (pg. 28). Whether the gift of labour was voluntary or involuntary established the field of the

moral economy. Mauss (1990) reminds us that the 'unreciprocated gift still makes the person who has accepted it inferior' (pg. 65). The nomenklatura had to at least acknowledge the demands of the moral economy in order to stay in power.

The politics of unpaid work began to shape the class divides between the nomenklatura versus everyone else in the village. The state co-opted peasant arrangements and peasants co-opted state arrangements and looked to the state's exploitative techniques to hire their own German labour. Masters and peasants/workers were adopting strategies from each other in order to stay competitive and to increase their own production profits on their state and private farms. Algazi (2003) writes that a gift is by no means fixed. It is 'contested' and the 'meanings and implications of such transactions are neither evident nor inherent in the acts themselves' (pg. 10). Negotiation was a two-way street. Others negotiated with the state in more subtle ways. Blum (1957) writes that in the feudal model that constrained peasants' mobility in Eastern Europe, serfs became free through the abandonment of land holdings. Similarly, peasants in the postwar period abandoned their land grants to seek jobs in the city—they abandoned one facet of the socialist revolution playing out in the rural areas and went to the city to engage with another facet of the revolution that promised a better quality of life.

4.7. (Re)collecting *gotyks*

In 2009, some villagers' homes were time capsules still adorned with German-era (*po Niemieckie*) wallpaper, paintings, crosses, photographs, and furniture. They did not change the Prussian timber framing or update their German-era kitchen layouts. Others—predominantly Poles—had burned German clothing, furniture, linen, toys, books, paintings, documents, photographs, and banners, which they had found inside their new homes and did not deem to be valuable or something that they wished to be associated with. Burning served as an aesthetic cleansing of the German landscape. These objects gave homes a unique aesthetic quality that differentiated them from the identical, socialist-era, furnishings still standing in many homes. Burning was a touchy subject. Mychaljo, a Ukrainian peasant who arrived in 1947 and whose beautiful home was still tapestried with German wallpaper and hanging plates claimed that when Poles burned German furniture, it was a symbol of hatred, 'a pain inflicted to Hitler'. His home was untouched.

Figure 14 German *gotyk* with 'God bless our home' inscription hangs in Mychaljo's kitchen still decorated with the original German wallpaper. Author's photo (2009).

Whether settlers chose to keep or discard these objects said a lot about their sense of 'belonging' to the territories. Settlers who perceived the German-Polish border as temporary refused to invest in their 'German' properties (Mach, 1993, pg. 192). Weronika—who had been repatriated from East Prussia as a 'Pole'—but who lived in the factory houses on the other side of the village, informed me that these artifacts were called *gotyks* ('gothics'). 'A *gotyk* is a type of memory gift (*pamiątka*) [...] One can neither chop it, or take it. It must stand, because they must stand' she said. Recently, when her daughter wanted to burn the German antiques, Weronika had stopped her, saying that 'It is not mine, it is not yours. So let them stand!' For an East Prussian, German furniture may have been a source of nostalgia that still held emotional value. Mychaljo and Weronika's homes felt eerie, as if they were being temporarily occupied. The *gotyks* seemed like a physical insurance policy for a 'recoverable past' (Grossman, 2013, pg. 142) should the German owners ever return to the East. *Gotyks* exposed how villagers like Mychaljo and Weronika today calculate the riskiness of their economic actions based on a much broader political time-frame into the distant past and future. History is not 'over', nor is their future 'secure'. In this aspect, the moral economy conflicted with their investment in their farms.

Figure 15 *Gotyk* photo of the farm with faded-out German text, 'The Tree of My Childhood' still hangs on a wall as a memory of what the farm looked like before 1945. Wallpaper is German-era as well. Author's photo (2009).

Gotyks are the objects and spaces that domesticated the German landscape into the settler household. They are a sort of border narrative that advocates porosity, co-ownership, and reciprocity, rather than the state narrative of the territories discussed in the above sections. Their meaning brings to light Stewart's (1993) claim that 'We do not need or desire souvenirs of events that are repeatable. Rather we need and desire souvenirs of events that are reportable' (pg. 135). Similar to the bodily wounds that interviewees pointed to in order to retell their histories, these objects were souvenirs that helped locate specific events in the village. Almost all of the interviewees possessed a *gotyk*, but the stories behind each item represented individualised narratives of human bonds and economic relations with the Germans (or lack thereof).

Zuzanna said that her *gotyk* was a gift. When the Germans were being deported from the territories, the *gmina* ordered each of the new settlers to transport 'their Germans' to Słupsk. Her husband Konrad refused to be involved. When Zuzanna was parting ways with Frau Agathe whom she had hired to raise her children, Agathe gave her a large black and silver cross as a 'memory' gift (*pamiątka*). During the interview, Zuzanna

escaped into the dining room where the cross stood, front and centre, on the credenza and brought it out for me to inspect. She explained that,

> Frau Agathe gave me a cross in two parts because "What am I going to give you for keepsake?"—because they were leaving for the Oder. I said that, "I do not want anything because I will remember you anyway". They were good people. And she took out the cross but in two pieces the cross was broken in two, right? I said 'Who broke your cross?' (and Agathe replied) "Russian! He took it from me, threw it and stomped on it!" He stomped on it. I took the cross. Love, I have it to this day. There was this one whose name was Giera, a welder who came over and he was from Warsaw. And I tell his wife about it and he listens and he tells me this: "Zuzanna, give me the cross. I will weld it for you. But I will shorten it" because it was longer. He says "It is so destroyed that I have to shorten it, to cut it evenly". Whenever I look (at it), I see Frau Agathe and those Russians who are stomping on it.

Zuzanna's story of how she was gifted a cross and then 'recovered' it is her way of telling the border narrative of the territories. While the state was promoting revenge and expulsion, Zuzanna and the German family practiced reconciliation and transnational reciprocity through multiple gifts. They acted like a fictive extended family who 'co-managed' the farm. Zuzanna took good care of the old German property while the German family stayed in close contact throughout the socialist period, sent packages, money, and even visited in the 1970s. The *gift* of German property was more meaningful than the *right* over German property bestowed upon them by the state, because it symbolically clarified the sanctity of the domestic sphere. Through it, settlers informally 'recovered' the territories from the Germans through the preservation of these artifacts. Rather than settlers representing the state's conquest of the state territories, the *gotyk* symbolised the family-based transmission of property into the ownership of the settler families who would treat the property well. *Gotyks* preserved a sense of diversity.

Villagers never quite believed the socialist state's claim that the border treaty was final. G*otyk* narratives represent 'refracted meanings' (Humphrey, 2005, pg. 55) from the dominant ideological discourse and narrative of the border (see Grossman 2014, pg. 25). While the nomenklatura's official looting of the furniture represented a combination of capital that pitted an 'us' against 'them' mentality on the village scale, the *gotyks* represented a combination of capital into other cultural meanings of power and

solidarity that did not include the authority or regulation of the state or economic activity. These objects are arti(facts) of ideological alterity (see Henare, Holbraad, et. al. 2007, pg. 12) that marked the domestic 'front' against the Sovietisation of everyday life (Buchli, 1999, pg. 24). They commemorated 'unofficial' contexts in a contested past (Grossman, 2013, pg. 133). The idea of a shared Germany-Poland borderland, a 'Central' European imagery, is socially and culturally reproduced through them. They are a peaceful marker of this flexible ownership of property and of the perception of a Polish-German border that is permeable and subject to the mixing and co-habitation of populations.

Figure 16 Frau Agathe's cross with inscriptions. Author's photo (2009).

Nevertheless, this gift of the *gotyk* had serf-like connotations because it established a hierarchy between the German families and the Polish settlers; as if the settlers were 'renters' of the German property and 'maintained' it through their labour to then be 'rewarded' with German packages sent from time to time. The *gotyk* signified the

settlers' protection of German objects from becoming incorporated into the construction of the socialist state German owners still had some hope that they would eventually return to their homes, and it made perfect sense to keep good relations with the settlers in order to take good care of the house while the Germans were away. The *gotyks,* thus, represented a link to another cross-border hierarchy, an economic link to West and East Germany. These gifts represented a domestic version of transferring ownership and land in a peaceful manner from one family to another—creating an 'open border' of resource flows between them over the Polish-German border.

Figure 17 Frau Agathe (blonde woman outside with beige dress) visits Zuzanna and checks up on her old farm in the 1970s. My mother Cecylia and grandfather Konrad speak to her while Zuzanna stands in the doorway. Zuzanna's private collection.

The more I stepped into villagers' homes, the more I noticed variations of Zuzanna's artifacts—even plastic replicas! It is as if the replicas functioned as dream-catchers, representing a form of protection. The replicas suggest that the reproduction of the idea of the *gotyk* was an important way in which villagers 'legitimised' their stay in the

territories in the midst of politicised restitution battles between Poland and Germany that are still being waged to this day. Stefania, a Ukrainian peasant who was one of the original settlers, told me that she keeps a special room just for the German family to stay on their old property. The *gotyks* preserve the spaces that give life to German nostalgia, *Heimat*—a term villagers often use to describe Germans' sentiments towards the lands. *Heimat* is short for *Heimatgefühle* or 'feelings of home' (Bammer, 2012, pg. 110). Krystyna, a German woman who stayed behind in Dobra, showed me one German book with German names of villages and towns which gave the details of how each German village was transformed into a Polish one and how many people died in the process. 'When I open this up, I am back in Germany', she told me. These objects carry a powerful, transformational value of experiencing different landscapes.

Figure 18 German barometer that hangs on Zuzanna's wall. Roman received it from his neighbour as a confirmation gift. Author's photo (2009).

Gotyks' cultural and social value is still felt today. Aunt Kinga, who was born in the territories in the late 1940s and who has never met the owner of the house she eventually bought, takes special care of a German apple tree in her backyard. In the

1990s, the German owners' daughters returned to the house and wanted to taste the apples from their childhood. When Kinga showed them the tree and gave them the apples, the women cried. The tree is collapsing, but Kinga and Alfred take special care of it and have propped up the branches 'just in case' the Germans return. *Gotyks* are passed down inter-generationally as family heirlooms—I even have one from my mother. Whether they are transferred or purchased as replicas, the *gotyks* represent a responsible, ethical, stewardship and a respect for the German property and landscape.

4.8. Conclusion: relation of men dominating men

Domestication was a multi-scalar process. On the national scale, Polish state authorities in Warsaw domesticated the Soviet state model to create their own path to socialism, by recreating the territories as a cradle of Polish consciousness. On the regional level, authorities used skilled and cheap German labour to secure the first proletarian workers in their nationalised state workplaces. These practices were all indicators of how the nomenklatura domesticated the state-making process by manipulating the gap between 'state' and 'individual' interests. On the domestic level, villagers created relations with the Germans through *gotyks* and neighbourly help which domesticated the new frontier regardless of the state's participation. This multi-scalar phenomenon of domestication differentiated the state apparatus, creating numerous versions of it, which created the confusion and 'space' for further domestication, especially on the commune level.

The state passed legislation that forced peasants and Germans to work to pay the labour price of the state-making process, while the nomenklatura established neighbourly help arrangements on a local level to transform workers into private servants. This exploitative era set the stage for the villagers' common perception of *kombinacja* as something that was used by the ruling class, state, or authority against the people, and that the people would have to then retaliate by using *kombinacja* against them to protect their own interests. Workers' and peasants' revolts against individual *gmina* officials had little to do with the actual socialist revolution—rather these were revolts against the domestication of state power by the nomenklatura. We have already seen in this chapter that both settlers who represented the state apparatus, and those who did not, manipulated space, resources, and labour to ensure that their family's subsistence needs were met.

Chapter 5

Peasants' *kombinacja*: 1948-1956

5.1. *Homo Sovieticus*

During the Stalinist era from 1948 to 1956, the Polish People's Republic (PPR) sought to co-opt all economic activity and formally link it to state supply chains. Village agriculture was collectivised into state farms (*sovkhozy*) and collective farms (*kołchozy*) [64]. The state would buy cheap produce at fixed prices from the peasants and sell them at cheap prices to the workers in industrialising urban centres across Poland and the Soviet bloc. In order for the system to work, citizens would have to acquire a new socialist discipline of labour that prioritised the state over private needs. Stakhanovite propaganda in the state-run media depicted labour heroines (*przodownica pracy*) who went 'beyond' the plan out of their zeal for the revolution. Still, shortages emerged. Rather than passing reforms to adjust the imported Stalinist structures to local conditions, it blamed shortages on politically motivated economic saboteurs (Lukowski & Zawadzki, 2006, pg. 287; Davies, 1982, pg. 579; Fidelis, 2010, pg. 58; Gibney, 1959, pg. 227; Kenney, 1997, pg. 206).

The PPR became paranoid of this enemy (*wróg*) who lurked in its workplaces and engaged in 'faulty production' (*brakorobstwo*). In 1950 a law was passed on socialist work discipline which sentenced 44,443 workers (21% of all convictions in Poland that year) to jail for absenteeism, drunkenness, leaving the factory during the work day, lowered effectiveness, and many other minor 'crimes'. Between 1949 and 1952, 46,700 people were sentenced to labour camps on the charges of 'office crimes', 'actions against the state monopoly' and 'plunder and appropriation of public property' (Fidelis, 2010, pg. 75; Kenney, 1997, pg. 201). Purges focused on those recruited from the liquidated private sector and who looked for employment 'with an eye for social benefits' such as 'cheaper apartment rent, electricity, fat coupons, etc'. (Kenney, 1997,

[64] The *sovkhoz* was called a 'State Agricultural Farm' (*Państwowe Gospodarstwo Rolne*) and the *kolkhoz* was called a 'Production Cooperative' (*spółdzielnie produkcyjne*) even though they were identical to the Soviet model.

pg. 193). All citizens had to follow the socialist labour discipline; anyone who engaged in unauthorised work threatened the entire structure of the economy.

Stalinist collectivisation came to Dobra in 1948. By then, the Red Army had converted the archipelao of Junker estates across the *gmina* into Soviet state farms that they occupied until 1949. *Gmina* officials set out to collectivise peasant land—the same land that it was *still* redistributing through the agrarian reform—into Soviet style collective farms (*kolkhoz*)[65]. Peasants were confused. The *gmina* had just praised them as pioneers of Polish nationalism and handed them *Akt Nadania* documents that formalised their settlement on the new land grants. Now, those same officials called them 'rich peasants' (*kułak*), imposed agricultural quotas and persuaded them to collectivise their land. Peasants from the east had already been Polonised and Catholicised in the territories. Now, the Stalinist campaigns would transform all peasants into the *Homo Sovieticus*—the Soviet Man.

This chapter is loosely structured around Zuzanna's interactions with peasants and officials during my interviews with them about the period spanning from de-kulakisation in 1948 to de-collectivisation in 1956. During that period, Zuzanna had gone from being a propertied peasant, into a *kułak* forced to supply agricultural quotas to the state, then into a collective farm worker (*kołchoznik*), and then finally back to a propertied peasant who was still forced to supply agricultural quotas. During the interviews, she came face-to-face with both her oppressors and her fellow collective farm workers. What I found interesting about their exchanges is how the term '*kombinacja*' emerged in the descriptions of various power struggles. It did not apply to a specific activity, rather it was a term used to describe conscious and multifarious reformulations of the command economy. During this time period, *gmina* archives introduced the character called the *kombinator*—the arch nemesis of the *Homo Sovieticus*—whose sole purpose was to wreck the command economy by diverting resources away from the state supply chains. Peculiarly, the *gmina* and the villagers were collectively silent about *kombinacja* in the postwar period and collectively vocal in their acknowledgement of it during Stalinism. This is not a coincidence. Stalinism reoriented settlers' Westward-looking imagery, as self-determining colonialists who

[65] Villagers liked the state farms and adopted the formal 'PGR' term, while they hated the collective farms and called it by the pejorative Soviet term *kołchoz*.

would reclaim lost Polish lands and remake them into their own image, toward the East, chained to Mother Russia, who would colonise *them*. It crystallised their class position in the command economy, namely their economic subservience to urban and international demand. Villagers who had survived similar conditions under Nazi occupation, or who fled collectivisation in the East, knew exactly what they were up against, and concurrently, how to survive through it. The term *kombinacja* thus 'marked' the encounter between a new version of the state and the people.

Officials and state representatives recalled using *kombinacja*. Stasiek—the *gmina* mayor in 1953—claimed to have used *kombinacja* while he held office to show Zuzanna that he had been on the villagers' side all along. Fidelis, who was a state forestry worker and an activist forced to travel around villages and attempt to persuade (*namawiać*) peasants to collectivise, is another important source. His recollections show how state representatives accepted others' *kombinacja* to evade collectivisation while 'agreeing' to it. Archival evidence supports the oral history. Villagers had a vested interest in keeping the farm broken enough to ensure that everyone got their share of unauthorised resources, but stabilised enough for the state to replenish its warehouses.

Kombinacja permeated into all stages, scales, and interactions of economic and political life on the collective farm. It served as an economic and political stabiliser. It helped limit the penetration of collectivisation but to accommodate plans on existing collective farms. It played a vital role in splitting—domesticating—collective farm resources along competing economic and political factions of villagers who were still struggling over legitimacy and power in the village. The methods of how to keep the collective farms broken and how to fix them were key to deciding 'who' controlled the reworking of Stalinist reforms. By investigating the sites where *kombinacja* occurred between the peasants and officials, I am able to show how Stalinism was domesticated to serve local economic and political conditions.

5.2. From pioneers to *kułaks*

By 1952, the territories boasted 2,000 'Production Cooperatives'—the highest number in the country—composed of collectivised 50,000 peasant farms that spanned 1,235,000 acres (Jędrychowski, 1952, pg. 8). Its landscape resembled Soviet Russia, not the 'privatised' Poland found in history books. This was the product of a multi-phase process that included the imposition of high taxes and agricultural quotas upon the

peasantry before persuading them to collectivise their farms. In the first phase, beginning in 1948, the PPR mobilised poor and middle peasants into a class war against the rich peasant (*kułak*)—which politician Hilary Minc defined as anyone who was wealthy enough to hire labour on his or her farm. The territories were composed of uprooted settlers whose class standing was largely based on their ethnicity. Small peasants (< 5 hectares) were predominantly Ukrainian and Belarusian who were settled in isolated colonies; medium peasants (> 5 hectares) were predominantly Polish and were settled in the village centres. By playing off of ethnic tensions, the PPR could mobilise the term '*kułak*' more effectively in the heterogeneous peasantry in the territories than in the rooted, more homogeneous, peasantry in central Poland.

Collectivisation was an awkward project for the *gmina* officials in Dobra. The same officials who had distributed land to the settlers, allocated the largest parcels for themselves, and employed German labour on them, were the ones leading the de-kulakisation (*rozkułaczanie*) campaign. During interviews, peasants often repeated the phrase 'And then They made us into *kułaks*!'

There was no correlation between being a *kułak* and being *called* a *kułak*. The archives provide no definitive guidelines. In the villagers' view, anyone could have been suspected of being one. Identification had less to do with land size and more to do with what peasants did with their farms. Officials observed peasants who practiced superior extraction techniques and resource management, were productive, wore nice attire, 'fared better', possessed an 'economic mentality', owned 3 cows or 2 horses, or had multiple wagons. Fidelis argued that the term was used by the *gmina* to set economic restrictions upon those who were a political threat to the officials. Weronika recalled her brother's dumbfounded response to being labeled a *kułak*: 'I am a "*kułak*", but I have poverty at home!' Others claimed that it had nothing to do with the individual and everything to do with their land. Arena, a Ukrainian peasant, argued that they (small peasants) were called *kułaks* because their colony had rich soil and the *gmina* wanted to establish a political justification for converting them into a collective farm. Officials used the term in a myriad of ways to create the farms and protect their positions of state power against political competitors.

The penalties were harsh. A Polish *kułak* had to pay an 'enrichment tax' (*wzbogacenie*, sometimes referred to as '*F.O.R*'[66]). Polish peasants who had voluntarily migrated to the territories, rather than coming through a state resettlement programme like the Ukrainians and Belarusians, had to pay this tax because they had enriched their families off of German land and property[67]. Ukrainians and Belarusians received 'land swaps' for their expropriated land back East. During our interviews, Zuzanna was surprised to discover that many of her neighbours—fellow *kułaks*—never paid the enrichment tax. Either the tax code lacked transparency or the enrichment tax was an inter-war tax obligation adapted by the *gmina* officials.

Figure 19 State's anti-*kułak* propaganda: 'The "good" *kułak*: old wisdom teaches, do not trust the rich man! He will give you one hand, and he will take something with the second one!' (http://www.blogpress.pl/node/6664).

[66] It is unclear what F.O.R. means, but the Polish peasants had to pay it.
[67] Archive: Nr. 3, 1948/1950, pg. 3.

When ex-*gmina* officials were hesitant to discuss the *kułak* period with me, Zuzanna embarked on a personal mission of '*kułak's* revenge' in outing their participation in the campaign. During an interview with Kacper—the late Hektor's son and *gmina* official—his partner Gosia defensively repeated that Kacper 'does not remember history' (*On nie pamięta historii*) and shut the door on us. Zuzanna, flustered, spread gossip all across Dobra that Kacper had 'forgotten' all that he had done to the villagers! When I went back to them in 2011, I received a warm welcome and got the interview. Zuzanna's gossiping certainly demonstrated its power (and hers) in gaining leverage over villagers.

Zuzanna's next victim was Stasiek, who was appointed *gmina* mayor in 1953. He first told me that he came 'after' the *kułak* era. He explained, 'Here, there weren't any *kułaks* because farms that large did not exist here' and emphasised that 'If someone had 15 hectares of land (then) he was called a *kułak*'. Zuzanna—who perhaps for the first time ever spoke to a *gmina* official about this—would not let him get away with it and interjected with:

> Stasiu, we worked 5 hectares of land—because the Germans left 33 hectares behind. The S. family, the J. family, and us took the land, split it equally, so we each had 11 hectares. I went to the *gmina*, to Hektor, and told him and wrote a request to use only 5 hectares to which he responded, 'No' because we were written under 11 hectares and that is what we had to pay. We had to pay taxes for 11 hectares and they made us into *kułaks*! And we had to pay the *F.O.R.*

Even when peasants wanted to self-dekulakise, the *gmina* needed their taxes and kept them locked into a constructed class status. This helped establish distrust for local officials but a generally positive outlook on the socialist revolution in general. Stasiek quickly confirmed, 'Yes, yes, yes'. The state wanted to de-kulakise peasants on its own terms; self-dekulakisation expressed a rejection of the state and paved the possibility for alternative economic activity that existed outside of it.

When I enquired about the actual definition of the *kułak*, Stasiek responded, 'It was like this: If one had more land, then They counted him as a rich man (*bogacz*). And if one was a rich man, one was a *kułak*. And They illustrated him with a large sack across his back which he carries and hides the grain'. Zuzanna then interjected—'That was unfair'. He added defensively, 'But listen, the concept of the *kułak* was not produced as

a Polish initiative. This all came from the East, from the Soviet Union. All the politics came from there!' The Polish version was much more lenient than in the Soviet Union where *kułak* with 5 hectares were deported and 'If he was labeled as a *kułak*, They never asked twice'. He framed this diluted brand of dekulakisation as the *gmina*'s attempt to protect villagers from 'real' Soviet purges.

The same officials who executed the de-kulakisation campaign were some of the largest land owners in the *gmina.* During one interview, Zuzanna bought another ex-*gmina* official—Kaźimierz—to 'justice' when he mentioned that he had owned 40 hectares of land in Dobra. 'Hoh!' Zuzanna responded in shock, 'so *kułak*!' Danusia, his daughter added, 'A *kułak* you were! 40 hectares and They called you a *kułak*!' He meekly responded, 'Yes'. I asked how it was possible to be both a *kułak* and a *gmina* official. Interested, Danusia interjected, 'But he was a *kułak* very shortly! Because the *kułak* era was brief. Didn't they focus on liquidating the wealthier farms?' To which Kaźimierz defensively responded, 'Here, no one liquidated anything!' to which Danusia responded, 'Why did they call you a *kułak*?' Defeated, he said, 'Because I—(sigh)—many are'. We all laughed because it revealed how '*kułak*' was such an absurd form of classification. *Gmina* officials employed it to strengthen their monopoly on local power, not to meet Soviet guidelines.

5.3. Quotas

The agricultural quotas (*kontyngenty*) introduced in the Six Year Plan from 1949 to 1956 formally connected domestic production on peasant farms to the command economy. From 1951 to 1952, legislation imposed mandatory, unsubsidised quotas of milk, livestock, potatoes, and grains, upon all peasant farms over one hectare[68]. Quotas were important markers of the state's exploitation of the peasantry. Radosław, a Belarusian peasant from Podwoda village explained that, 'Here, the formation of our Polish history is composed of agriculture. Oppression, mandatory quotas, every potato 'allocate to the state!', pig 'allocate to the state!' And how heavy the fine was!' Like the *szarwark,* the authorities imposed quotas upon anyone they wanted. German workers who had a <0.5 hectare allotment garden had to supply quotas and *kułak* enrichment

[68] Livestock (Dz.U. z 1952, Nr. 8, Poz. 46.); milk (Dz.U. z 1952, Nr. 22, Poz. 142.); grain (Dz.U. z 1952, Nr. 32, Poz. 214.); potatoes (Dz.U. z 1952, Nr. 37, Poz. 255.).

taxes like Zuzanna. Some officials supplied the quota while serving office; and others altered their land grants to just below 1 hectare to be exempt from it altogether.

The *gmina* determined quota amounts for each farm based upon the amount of hectares received through the agrarian reform—and which peasants were forbidden to sell or rent. Each farm had to produce 150 kilograms of grain and 100 kilograms of livestock per hectare. *Kułaks* in particular were excluded from state agricultural credits for quota production and were forced to secure their own tools, fertilisers, and seeds. Thus, laws associated with the *kułak* propaganda actually undermined the production potential of the medium peasant who composed most of the peasant producers. Hiring labour was illegal, thus families were locked into their roles as labourers on their farms. Instead of providing economic relief, the *gmina* called for more activism to mobilise the peasantry into 'neighbourly help' (*pomoc sąsiedzka*, see Chapter 4) arrangements among themselves to decrease shortages[69].

Quota roundups took place twice a week. Peasants were forbidden to feed livestock 24 hours before turning them over to the state (in order to use of potential surplus grains and fodder), but peasants commonly did and paid off inspectors to keep quiet in return for food from their farms. Those with wagons could transport quotas to the state purchasing centre called the *Gmina* Cooperative of Peasant's Self-Help (GSSC) in Dobra, where they sold their quotas at fixed prices. There was a grading system—higher quality produce received higher rates from the state (Śmigielska, 1992, pg. 111). Prices were discouraging. Fidelis and Stanisław, both forestry workers at the time, recalled that a potato quota required months of labour to fulfill but was not worth more than a quarter-litre of vodka at the state store. If the peasant brought in a quota surplus, the state bought his quota on *wolne rękowe* ('free hand'[70]) prices. This was called a *premia*, but it was rarely achieved (or bought into). Peasants then sold their quotas and received a GSSC receipt which they then took to the *gmina* headquarters to clear their personal accounts. The GSSC then consolidated the quotas in the *gmina* and subcontracted some of the raw materials to local state processing sites to produce bread, butter, meat, which

[69] All source material for this section comes from archive Nr. 13. (1953/1954).
[70] The state knew that peasants were selling high quality goods on the 'free market' (see footnote 74) so it attempted to co-opt that activity by offering market prices for peasants' surplus goods.

were then sold to the workers in the *gmina* (Korbonski, 1965, pg. 144). The quotas subsequently went further down the supply chain to the Powiat Association of *Gmina* Cooperatives (PZGS), the Voivodeship Associations of *Gmina* Cooperatives (WZGS), and then to the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (RWPG[71]).

According to a *gmina* report from 1953, quotas represented the 'fraternal cooperation of workers and peasants' because it bridged agricultural production and industrial growth. To persuade the peasantry to accept quotas, the *gmina* claimed it had convinced them that historical processes beyond their control had already disconnected them from their 'old methods'. Agrarian reform expanded space in crowded prewar villages and eliminated petty property disputes; modernisation introduced electricity, industrial production, schools and education, hospitals, culture centres, roads, railways, employment, and waged labour for peasants. Modernisation was the *gmina*'s way of 'protecting them from capitalist exploitation by increasing production, elevating farming technologically, and elevating its welfare'. By 'repressing speculation, lowering free marketeers, and disabling the enrichment of *kułaks*' the *gmina* claimed that it had increased quota yields. In 1953, the peasants contracted 1,961,933 *złoty* more to the state than in 1952. They sold 143,734 *złoty* more quotas than in 1952. To celebrate, the *gmina* promised to *increase* the peasant's agricultural quota by 10% per hectare in the following year, thus ensuring that all peasant energy would be aimed towards production for the state.

Gmina archives from 1953 to 1954 were filled with peasants begging *gmina* authorities for quota reductions due to large family sizes, failed harvests, and deaths. Applications from peasants to abandon their land or pay lower property taxes were rejected. The *gmina* interrogated, arrested, and imprisoned peasants whom they suspected of evasion. Interrogation was so common that villagers in Dobra began to call it 'onto the little carpet' (*na dywanek*) where *gmina* officials arrested suspected evaders [72]. By late 1954, the list of peasants refusing or unable to complete quotas was so high that the *gmina* had to take claims more seriously. The structural problems that generated shortages were never solved. In autumn of 1952, the secret police arrested tens of thousands of peasants

[71] COMECON in English.
[72] After the peasants' competition against the nomenklatura over German valuables, carpets were rare on their farms.

across Poland who had failed to deliver their quotas. Although forced inspections of peasant farms were illegal and subject to penalties from the Party, it was not uncommon for *kułaks* who had met their quotas to be imprisoned for several weeks without trial while their quotas were confiscated by the state. In Gryfice village near Szczecin in 1951, *powiat* (county) officials conducted illegal searches with the help of police and other authorities (Applebaum, 2012, pg. 276; Korbonski, 1965, pg. 163, footnote 9; Paczkowski, 1999, pg. 382). The *gmina* officials in Dobra inspected peasant farms for quota evasion—a feature of the quota system that dealt a blow to the *gmina*'s political legitimacy.

Stasiek recalled one incident in which a neighbour, who was part of the *gmina* authorities, made false claims against his neighbour who had been evading his quotas. The peasant was imprisoned while Stasiek was given the order to thresh the peasants' wheat. When they weighed the harvest, it was below the quota amount. The peasants' wife pleaded with Stasiek not to take away the wheat because the family would have nothing to live off of. Instead, Stasiek wrote up a declaration to the authorities calling for the peasant to be released and for the family to only sell a portion of their quota to the state. But before he let the peasant go, a *powiat*-level official called Stasiek and chastised him for not obeying the law—possibly because of the forced extraction or because he attempted to get the peasant out of jail. When the peasant returned, he thanked Stasiek for helping save his family. There was no 'hero' in this story. Stasiek had extracted resources from a peasants' farm and unearthed the neighbour's dishonesty, but was then himself chastised when, having worked out what the peasant's new quota would be, he worried that the quotas and tactics undermined the legitimacy of the *gmina*:

> Behind Communism, the quotas were a bane for peasants. It was a bloody pillory that was mandatory. People were bloody agonizing about it and if it were not for the quotas, then people would have a different view of the entire government. Those quotas butchered those peasants. It was the worst torture!

Legitimacy was threatened by the action of the Volunteer Reserve Militia (ORMO) in Dobra who reported any deviant activity to the *gmina*. Maria, a Ukrainian small peasant farmer, recalled that a female friend with whom she had returned from mass one Sunday afternoon went upstairs to inspect Maria's attic. The ORMO volunteer discovered four

tons of grain and ordered Maria to sell the quota to the GSSC. Such actors operated in a chameleon-like way blurring civilian and state identities and severely damaged the level of trust between villagers and civil society. The trend went the other way around too. Weronika, a Polish-German peasant turned factory worker recalled being under *gmina* surveillance: 'It was like this: one saved some for himself, for the pigs, for the horse. And [one day] when I was out farming—! He came after me upstairs! And he looked around to see how much of the grain there was! I said, "So you see, Sir, I have to feed the horses, the pigs, sowing—what am I going to purchase with that later!?" And he calmed down somehow'. In other words, he started off as an 'authority' figure but then sympathised as a 'villager'. It was this flip-flop between 'villager' and 'authority' that created a dangerous political atmosphere in the village.

The *gmina* struggled to monitor worker and peasant practices around the state supply and distribution chain of agricultural resources. Its overriding point was that all shortages were caused by 'resistant elements (*elementy oporny*) that are not meeting the quotas' rather than by poverty. It was a 'lack of mass-political work' that caused peasants to meet only 60.5% of the livestock quota and 21.4% of the milk quota in 1953. Without education in socialist discipline, peasants were 'working how they want and what makes them comfortable' and producing disproportionate quota amounts. Peasants did not 'trust in the Committee and not enough 'agitators' were around to educate them about collective work. Meanwhile, workers lacked oversight in the state workplaces that processed the quotas: 'The milk purchase points are not controlled and workers are working in such a way, that they fancy'. Control, according to the *gmina*, was key to lessening shortages as 'the toleration towards speculators and *kułaks*, will increase the audacity of enemy elements (*wrogich elementów*)'. The *gmina* claimed that the lack of Party membership disconnected the masses from the political objectives of the state.

Stasiek suggested that the *gmina* gave peasants partial leeway into the quota system: 'It seems to me that every individual should rule his own house—the legal structures had to be avoided but delicately'. Peasants recalled using a variety of strategies to cut quota production costs. To meet their livestock quotas, they raised more beef than pork because cows grew faster and did not consume farm fodder. Although it was impossible to evade the quota totally, the *gmina* rented out state livestock to poor peasants who

then raised it off of their farm resources and sold it back to the state as their farm quota. Others took risks by purchasing lower quality agricultural goods on what in Poland was referred to as the 'free market' (*wolny rynek*) and transported these as their quotas to the GSSC while selling their higher quality agricultural produce for higher free market prices[73]. This was nothing unique. All across Poland, peasants 'juggled their deliveries, cheated on land records, or used judiciously placed bribes to keep local officials from becoming too curious' (Gibney, 1959, pg. 239).

Hiding shortages was systemic. Officials found ways to 'dislocate' from the state supply chain that fed agricultural resources to the urban industrial areas. For example, a Director of a state brewery in the *gmina* was caught selling beer quotas on the free market (*wolny rynek*) instead of the GSSC. Officials were only unmasked when it was politically convenient. Stasiek even claimed that *powiat* officials forced the *gmina* to falsify the quota accounts:

> Sometimes we would sit late at night, accounting for the mandatory quotas, we interrogated peasants and what not. I remember one time, it was still in Dolina, not in Dobra, maybe it was 11 at night, heck. We are all sitting, doing the accounting, then the Secretary of the powiat level Committee comes—the guy I told you only finished 3rd grade, he was blind in one eye, this fat bull—He didn't say "good-evening" or "*cholera*[74]" only—"How many plans have you completed of the mandatory quotas?" and I say, "Sir, we are doing the accounting and we have about 80%". There was a large knife with the papers and ink. How he hit his fist down on the desk! How the ink jumped from the casing and spilled all over the desk! I remember it like it was today! And he said "What—80%? You can only afford 100%!" And yes! He slammed the doors. He left without good-bye or anything! He said, "You have to report that you have 100%!" This is what discussions were like!

The officials who fiddled quotas and *gmina* accounts did not suffer nearly the same punishments as peasants who were caught evading quotas. Zygmunt, a Polish *kułak* in Podwoda village, recalled that peasants faced 'neighbourly help' penalties for

[73] The 'free market' was not synonymous with the 'black market' (*czarny rynek*). The former encompassed transient, unregulated economic activity that existed in fields, buses, farms, etc. and where the exchange did not have to be immediate. The 'black market' (*czarny rynek*) occupied a physical market place in the city where the 'exchange' occurred on the spot and the space was sometimes patrolled by the state.
[74] Akin to 'oh heck' in English.

incomplete quotas[75]. 'If he did not give wheat or milk—there were a myriad of responsibilities. Those were the times that when one had a horse and wagon, one had to transport wood out of the forest because there was no storage. It was a responsibility to (transport) this and that amount, or the fine counted as this and that'. An archive from 1953 indicated that due to the forestry's high quotas, the *gmina* would use their special relationship to send peasant labour, horses, and wagons to 'help' in the transport of wood out of the forest[76]. This peasant labour was compulsory and the *gmina* imposed special requirements on each peasant to meet his wood transport quota for the forestry. Peasant refusal resulted in fines. At several *gmina* meetings in 1953, peasants complained that the transport damaged their horses and wagons and they demanded compensation. One peasant complained that the barley crop the Forestry Director had promised from the forestry-*gmina* field, in return for their help with the lumber export, had been delayed. The director responded that the peasants had told him they did not want the expensive barley. Officials in the archives complained that due to a resistant peasantry, the *gmina* and state forestry had to get 'help' from the adjacent state farm to transport the wood on the promise that in return the *gmina* would send peasants to help harvest the state farm's potato quota[77]!

The peasant farm became a state workplace, subject to surveillance, order, and cleanliness. Quotas constituted a spatial, economic, ecological, and cultural overhaul of the peasant farm into a state unit of production. This formal supply chain from the farm to the state was rigid and hierarchical. The state imposed quotas that peasants could not alter, without regard to differences in production or ecology, and with fixed prices and required sowing on available land. Further, it gave *gmina*s the power to lower quotas. Production for the state was the primary function of the peasant farm; the family was secondary. When I explore *kombinacja*'s role in this process of keeping agricultural resources from being lost to the state, its function of differentiating a local economy against that of the state becomes much clearer.

[75] Neighbourly help was not eliminated with Stalinism, but were incorporated as a mechanism for punishing those who did not abide by Stalinist development. They were an effective mechanism for exercising local power.
[76] Law: Dz.U. z 1949, Nr. 63, Poz. 494; Archive: Nr. 17, 1953, pg. 3.
[77] Archive: Nr. 14, 1953, pg. 6 and Nr. 14, 1954, pg. 91.

Figure 20 Party representative leads peasants' trek to sell quotas in Chojno, 1948-51. (http://www.chojno.pl/Lata_wladzy_ludowej_w_Chojnie_i_regionie.htm).

5.4. Ostap Bender

The *gmina* became increasingly paranoid about shortages, citing that while most peasants performed their 'social and patriotic' duty, there were those who went 'into the hands of the speculators, helped them with elevating prices on agricultural goods, and promoted the disorganisation of providing for cities'. This resurgent localism, aiming to keep agricultural goods circulating within and between the villages rather than transferred to the city, was identified by the *gmina* as a capitalist attempt to subvert the state economy. 'We see here, that peasants are cheating the Nation', the archives boldly claimed. The point here is that shortages were not identified as an economic problem—a possible structural problem with the supply chain—but as the peasantry's usage of local alliances to disconnect from their role as producers for the state. In 1953, the *gmina* archive introduced a new enemy—the *kombinator*:

> The People's Republic, is providing steps in the direction of shortening speculation, reducing black marketeers and disabling the enrichment of *kułaks* in the village by introducing mandatory quotas of grain, livestock, milk, potatoes, that have the objective of [...] holding-up speculation and

> forcing of *kułaks*, *kombinators* and those peasants, who are in this era, for the national economy, not meeting their citizen duties, and sometimes even their own farms, in the meeting of their duties within the State—We will not allow for this, for some dishonest citizens and speculators to disregard their duties to the State and to the legitimate and patriotic mass of peasants, in order to create the difficulty of providing for cities.

The differences between *kułaks*, *kombinators*, and deviant peasants are fluid and complicated. Peasants who were not *kułaks* could be deviant through petty accumulation, even though they did not pay the enrichment taxes like the more deviant *kułaks* who were perceived as posing a direct political threat to the *gmina*. *Kombinators* could be anyone—represented as an anarchist—who aided the peasantry in diverting agricultural goods away from the city.

It is intriguing that the term *kombinator* in the archives and in villagers' narratives of *kombinacja* converge on this period. I am tempted to connect this emergence with the Sovietisation of the territories, especially the education system, which imported new words into the Polish lexicon. When I excitingly related my discovery of Ostap Bender—the '*kombinator*'—in Evgenii Petrov's *The Twelve Chairs* to my mother, she nonchalantly replied, 'Yeah, I know Petrov'. She could have been exposed to *kombinator*s and Russian *kombinatsiia* through the Russian school system. This could explain the use of the term in the archives.

But villagers had a different 'origin' story of *kombinacja*—one that emphasised continuity with the period of Nazi occupation. Kacper—who was a *gmina* official with his father Hektor in Dobra throughout the 1940s and 1950s—claimed that according to his knowledge, *kombinacja* originated under the Nazi occupation. Stealing from warehouses, smuggling resources on the side, and withholding mandatory quotas from the General gouvernement was the only way to survive. He sold calcium carbide from the Nazi warehouses on the black market but his *kombinacja* required the buy-in of the German brigadiers. His *kombinacja* aimed 'to hurt the Occupant, the German'. Then, he added that Poles 'learned during the German occupation, and then later, the same thing afterwards!' During my interview with Krystyna, Zuzanna recalled how her father evaded the Nazis by selling food on the free market, as she later did in the 1950s. Her father had buyers who came at night to pick up the produce. However, there was a neighbour called Sajda who watched all of the activity and supposedly told on her

father. When the Nazis came to inspect the farm, her father went to the credenza to get the receipts and showed them to the officers. The receipts were all correct but then the officers enquired about his selling on the side.

> They ask father, "You sold that last night?" and father says "I sold it". "And did you sell a pig?" "I sold it. The winter is coming", he says, "I have to buy my children warm shoes, warm covers, warm clothes, because we all work—I have to put on warm clothes and eat well because we all work". And he came up to father and said "Good Boer!" Because he had (resources) for the state, for himself, and for his entire family. And father said, "Well, someone here told on us pretty well".

Kombinacja stories like this told of peasants' and workers' encounters with the state—and the quota system resurrected during this period in Dobra brought back the historical 'connection' with the survival strategies practiced under the Nazis. They exemplify villagers' narrative of how *kombinacja* crosses-over during regime change, can be transferred geographically, and can 'jump in' when conditions of the previous regime are unresolved by the new one. Thus, their explanation of the origin of *kombinacja* may not be accurate per se, given its existence in records prior to the Second World War, but it demonstrates their understanding of the context in which *kombinacja* can be initiated again or continued under new conditions. At some threshold, *kombinacja* is deemed necessary again for survival. Through this 'beginning' or 'rebirth' of *kombinacja,* we learn a lot about how it changes across time, that it gets appropriated by other groups (not only Poles), and that its manifestation is a critique of state power because it is a demonstration of resistance against the continuous subjugation and oppression of the peasantry, workers, and the poor.

Thus, *kombinacja* under the Germans continued under the Soviets as a form of liberation from foreign occupation, but it changed slightly. Under Stalinism, villagers used *kombinacja* to subvert the formalisation of Stalinist policies in the village as peasants fought for control against the officials over the trajectory of the frontier. Thus, *kombinacja* became incorporated into the fabric of the local state and how the representatives of the state negotiated power relations between them, and how they worked together to evade the higher echelons of the state and preserve the local area from being stripped of all of its agricultural and industrial production for higher priority populations in the cities and abroad.

I am still unclear about why *kombinacja* is blanked out in villager narratives from the period of 1944 to 1949, even though they evidently used various strategies that would merit the term. Something important happened in this period that collectivised these narratives and experiences against the state. Perhaps official rhetoric, as indicated in the archive, had something to do with 'narrating' this deviant activity during this period. Hence, Kashubians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians expressed a similar 'origin' narrative of *kombinacja* dating back to the Nazi era despite different histories of the war and relations with the state. It seems that the *kombinacja* narrative was entangled in the processes of Polonisation and Sovietisation. *Kombinacja* can be transferred and linked up with other ethnicities and passed down; it is a learned element that peoplecan use in order to construct their solidarities, a flexible strategy that can be appropriated by an individual or group for a multiplicity of motives against a perceived 'other'.

The formation of class and the shared experience of poverty by the collective may offer some insight. Zuzanna explains how *kombinacja* became an expression of class alliances and competition over the theft of resources. For example, if peasants did not divert as much quota as possible for their private gain, then those quotas would be diverted by workers farther down the production chain. She gives an example of the *kombinacja* of quota meat in the state slaughterhouses:

> **Z:** Before, there was a lot of poverty, and people had to use *kombinacja.* Everywhere, everywhere. Even there was this slaughterhouse in Dobra so those workers, in the slaughterhouse here, stole the meat and sold it on the side. And the money went in their pockets [...] One stole and had (contact with) these receivers (*odbiorcy*), and so he *kombinował* at work by selling [meat] for less. That is *kombinacja*.
>
> **Self:** Where did they sell all of these things—the *kombinators*?
>
> **Z:** They had these receivers on the left (*lewych odbiorców*). They made plans, or he took the [meat] and left it somewhere, and then someone (picked it up) and it was this kind of *kombinacja*.
>
> **Self:** So it was an entire operation?
>
> **Z:** Oh, he who wanted to *kombinować* could. He stole from the state and sold it cheaper over there and put the money into his pocket. And it was the state's because the state paid for the piglets, the livestock, no? So it was the state's and it needed to account from it.

Unlike the stories of the *gmina* officials or ORMO volunteers moving along the 'official versus villager' spectrum according to their whims, the rhetoric of *kombinacja* shows

that people began to manipulate that same spectrum of citizen/saboteur from the bottom-up. There is a sense of grasping hold of this strategy to get around the system; working out how the state supply chain worked and its 'blind spots' in order to siphon off resources. This maneuvering along the spectrum of 'citizen' and 'enemy' was an internalised part of the collective experience and the relationship with the state[78].

An exhaustive search through the PPR's legislative journal from 1944 to 1989 showed no sign of a *kombinator* or of *kombinacja.* Some of the laws, however, were responses to this issue. Laws from 1953 fined and imprisoned those who engaged in petty theft of collective property; speculated, purchased, hid, or accumulated commodities that had been illegally purchased from state production sites, or engaged in any economic activity not incorporated in state plans; engaged in 'self-proprietorship, or extract(ed) collective goods in any way'. Others ensured the 'securement of a socialist discipline of work', enforced strict fines for those who skipped work or engaged in non-work related activities; required all workers to report found resources, property, or materials to the state and transfer all workplace innovations to state ownership rather than using them for private gain[79]. The state was faced with an enemy who publicly resisted the proletarianisation process or fully rejected the state quotas; rather, the *kombinator* embraced state socialism because they could profit from and manipulate its system.

5.5. Persuasion[80]

The collectivisation drive in the territories was stronger than in any other part of the country. In 1953, a Powiat Committee[81] sent Party cadres (*aktywy*) from Słupsk to its surrounding villages to persuade (*namawiać*) *gmina*s to set up collective farms. One official who came to Dobra to spread the word used a lot of the official propaganda to persuade the *gmina* to accept the 'vision' for collective life.

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[78] Lenin wrote that the medium peasantry had a 'double nature' as both allies of the state when they produced quotas and enemies when they clung onto their land. *Kombinators* reflected this idea (Korbonski, 1965, pg. 185).
[79] Dz.U. z 1953, Nr. 17, Poz. 69; Dz.U. z 1953, Nr. 16, Poz. 64.; Dz.U. z 1950, Nr. 20, Poz. 168; Dz.U. z 1966, Nr. 22, Poz. 141; Dz.U. z 1950, Nr. 47, Poz. 428. Arts.1, 2, 23. pg. 641.
[80] For a fascinating read on 'persuasion work' (*muncă de lămurire*) during Romanian collectivisation, see Kligman & Verdery, 2011, pgs. 283-323.
[81] Komitet Powiatowy.

> W.M. said that the Production Cooperative is a farm with a higher level of production that gives benefits for the members of the collective and the State. In this way, the People's Poland gives the possibility of building a new life, a life that allows for the working peasant a better assemblage of material and cultural life. Villages that are established on the foundations of the Production Cooperative will eliminate the exploitation of small and medium peasants from the *kułaks* elements and will strengthen the worker-peasant alliance[82], a foundation of the People's Authority in Poland. And we here in Dobra have the possibility of setting up a Production Cooperative, so let us not waver, and get to work, and the People's Poland will help us[83].

Language was key to identifying political orientation. Fearful of a backlash, the state carefully rebranded the Soviet term '*kolkhoz*' as a 'production cooperative' (*spółdzielnia produkcyjna*). Most peasants—especially those from the East —were not fooled by the terminology. They called the production cooperative a '*kołchoz*' to reference its Soviet origins. The choice of words was an important way of expressing one's political leanings. Only the ex-*gmina* officials used the formal term to reference its Polish origin. In other words, villagers' experiences with Soviet collectivisation prior to their resettlement to the territories informed them of what was 'to come' and primed them politically for the 'import' of collective farms on Polish soil. Thus, calling production cooperatives '*kołchozy*' was a way to express that they knew the 'true nature' of the state's goals.

Persuading peasants to form 'production co-operatives' was a difficult task for the *gmina*. According to records, during a meeting about collectivisation in 1953, an official stated that only 35% of people were on the *gmina*'s side while the remaining '65% were enemy elements (*wrogi element*) that were only looking to intervene'. The *gmina* would have to engage in a campaign of persuasion:

> In this case we have to push with all our energy towards this important task and establish the Production Cooperative. In this area there is no lack of enemies, and in this case we need to equip ourselves and not allow for any plots from enemy elements (*elementów wrogowych*) like for example, there are those, who before the organisation of the collective had around 12 hectares and who are currently transferring this to worker

[82] The worker-peasant alliance did not mean the establishment of a worker-peasant class. It meant that the peasants would accept their role as producers for the urban workers. The 'alliance' subjugated the countryside to the industrialising process.
[83] Archive: Nr. 13, 1953, pg. 5.

> allotment gardens (*działki robotnicze*), so as to not enter the Production Cooperative.

Fearing collectivisation, some peasants abandoned land and became workers in the nearby state farm, where they received < 0.5-hectare allotment gardens on which they could grow produce and earn wages as landless agricultural workers. The *gmina* did not like this situation because it was left with surplus land but not enough labour to work it. The point of collectivisation was to ensure *kułaks* worked on the collective farms. But instead we have an example of how peasants could use mobility as a means to resist the command economy when it suited whilst supporting it on other occasions: the state was simultaneously resisted and accommodated.

Collectivisation was 'voluntary', so persuasion through Party-recruited activists became the primary means through which collectivisation could spread across the countryside. One activist, Fidelis, explained his awkward position: 'For the activist, it was the most difficult thing to set up those collective farms. Sometimes you needed to say what you needed to say in order to set it up. Anything to overthrow dissent'. Although Fidelis did not specifically persuade people in Dobra, his story shows how he was both an activist and shared the 'hidden transcript' (Scott, 1990) with the peasants whom he tried to persuade to collectivise. Meeting villagers who he did not know, the activists rehearsed the state propaganda even though they themselves did not believe the message. To Fidelis:

> We talked what they order us to talk about. "That this is good. That this is a collective! That it will be your ownership only! And that you will farm alone! That you will live like this! That they will not be squeezing you with taxes! That you will pay to the collective! That they will not take bread! You do not have to give away this and that!" We said it all! But the Director and I, we talked about it amongst ourselves about the subject: "What? It (collectivisation) will be even worse! The peasants are doing fine just as they are".

In instances where the peasant farmer was known, Fidelis and his partner were able to switch between propaganda and the hidden transcript in a performance that drew upon humour and sarcasm.

> I look at a peasant who lives there, is milking a cow on a Sunday after dinner. He was an elderly man, and we explain to him how it will be

> good, how this and that—and he knew us and we knew him! And he says later in the conversation, "Yes, gentlemen, you are right!" He says, "In the collective, the bread comes in three forms!" And we ask, "What type?" And he responds, "The bread is wheat, rye, and crappy!" And then he says, "But the crappy one is always plentiful! There is no wheat [bread] and the rye from time to time!" But we laughed and we are not going to tell [the authorities] that this peasant said this because they would have locked him up.

Using the formal transcript mixed with humour and sarcasm, the peasant was able to tell his friend the activist to go find someone else to talk to while still speaking the 'truth' about the poor quality of production on collective farms that would not make 'volunteering' a good option. Fidelis added that sometimes, however, the discussions ended in a 'consensus' that the peasants would collectivise. Both sides knew, however, that this was only a performance of accepting the official transcript while at the same time disconnecting the village from the collectivisation process.

> There was a *kołchoz* here in Podwoda, in Dobra had a second one, and Byt, a third, but the rest held on (to land). Those villages used *kombinacja*. Simply, they promised that, "We will collectivise at 'such and such' a time". Those establishing the *kołchozy* could then overlook it (*kombinacja*).

In his explanation, *kombinacja* was an important tool for playing multiple roles that both appeased the state and local interests. By not reporting deviant activity, the activists gave the peasantry the space to scramble and limit the collectivisation process. While theoretically the collectivisation process nationally commenced before agricultural quotas were introduced in 1950 and 1951 in response to the shortages caused by lower yields on already collectivised farms, in *gmina* Dobra, peasants did not collectivise until 1953, after they had been subjected to individual quotas. This 'economic blackmail' threatened small and medium peasants with higher tax rates, higher delivery quotas, exclusion from fertilisers, seeds, building materials, and subjection to *szarwark*, that persuaded them to voluntarily collectivise (Korbonski, 1965, pgs. 174-5).

5.6. The *kołchoz*

Peasants who chose to collectivise agreed to give up the fields they had acquired from the agrarian reform and returned them to the *gmina*, retaining only garden plots. The

gmina then took on the task of creating the Agricultural Production Cooperative (RSP), or *kołchoz*. However, the *gmina* Dobra delayed the process of collectivisation. A 1953 report stated that peasant members in Dobra's *kołchoz* sowed only 33% of the land collectively, while the other 67% was sown individually in order to meet the corvée obligations prior to collectivising their fields. As *kołchoźniki*, they still were bound by their individual corvée debts from their previous farms, and had to repay that work in the *kołchoz*. Once the corvée obligations were met, the *miedza*—a several metre wide grassy property division between peasant properties—was ploughed over and they received a re-drawn 2-hectare parcel on which they were responsible for working towards the quota. So, the *gmina* ensured that the peasants paid off their debts before they could become *kołchozniki*.

For Zuzanna and Konrad, collectivisation provided a much-needed relief from the enrichment taxes, individual quota deliveries, interrogations, surveillance, and corvée obligations that had reached an oppressive level in the early 1950s. The couple lived in the northern part of the village, an area populated with Poles. Before collectivisation, these peasants worked daily on their parcels located at the end of the street that opened up to vast expanses of fields. When the *kołchoz* opened, Konrad walked down the same street and onto the same fields with his neighbours; but instead of working their private plots, the *kołchoźniki* met with the Director who distributed work assignments, went to the Warehouseman to pick up their tools, were supervised by a Brigadier who watched them work, and then were paid by the Accountant after the mandatory farm quotas were sold for fixed prices to the GSSC. Zuzanna used pregnancy and childrearing as an excuse to evade work on the farm and instead spent the days working at home and carrying out reciprocal arrangements with other women. This division of gender roles became critical to how peasants diversified their economic activity outside of the command economy, while simultaneously accommodating the authorities. The only time Zuzanna 'helped out' (*pomagała*) was during major sowing and harvesting periods. While *kołchoźniki* on paper, the couple still straddled both wages and subsistence agriculture.

The *kołchoz* was structured to work like this: once peasants agreed to collectivise, they pooled monetary or in-kind shares into a collective farm fund. They used that fund to buy or rent machines, seeds, and fertilisers from the *gmina* to initiate production. The

kołchoźniki then worked collectively to produce the quotas of grains, flax, potatoes, linen, beets, livestock, and dairy that they then sold to the GSSC for low, fixed prices. Their main function as producers for the state did not change; it is just that they had more access to state credits and capital to focus on that production. The peasants then pooled a portion of those wages to buy or rent more capital and continue into the next production cycle. Quotas were adjusted annually by the central government[84]. Thus, in order for the *kołchoz* to work effectively, there had to be a steady stream of information and resources exchanged between central and local authorities.

In creating other *kołchozy* around the *gmina*, officials took a creative approach. They combined settlements and boundaries, and expropriated abandoned or underused peasant agricultural buildings as they saw fit without peasant consent. In 1953, a *gmina* official nonchalantly recommended that the *gmina* should transform a whole colony of sick and elderly peasants into a fourth collective farm or incorporate it into the adjacent state farm. The *gmina* pooled national land from the Land Fund (*Fundusz Ziemi*) to be worked by the peasants without any extra labour to offset the land[85]. Collective farms became a bricolage of whatever the *gmina* wanted to put into them to centralise production by peasant labour.

Although they shared a cookie cutter style administrative structure, collective farms were built upon diverse economic landscapes, and became a pastiche of land, capital, and people. Since the rigid structure of the collective farms did not have mechanisms to adjust to the 'uneven development of collectivisation' (Kligman & Verdery, 2011, pg. 143) between farms and on a regional scale, the people and local officials were left with no choice but to find stabilisers outside of the formal state apparatus to accommodate these rigid structures. There was one exception. In Podwoda village, several kilometres southeast of Dobra, peasants consented to collectivisation only if *gmina* authorities kept the *miedza* which they then continued to work by sharing machines, labour and fertilisers to meet the quota under the authority of the collective farm Director. The farm was collectivised enough to be defined as such on paper, but aesthetically 'independent' enough to please the peasants.

[84] Dz.U. z 1952, Nr. 29, Poz. 195.
[85] Archive: Nr. 14, 1954, pgs. 39, 166.

Figure 21 Zuzanna (top-centre) and Konrad (third from the right) on the collective farm in the 1950s. Zuzanna's private collection.

In reality, no collective farm could 'produce on its own'. The collective farm 'Hope' in Starnice village was adjacent to a state farm and had a special neighbourly help arrangement with it—meaning, that the state farm allocated labour and resources to complete the *kołchoz* quota. To increase yields, the *gmina* organised labour flows in and out of its collective farms through neighbourly help. In 1953, Hektor ordered the *gmina* to send 200 people from the village as neighbourly help to pick potato beetles off of crops on other collective farms. Since independent peasants who had collectivised no longer had to provide neighbourly help to complete their quotas, the state was in effect formalising this relation with the peasants (that from 1959 included the introduction of wages for neighbourly help). According to a 1950 law, the *gmina* had to provide in-kind compensation of rye for neighbourly help in the form of labour, machine rentals, or horse services on *gmina* land. Neighbourly help, therefore, allowed the *gmina* to 'subcontract' an unlimited amount of peasant services[86]. These were mandatory. A day

[86] On Siberian collective farms, directors forced gulag prisoners to work alongside the peasants (Vitebsky, 2005, pgs. 225-226).

before giving birth to my mother, Zuzanna had to go 'work off' (*odrobić*) her obligation on the farm by picking linen for the quota.

According to accounts from 1954, some quotas (i.e. secale) in Dobra's *kołchoz* had no chance of completion because no seeds had been delivered to the village. In addition, the *gmina* authorities divided quotas among the multiple *kołchozy* under its administration. Some farms received all of a certain seed variety, others did not. Each focused on meeting one mandatory quota—usually grain—while showing enormous deficits in all others. The *gmina* struggled to keep up with the quickly changing laws that determined annual quota prices, measurements of quotas per hectare, substitutions, and quota types. By the time necessary changes to the new quota law were made, another was passed that resulted in another reassembling of labour, capital, and space, in order to adjust to the new rules. Some quota yields were decreased because peasants decided against buying or taking out credit on expensive and environmentally unfriendly chemical fertilisers. They preferred cheaper, slower horses over expensive, more efficient tractors. In effect, production progressed at the peasants' pace and failed to meet the increasing quotas provided by the state[87].

The collectivisation model centralised or 'domesticated' varied landscapes, economies, and people under the structure of a 'collective farm' but did not have the structural mechanisms to flexibly adapt to this variation. In effect, corruption and free market activity were a form of organising resources from various locations and people of different political and economic leanings, in order to 'meet the plan' and thus, stabilise the command economy. It was this system of broken-down collective farms that allowed peasants and officials to maintain their livelihoods. We see that *kombinacja* was the flexible mechanism that could be used by officials and the peasants to 'do what they had to do' to meet the state plan or meet their subsistence needs at home. All villagers realised that the less the collective farm resembled its Russian cousin, the more likely it would be that they would all survive through Stalinism. Differentiation was freedom.

[87] Archives: Nr. 14, 1954, pg.156 and Nr. 14, 1953, pg. 80. Laws: Dz.U. z 1959. Nr. 48. Poz. 294 and Dz.U. z. 1950. Nr. 51. Poz. 475.

5.7. Peasant resistance

Given the poor economic performance of the *kołchoz*, the question of accountability was raised. Who was responsible for poor production—the *gmina* or the *kołchoźniki*? At one *gmina* meeting, Ignacy, a *kołchoznik*, stood up and represented the collective farm workers' frustration regarding the amount of grain that had been given away to the state in the previous quota cycle. Ignacy stated that 'a rational form of livestock farming is difficult in our conditions [...] especially since last year there was a weak grain harvest and we gave almost all of the grain for planned purchase, and this year we do not have anything to feed the pigs, since there are shortages of animal feed and there is nowhere to buy animal feed'. He complained that the collective farm workers had asked the Director of the GSSC in Dobra to sell them animal feed but he had rejected their offer because he did not want to be accountable for selling unauthorised feed. Ignacy then complained that a poor farm makes life difficult for the *kołchoźniki* who have high quotas that produce poor wages which cannot cover the cost of their high taxes at home[88]. Again, the implications were not that the *kołchozniki* were rising up against the *kołchoz* or *gmina*, but that they felt their economic needs and access to resources was not being met by the authorities—which plunged them into poverty.

Peasant frustration emerged not in total defiance to collective farms but as a response to the bureaucratic gridlock. It appears that the *gmina* did not do much about the peasants' complaints, and tensions must have risen because at a later *gmina* meeting the following year, Zuzanna's neighbour Teofil, a *kołchoźnik*, complained about the *gmina*'s inefficiency in paying wages on time; which delayed production and undermined a willingness to work. Peasants began to refuse to perform neighbourly help and other labour obligations for the *gmina* as a protest against their poor treatment. He said to the officials,

> When They (*gmina*) wanted to set up the collective farm, they drove around (persuading), but once They set it up, They left us to our own losses, and now They do not care to expedite their accounting process when collective farm members do not have anything to build up stock, there is no hay for horses, and this is having an adverse effect on the wood transport, this is why peasants are no longer taking part, because without hay they will not go to transport wood.

[88] Archive: Nr. 14, 1953, pg. 61.

In response, Wojtek a *gmina* official stood up and stated that the collective farm in Starnice village was the only one that functioned well in the *gmina*, 'and the rest, work however they feel like it'. In retaliation, another peasant representative from the collective farm in Dobra, stood up and responded that 'the caretaker of the collective farm members ought to be the Party leader' and threateningly invited Wojtek 'to come to the fields to take a look, and order (us) around'. But Wojtek continued with his 'argument' that the only reason farms were not functioning effectively was because 'there are still these types of peasants, who approach mandatory quotas with strong resistance'. The *gmina* officials thought it was the peasants' responsibility to mobilise resources and labour, while the peasantry thought that it was the *gmina*'s responsibility to supply them. This exchange demonstrates that the *gmina* officials knew how to manipulate the political rhetoric of peasant ownership in order to relieve themselves of the responsibility of fixing the problems on the farm. Ironically, it was the peasants who wanted 'more' *gmina* intervention. Neither party wanted to dedicate any more resources than they already had to the function of the collective farms.

Peasants in the Łabuń collective farm in the *gmina* revolted. In 1953, a Party agronomist from Łabuń complained to the *gmina* that two groups of peasants had formed on his collective farm. Several peasants who got fired from the farm had sought out factory jobs where they got paid higher wages and incentivised the remaining members to drag their feet. Others abandoned their homes and sought work in the city while the rest were stuck with their pooled land[89]. There was no 'leader' to this resistance; peasants did anything so as not to work on the collective farm to produce the quota: setting fire to grain warehouses and barns, killing horses, breaking wagons and machinery, foot-dragging, drinking on the job. All of these actions subverted quotas.

A 'citizen' Stanisław from Łabuń complained in 1953 that in that collective farm, machines worked all year, except when the sowing began for the season—that was 'enemy work' (*wrogowa robota*). *Gmina* officials skeptically recorded peasants' complaints that labour was slow due to hazardous working conditions with the new machines, their confusion about quota plans, broken machines not being fixed on time, or a dearth of ploughs. Officials in Dobra explained this as the 'grey heritage of

[89] Archive: Nr. 14, 1953, pg. 101.

capitalism that presented itself with resistance from old classes'. This exposed the hypocrisy of power. Officials used past feudal institutions to establish control in the village, yet they critiqued anyone who 'used' past class alliances and strategies against the state plan.

The *kołchozniki* used *kombinacja* to deal with the poor conditions in the *kołchoz*. The most profitable ventures were the kołchoźnik's dealings with non-collectivised peasants. They sold *kołchoz* livestock to them so that the latter would not have to deliver their highest quality beef to the state, and others used *kołchoz* tractors to perform private services for the other peasants. Most *kołchozniki*, however, 'domesticated' the state property by feeding less fodder to the state livestock and diverting the rest to feed their own. They butchered the state livestock for private consumption and stole grain for private storage.

Although there appeared to be some collective consensus that *kombinacja* was permissible, *kombinators* did not always work in the interest of the collective. Zuzanna recalled that peasants competed over limited socialist property, which contributed to the lack of trust even among the peasantry on the farm:

> So, I want something from you and I will use *kombinacja* to take it, no? Or trick someone. Lie. That is *kombinacja* for oneself. It is this kind of *kombinacja*, and it was around in [...] the *kołchoz*. There was *kombinacja* or stealing, or trickery between one another, or trick the state, and there were such *kombinator*s—it was this type of *kombinacja*.

When Zuzanna and Jagoda reminisced about the *kołchoz*, they said that the only reason why *kombinacja* was allowed was because the Dobra version was not like the Soviet Union. Jagoda said that 'the *kołchozy* were not like the *kołchozy* in Russia. It was like this. They planted seeds, took what they wanted, and they gave the rest away to the state. It was like this, you see? [...] It was not yet completely nationalised [...] They threshed, they talked, the bag of wheat they took to sell for a litre of vodka'. Zuzanna added, 'Because in Russia, you could not steal anything. They were real *kołchozy*'. Half-broken collective farmers gave the peasants a lot more access to resources than the 'real' collective farms in Russia.

Zuzanna then recalled how Konrad found two *kołchoźniki* stealing some bags of wheat one time and hiding them in the fields to pick up later that night. Instead of

collaborating with them, Konrad stole their bags and took them home and fed them to the chickens so that there would be no 'trace' of theft. The two women called it 'taking' (*branie*), not 'stealing'. This is important because they played on the state propaganda that collective farms belonged to the peasantry. If that was the case, then the peasants could decide what to do with the socialist property, and thus how they split it up would not have constituted 'theft' if it was 'their' property all along. At the same time, however, they understood that the *kombinacja* needed to be kept 'invisible' from state surveillance. During the wheat harvests on the collective farms, Zuzanna recalled that the *gmina* sent out watchmen. 'There was such order, that "God forbid something is stolen!" Because he was so just that he had to report that immediately and they imposed fines for it. That is was not allowed!' Thus, they knew the 'formal' rules against 'taking' state property.

Gmina officials themselves carried on this *kombinacja* especially where there were 'manipulable resources' that were either undefined by legislation or that constituted a surplus to the obligatory quota plan (Humphrey, 1998, pg. 9). In 1953, one Party official Jacek accused Wojtek—the top Party official in the *gmina*—of selling wheat from an abandoned peasant farm, not to the nearby collective farm 'Starnice' to help it meet its quota or to workers, but to independent peasants at free market prices in order to complete their quotas. Wojek responded that the collective farm had cancelled its order and instead he sold the wheat to two village mayors and 20 'poor' un-collectivised peasants to help meet their individual quotas. The matter ended there as the Director of the collective farm in Starnice, rather than enquiring further into what his farm had lost, took to the stand and stated that his collective farm is the best in the entire *gmina*. It does not appear to me that the officials cared about the law; rather, they cared about preserving their position of power by providing a public good so that they could weave in and out of the law. This demonstrates the grey zone of *kombinacja.*

In sum, *kombinacja* was a response to the lack of capital, delays in distribution of wages, and to the *gmina*'s continuous breaking of the promises it made during the collectivisation process. It was not an attempt to find a solution to the structural problems plaguing the farm; rather, *kombinacja* represented peasants' individual attempts to solve immediate subsistence problems. Keeping the *kołchoz* broken was certainly beneficial for everyone—the *gmina* did not have to do its job or secure

resources for the farm, and the *kołchoźniki* did not have to exert labour to earn wages for which they were not paid on time. 'Taking' resources and selling them or incorporating them into their domestic spheres was a way to avoid confrontations with the *gmina*.

The collective farm structure was formally too rigid. This forced officials to use *kombinacja* to move resources and people around, to ensure that the quotas were met and to maintain a general level of political satisfaction. *Kombinacja* provided institutional flexibility. Likewise, the peasants were faced with structures that undermined their uses of mobility that had allowed them to move across a landscape, find seasonal work, and use it as a bargaining tactic for higher wages (Hann, 1981, pg. 18). In the collective farm, peasants were locked into a landscape where their only mobility was granted by the local officials. To make ends meet, officials and peasants used *kombinacja* to leverage control over the flow (and pace) of labour and resources between the household and the state supply chain. Thus, the strategy was used to stabilise the command economy, preserve the political power of the officials, and to meet peasants' subsistence needs[90].

5.8. Conclusion: flexibility is survival

This chapter has shown how the crystallisation of the 'formal' state apparatus and its economy resulted in the crystallisation of 'informality' (*kombinacja*), both in villagers' collective memory and in the state's official archives. In its attempts to gain consent in its co-optation of economic activities and chaining them to the command economy, the state assiduously avoided using stigmatised Soviet terms like '*kołchoz*'. However, peasants were not convinced. They used the Soviet term *kołchoz* instead of *spółdzielnia produkcyjna* (production cooperative), the informal *chłop* (peasant) instead of the state term '*rolnik*' (farmer), and *dwór* (manor) instead of *pole* (fields). While peasants claimed that they were not 'forced' to collectivise, they used the term 'persuasion' (*namawianie*) in a pejorative way. The use of 'informal' terms exposed the villagers'

[90] In 1956, Stalinism was abandoned and peasants were given the right to de-collectivise. The collective farm in Dobra partially de-collectivised in 1957, with the *gmina* redistributing land back to the peasants. The remainder of the farm became concentrated in the nearby Ukrainian colony, which continued to work on 314 hectares or 2.7% of *gmina* land until the 1980s (Davies, 1982, pg. 582; Żurawski, 1985, pg. 53).

political dislocation from the state's development goals. It subversively accented the historical continuities of power dynamics between peasants and masters from the feudal period that were acting out within the framework of Soviet-modeled agriculture. Only officials used the 'formal' terms that endorsed the state's imaginary.

With such attention given to the choice of words and their political meanings, the villagers' reincarnation of the colloquial term *kombinacja* does not appear accidental. Like the other terms, it was suggestive of continuities with the pre-1945 past. It was a perfect arch-nemesis to the formal state apparatus that attempted to make all economic activity legible and ordered. Its origins were obscure, it was not locked in a single class, it was vague (making combinations of what?), and its application was diverse. Anyone who knew that a *kombinacja* had been committed recognized that alternatives to the state economy were *possible,* without knowing exactly what was done to produce those alternatives. The term was informative but simultaneously preserved its vagueness. For this reason the state officials themselves, while castigating it in the archives, used the strategy for their own goals. It became the perfect strategy to disrupt the crystallisation of form.

Villagers' recollections from this period reveal *kombinacja*'s adaptability. It can be transplanted, from Nazi labour camps to Soviet collective farms, can be adopted by other ethnic and linguistic groups (it is not just a Polish phenomenon). It was also a form of accommodation. For one thing, state officials used it to stabilise the 'formal' economy. As people became more aware of 'how' the state worked, they became more aware of its 'blind-spots', and that in those spots it was possible to play, manipulate, and switch between both sides. That there was a way to both be a citizen and participate in state socialism, while at the same time, 'filling in' the subsistence deficits of the state economy's structural problems and the *gmina*'s ignorance of them, was posed to the domestic unit of production. These sideline activities diverted the flow of resources that were destined for the city and helped strengthen an agrarianism and localism. *Kombinacja* partially disconnected the village from this supply chain. Narrating village history through this 'marker' of *kombinacja* helps unearth some of the 'contexts', 'sites', and 'situations' in which the peasantry and the state sometimes agreed and sometimes disagreed on labour, capital, and the development of the village.

Chapter 6

Worker-peasants' *kombinacja*: 1956-1989

6.1. Co-opting circles

Joseph Stalin's death in 1953 and the failure of Soviet collectivisation in Poland set the stage for the process of de-collectivisation. Accordingly, the *gmina* of Dobra gave collective farm workers the option to take back the land that they had pooled. However, national authorities had to keep a short leash on the peasantry with '*kułak*' tendencies. Any peasant who took back over two hectares of land was forced, once again, to produce agricultural quotas for the state. To increase quota production, the state had to find a way to grant access to both fertilisers and machinery without giving peasants the option of investing in private machines and expanding their land holding. At the Eighth Plenum in 1956, Władysław Gomułka—First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party—renounced the mistakes of Stalinism and promised a 'Polish road to socialism'. His 'Polish October' reforms reintroduced Agricultural Circles (*Kółka Rolnicze*, KR, or circles), a popular and beloved form of peasant self-government widely used by Polish peasants in the prewar and interwar periods.

The state hoped to ride the coat tails of the circles' popularity as counter revolutionary organisations that had mobilised right-wing, Catholic, Polish peasants against an occupying power. A state-censored academic advertised the circles as 'insignificantly subject to formalism and bureaucracy' (Gałeski, 1973, pg. 147; in Hann, 1985, pg. 192, footnote 3.). Yet, rather than replicating the prewar and interwar versions, the state revised the system significantly to link peasant production to the command economy and to central state authorities. Before 1939, peasants worked their private plots and gave their harvests and products to circle stores that then sold them for a commission (see below). The new circles' function was to provide paid agricultural services using state machinery on de-collectivised peasant farms to expedite their quota production to the state. Peasants who needed those services would benefit from those circle services. They could join them as 'worker-peasants' (*robotnik-chłopy*) who both produced quotas on their individual farms and earned wages in the circle providing agricultural services

to others. Gomułka transformed circles from platforms for organising right-wing capitalists to ones promoting left-wing socialism.

Nevertheless, due to the circles' nationalist undertones and history, their reintroduction into the Polish way of life served as a rubric for the empowerment of the peasantry. Furthermore, as the state had demonstrated itself, circles were flexible and could be recalibrated towards many goals. In this chapter I show how the peasants who joined the circles as worker-peasants used *kombinacja* to mould them so that it subsidised as much of their quota production costs for the state as possible. While formally called 'worker-peasants', they accommodated the state by acquiring 'proletarian' characteristics, but only in order to satiate their 'peasant' needs. *Kombinacja* permeated into the state services sector and gave worker-peasants greater authorised movement across larger geographic expanses to make informal deals on the job. Finally, by tracing the actions of the worker-peasantry in Dobra's circles, we begin to detect how *kombinacja* changes over time, how it both adapts to and transforms different structures, and how it bridges different eras, geographies, ideologies and state practices. I argue that worker-peasants used the circles as a platform and *kombinacja* as a strategy to regain economic and political leverage. In Bourdieusian terms, this chapter shows how this habitus (*kombinacja*) spilled over from one field to another as the same networks of peasants from the collective farm were transformed into a new 'class' by the state, but faced the same shortages and problems with the officials in the circles as they did in the collective farm.

6.2. Worker-peasants

Research on worker-peasants reveals how they have combined waged labour and agricultural production in multiple contexts, for varied motives and at different scales. Studies have focused on proto-industrialised sites in 18th century Hungary (Sozan, 1976), 19th century Saxony (Quataert, 1985), 20th century Transylvania (Beck, 1976), Hungary (Hann, 1980), Romania (Verdery, 2011), northern Italy (Holmes, 1983), the Swiss Alps (Minga-Kalman, 1978), and India (Chari, 2004), and how independent peasant proprietors have sought waged labour opportunities in order to supplement their agricultural production. Germans called this class Pendler due to their swinging back and forth between the dual obligations of family and factory. They 'react(ed) partly like peasants (e.g. in questions of land ownership or farm prices), partly like workers (e.g.

about wages and strikes)' (Bergmann, 1975, pg. 87; Holmes, 1983, pg. 742). What has unified all of these studies is the argument that through this mobility across the agro-industrial divide, worker-peasants partially resolve spatial, labour, production and wage-labour problems, caused or inhibited by formal institutions like the state.

This last point is developed by Holmes (1983) in his study of how the state actively 'preserved' a worker-peasant class in northern Italy. The research traces the worker-peasantry back to the 16th century during the growth of the textile industry and peasants' temporary migration patterns to urban centres throughout the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century (pg. 735). It was not until the emergence of an industrial base in the Friuli region that the worker-peasantry could simultaneously engage in peasant agriculture and wage labour on a daily basis. Then, the emergence of the welfare state, that directed programmes at that particular group of people, halted their 'proletarianisation' and strengthened the worker-peasantry's class position. The state made being a 'peasant' intolerable and then curbed the peasantry's transition into the working class. Holmes' study offers comparison with my research on how the state sought to define and control the worker-peasants in the circles, and how in turn the workers adopted strategies (*combinazione* in his study) to combine wage-earning and agriculture to prevent being locked-in to a class status.[91] In Poland, worker-peasants have existed at the interstices of the socialist system. After the de-collectivisation of agriculture, a million peasants asked for only 2 hectares of land back from the state—a move that exempted them from agricultural quota production. Sixty percent of those peasants supplemented their domestic agricultural production with waged labour. They owned farms and worked in manufacturing, building and construction, and transport and communication industries, as well as various trades like tanning and carpentry. There were full-time workers who sought temporary agricultural work on state or peasant farms in order to secure food for their family (Franklin, 1969, pg. 211; Lewis, 1973, pgs. 50-51; Nagenstat, 1991, pgs. 147-174). In their own ways, worker-peasants 'solved' food shortages by creating informal linkages between production on their farms and demand in the cities.

[91] *Combinazione* referred to a cultivator's improvisation in combining multiple sources of sustenance, like renting and sharecropping land with temporary wage-labour pursuits. One who used it was called a *figura mista* (transient actor) (pg. 736).

Worker-peasantries formed through demographic shifts. Peasants' children who were of working age secured full-time waged labour in the factories. In her study on worker-peasants in a textile factory in Zambrów, Fidelis (2010) shows that despite factory work, peasants' world views and traditions informed their social identity, which they used to negotiate socialist labour by setting the pace of production. When Celia, a factory spinner, had ill parents, she took time off work in the factory for two weeks to help out on the farm. She was fined for the work evasion, but evidently fulfilling the potato harvest was more important than fulfilling the production plan at the factory (pgs. 117-118). By prioritising her family's labour obligations in quota production over her own obligation as a worker, Celia had to individually 'solve' the contradictory labour obligations that the state system had imposed upon her.[92] Her 'fine' exposed the state's rigid system of keeping the working and peasant classes separate, even if they were in the same family. Through her actions, she accommodated some parts of the socialist system, at the expense of other duties.

There is a difference between those people who displayed worker-peasant characteristics, such as Celia cited by Fidelis (2010), and those whom the state formally referred to as 'worker-peasants'. The former sought domestic solutions across the agro-industrial divide; the latter was a state solution to the agro-industrial divide. The latter formed a specific type of worker-peasants who owned peasant farms over 2 hectares that produced agricultural quotas for the state and earned wages in the circles that provided services to the peasant farms that, in turn, would expedite meeting the quota. These are the worker-peasants that are the subject of this chapter. The peasants in the previous chapter used *kombinacja* to wiggle out of their locked-in class. Similarly, the worker-peasants tried to get around their locked waged and agricultural labour arrangement with the state. Again, the pattern of *kombinacja* and immobility (property and class) emerges: *kombinacja* yet again was used as a way to loosen up class structures that threatened to lock them in.

[92] Celia crossed the agro-industrial divide because she was stuck in her worker class and her *parents* were in the peasant class. She went outside of her state-defined class as a worker, while the Rubignacchesi's *combinazione* was a response to the state's efforts to preserve them as a particular worker-peasant class. Both used innovative actions to manoeuvre along the 'interstices of agrarian and industrial systems' and organised along familiar rather than other institutional lines, but their relationship to the state differed (Holmes, 1983, pg. 746; Holmes & Quataert, 1986, pg. 194).

6.3. The nationalism of *kombi(nacja)*

Circles have a rich prewar history as 'a form of peasant self-government' that began with Poland's Prussian partition in 1862, and spread across the Austro-Hungarian and Russian partitions until the First World War. In the midst of Russification and Germanisation campaigns, circles provided an institutional platform to teach the Polish language, organise cultural activities, distribute loans, sell produce in 'circle' stores, open savings banks and agricultural schools, and to hold meetings. Peasants used the circles to pool, buy, and share machinery, as well as to establish consensus on new methods and technologies—all to secure a 'Polish' economic niche in agricultural production. In the Austro-Hungarian partition, circles used their facilities as informal arbitration courts where local conflicts between Polish peasants in the circles were solved at the village level. In the Russian partition, *staszic* circles formed which banned the participation of clergy and the gentry in peasant affairs. As flexible institutions, circles were adapted to local conditions and rose to prominence as the institutional platform to make economic and political demands of foreign governments (Stauter-Halsted, 2004, pg. 129; Galaj, 1973, pg. 346). Józef Piłsudski (Chief of State after the reconstitution of Poland), Stanisław Mikołajczyk (fought against a Soviet takeover), Henryk Sienkiewicz and Władysław Reymont—both Nobel Laureates in Literature—were raised in the circle and became symbols of the system's power to reclaim Polish national identity ('Historia Kółek Rolniczych', 2013).

Although dissolved during the First World War, circles as an organisational model for peasant agriculture resurfaced in the interwar period (1919-1939) when Poland was reconstituted as a nation-state (see Figure 22). This was the first time that the circles had emerged as legal and legitimate peasant institutions in Poland. They were controlled under the Central Association of Agricultural Circles—a right-wing, nationalist organisation—and grew to about 250,000 members in 1938.[93] When the Nazis invaded Poland in 1939, they dissolved the circles once again and subjected members to mandatory quota production towards the Nazi war effort (Korbonski, 1965, pgs. 288-289). Zuzanna's story about her father's simultaneous production for the Nazis and selling off domestic produce on the free market (see Chapters 4 and 5) revealed how in

[93] Circles (*Gazda kör*) in 1930s Hungary were sponsored by the Catholic Church and excluded non-Catholics and craftsmen (Lampland, 1995, pg. 52).

this period, peasants who had once belonged to the circles, used *kombinacja* to survive. Here, *kombinacja* and nationalism, or *kombi*(*nacja*)[94], converged upon the experience of the peasantry who now answered to Nazis, not the circles. The 'message' of *kombinacja* as a form of resistance against quotas, foreign domination, and subversion of the countryside to the needs of the industrialising cities, all posed interesting questions of how the peasantry would cope with the reintroduction of the socialist variant of the circles[95]. After the war, there were cases of workers attempting to reestablish prewar and interwar circles, but the state dismantled those attempts because their very function was to preserve Catholicism and nationalism. The Polish state was wary of religion as an organising platform for cooperative organisation which could serve as an incubator for anti-statist ideas[96].

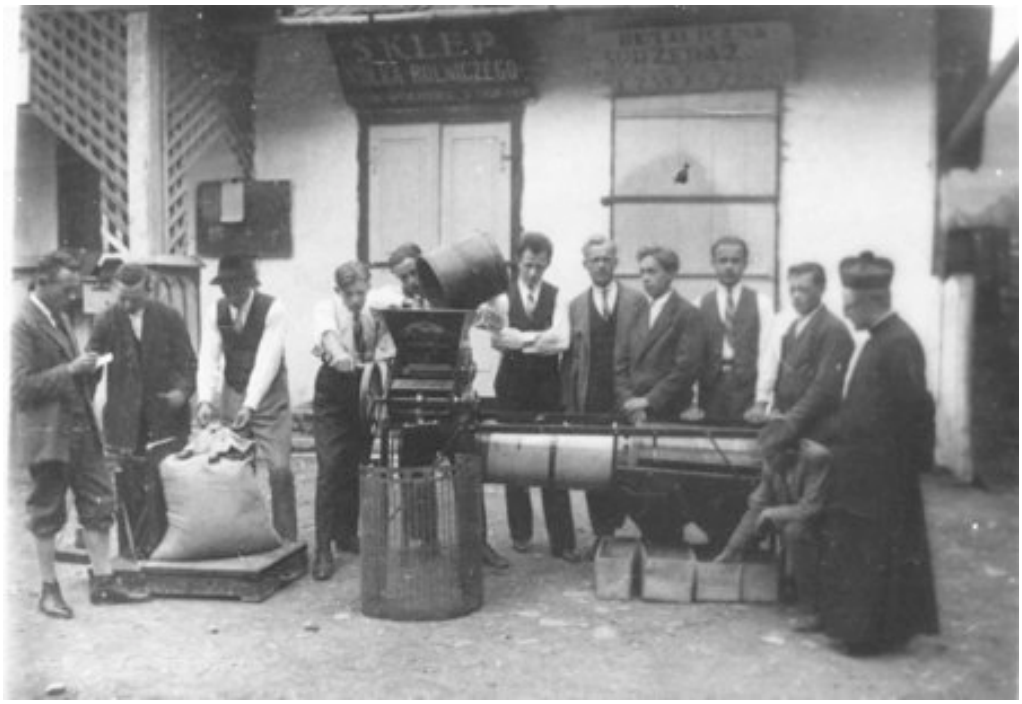

Figure 22 Peasants belonging to a circle get together in front of the circle store to measure the cereal harvest in 1937. The priest (right hand side) supervises. ('Dobra Koło Limanowej', 2014).

[94] 'Nacja' means 'nation'.
[95] After 1945, the Peasant Self-Help Association (later the GSSC), attempted to create circles but the Party shut them down and created Machinery Cooperative Centers (GOM) that subcontracted state machines to collective farms from 1951 to 1956.
[96] Catholic cooperatives also existed in Spain (Gibson-Graham, 2006, pgs. 125-126).

6.4. Peasant self-government or backdoor collectivisation?

The agrarian reforms introduced during the Polish October of 1956 returned 83% of collective farmland back to the peasantry[97]. New laws authorised the distribution of land titles to peasants and lifted bans on building new farmsteads, buying land, and dividing land among family members. As a result, land sales skyrocketed as peasants sensed the return of a prewar-type, private sector. The state loosened its grip on the peasantry and abolished grain and potato quotas for peasants who took back under 2 hectares of land during the reforms. Anyone with over 2 hectares of land was still forced to produce quotas for the state, as they had done prior to the collectivisation of agriculture. Bans on buying agricultural machinery and equipment were lifted, but few peasants purchased them due to the lack of income and the residual fear from the de-kulakisation campaigns (see Chapter 5). Peasants went back to using less efficient ploughing methods with horses as well as to working land without fertilisers. This limited their quota production (Davies, 1982, pg. 596; Korbonski, 1965, pgs. 284-291; Kruszewski, 1972, pg. 124; Lewis, 1973, pg. 48).

Gomułka gave peasants the go-ahead to voluntarily form circles to expedite quota production on their farms. The circles would help the private sector increase production while making it dependent upon the technological machinery owned by the state (Hann, 1985, pgs. 40-41). These circles ensured that the agricultural services sector would be under state ownership and not under peasant control as they had been in the prewar and interwar periods. However, circles were their own workplaces, meaning that they owned land and had their own quotas to fulfill. Peasants did not have to be worker-peasants in the circle but the circles were the only places where peasants could officially both work and receive agricultural services. These vertically integrated, state workplaces with a state administration, would link peasants with agricultural machinery left over from the defunct collective farms. Peasants became both producers of state quotas and providers of state services for peasant producers. Nevertheless, the reintroduction of the circles situated peasants' struggles against the Polish state in a broader historical narrative of using the circles as a platform for economic and political emancipation.

[97] Laws: Dz.U. z 1957, Nr. 39, Poz. 172.; Dz.U. z 1958, Nr. 17, Poz. 71.

The initial reaction was very positive. Peasant membership swelled up to 327,000 in just two months. At the Third Congress of the Polish United Workers Party (PZPR) in March 1959, Gomułka defined the circles as 'a mass organisation of working peasants'. But the state began to dislike what this mass organisation had started to look like. Medium peasants (5-15 hectares) dominated the circles—a pattern reminiscent of the collective farms—while the smaller peasants were kept out (Korbonski, 1965, pgs. 289-294). The Party began to fear that spontaneous growth—and the opportunities for self-governance—would subvert the circles' socialist goals and 'would play into the hands of capitalist elements and speculators'. By 1958 and 1959, news outlets complained that peasants had not joined with state-peasant co-operation in mind, and that they were 'not fulfilling their obligations as citizens' by evading taxes and delivering quotas (Lewis, 1973, pg. 61).

Circles had to be in tune with the state's economic interests of uniting the small and medium peasants. The state wanted to co-opt medium peasants' production capacity and knowledge, but wanted small peasants to countermand the medium peasants' *kułak* tendencies. To this end, Stalinist-style propaganda hinted to small peasants that the wealthiest ones limited their entrance into the circles and that they would have to join to minimise their exploitation by wealthier peasants. With the return of anti *kułak* propaganda, peasants became increasingly suspicious that the state would take over their de-collectivised land grants once more. Wary of 'backdoor collectivisation' (Hann, 1985, pg. 41), they began slaughtering their private livestock and focused their efforts on the reconstruction of their farmsteads rather than on production. Tax exemptions from heavy taxation, financial support, and machinery from the state were not enough to get small peasants to join. Without small peasants, membership growth dramatically slowed down in the second half of 1957 (Korbonski, 1965, pgs. 291-298; Kruszewski, 1972, pg. 129; Lewis, 1973, pg. 54; Staar, 1962, pg. 90).

Although the state initially sold the peasantry on the idea of circles, its Stalinist-style tactics and propaganda conjured up suspicion about the state's real intentions. Gomułka was conscious of this hesitation and defended the socialist reinterpretation of circles during his keynote address at the First National Conference of Agricultural Circles in September 1959:

> Here is the new role of agricultural circles (sic.)—their socialist meaning which, whether one likes it or not, is bound to increase [...] Some may say: we do not want such circles which will develop in the socialist direction. Let them go and some will quit. We are not afraid of that. They will be back because there is no other way. The great socialist truth that only through collective work [...] can productivity be raised and peasants' needs be satisfied will mature in the peasants' minds. (Quoted in Korbonski, 1965, pg. 296)

But even peasants who belonged to the Party were unconvinced. By 1961, only 68,000 out of 127,871 peasants who were members of the Party worked in circles. To prove the state's patronage of the independent peasantry, the Fund of Agricultural Development was created by Gomułka in June 1959 to buy tractors and other modern machinery to replace horses in the circles. But the funds were unevenly distributed. In 1961, 873,000 peasants (out of 13.5 million) belonged to 25,563 circles in 60% of Poland's 42,000 villages. But, 11,000 of those circles had no machinery and by 1969 prospects looked quite bleak as 34,814 circles shared only 12,165 tractors between them. These half-functioning circles paled in comparison to the very-well funded and organised state farms. Hann (1985) argues that the circles' objective was to 'enable peasants to produce more without adding the private ownership of land'. Yet, concurrently, 'authorities were determined not to permit the peasantry to modernise, even on these terms'. The state could not revoke legal ownership of land, but at the same time, 'peasants were not encouraged to expand their farms to an economically warranted size' (pg. 42). There was a sense that the worker-peasants were second-class citizens to the state farm workers[98].

Nonetheless, the circles reinvigorated the medium peasantry with an organisational platform that could be used for their own benefit. By 1972, 55% of Polish peasants were employed in circles, earned higher per capital incomes, and experienced a higher quality of life than full-time peasant farmers (Franklin, 1969, pg. 211; Korbonski, 1965, pg. 295; Kruszewski, 1972, pg. 129; Staar, 1962, pgs. 92, 179; Wädekin, 1982, pg. 213). In the next sections, I will show how worker-peasants in Dobra's circle used *kombinacja* to ensure that the state subsidised their domestic quota production and that they were able to make money on the side.

[98] Thanks to Dr. Frances Pine for this point.

6.5. 'State' and 'domestic' work in the circle

In 1956, the *gmina* partially de-collectivised the collective farm by downsizing it and giving it to the Ukrainian peasants in a nearby colony to manage it on the outskirts of the village (until 1989). In 1957, the rest of the collective farm land was redistributed back to the peasant farmers. Zuzanna took only five hectares as a precautionary strategy out of fear that enrichment taxes, high quotas, and *kułak* propaganda would return. While her move, like that of others, supported the state's campaign to 'proletarianise' medium peasants by making them small peasants, there was the realistic problem of what to do with the unused *gmina* land. It was in the *gmina*'s interest to give out as much land as possible so that it did not have to mobilise labour from the state and collective farms to work its land. The problem was probably resolved by the *gmina* adding the land to the downsized collective farm. Even so, without extra machines to jumpstart production, quotas of grain on peasant and the collective farms in the *gmina* slumped due to 'poor soil and low culture in agricultural production' in the view of a local historian (Żurawski, 1985, pg. 52). It is unclear how the *gmina* resolved this transitional phase from 1957 to 1960, however in 1961, six years after Gomułka's speech, a circle finally opened in Dobra. The same peasants, who had once been identified as *kułaks*, re-organised as collective farm workers, and then peasant farmers, were being transformed once again into a new class, the 'worker-peasantry'[99].

The circle's circulation of currency, machines, and services increased productive capacity and flexibility between peasant farms and the state. This is what worker-peasants were supposed to do: as peasants, they were supposed to order state services from the circle to expedite agricultural production on their independent farms and to produce their quotas for the state, which they subsequently sold to the GSSC (see Chapter 5) for fixed, low prices (Davies, 1982, pg. 596). Circles provided official state training for the peasantry. Peasants who ordered services worked in the circles—so they responded to those orders by putting on their 'worker' hats and providing those services with state machinery from the circle. Zuzanna explained how the process worked:

[99] Zuzanna first settled in the territories as a peasant in 1946, then became a '*kułak*', then a *kołchoźnik* in 1953, then an independent peasant again after de-collectivisation in 1956, and finally handled the domestic end of quota production on the farm while Konrad was employed in the circle as a worker-peasant in 1961.

> So, when you wanted to do something in the field, you went to the circle and ordered it, and then the tractor driver would write it down and then the treasurer would also write it down, and when the work was done then the tractor driver had this paper and wrote down the first and last name, and how many hours he worked, how many hectares, for there to be no *kombinacja*! It had to be done right and then the peasant for whom he did the job would sign. Oh and that [paper] went to the treasury and then if the peasant was honest he would go right away and pay, the treasurer would tell him how much he would have to pay the cashier, and then he paid for the completed work.

From 1961 to 1973, the circle was presided over by its own administration in the village with all circles in the *gmina* vertically integrated into an Agricultural Circle Cooperative (SKR[100]), headquartered in the *gmina* and overseen by a single administration that included a Director, Vice-Director, Head Accountant, Worker Accountant, Warehouse Accountant, and Brigadiers. All across Poland, villages lost local control over their circles (and machines) to their communes (Hann, 1985, pg. 41). Figure 23 shows what an SKR station looked like in one *gmina.* The SKR headquartered in Dobra ran circles in ten surrounding villages, controlled a total of 500 hectares of land, and employed 59 worker-peasants. Brigadiers from each circle made daily journeys to receive and then communicate orders from the *gmina*. Once more, the system was designed to ensure that state quotas were harvested from peasant and SKR land on the state's terms. To illustrate the extent to which this imperative was 'organised', on one occasion an SKR from Wrocław, 450 kilometres away, sent workers to the SKR in Dobra to 'help'[101] with the wheat harvest during a rainy season (Żurawski, 1985, pg. 52).

While villagers loved the circles, nevertheless there was a sense from the interviews that *kombinacja* and a sense of subversion to the system persisted. When explaining worker-peasant activity, Zuzanna continued to say 'peasants' (*chłopy*) when she referred to their formal 'worker-peasant' role in the circle. Once again, the use of language (as in many cases in Dobra when the peasantry did not use the same formal definition as the state did) emphasises the fact that the state was assigning them different names and setting up new institutions for the same purpose, to produce the state quotas.

[100] Spółdzielnia Kółek Rolniczych.
[101] Meaning 'neighbourly help'.

Figure 23 An SKR service station (‘Witamy w Różażnce’, 2014)**.**

Figure 24 The circle headquarters in Dobra now privately owned by a *gmina* official. Author’s photo (2009).

When he was a collective farm worker (*kołchoźnik*), Konrad went to the collective farm down the street each morning and worked there to produce the quota for wages and then

bring stuff home (through *kombinacja*) to meet the needs of his household plot. Now that the land was de-collectivised and the circle opened up, Konrad went to the circle each morning and provided agricultural services with a tractor for wages before returning home to work on his land to meet the quota to be sold to the GSSC. Previously, as we have noted that Zuzanna stayed at home with the children and engaged in exchange deals with women in the village. Under the new regime Zuzanna still stayed at home and worked during the day to meet the quota on their farm. The worker-peasant identity was gendered. Konrad fulfilled the 'worker' roles and Zuzanna fulfilled the 'peasant' roles without breaking any law[102].

These new 'worker-peasants' adjusted *kombinacja* to fit this new economic structure. Given that their peasant households were both the unit of consumption and production, worker-peasants prioritised their 'peasant' over their 'worker' identity through various *kombinacja* strategies within the circle. Zuzanna recalled that in the circle, 'There was state work but private work. If one wanted to use *kombinacja*, then he found it for himself'. A shadow services sector formed as worker-peasants who performed services made deals on the job. Matylda, a retired circle accountant from the 1970s and 1980s, explained that worker-peasants used state machinery from the circle to perform private services that had not been ordered or reported. Konrad's *kombinacja* activity was precisely this type of service; the work he provided on the job was extended as 'moonlighting' off it and he would bring back resources from the circle warehouses for use at home, similar to what he did on the collective farm.

My grandfather Konrad and father Czesław comprised a *kombinacja* team. Konrad was a tractor operator who drove to farms to provide ploughing services. My father worked as a (non-Party) scheduler on the farm and kept track of who ordered what, which services were carried out, who had outstanding balances, etc. Whenever Konrad's farm required ploughing, he either ploughed it using the state tractor without reporting it to the circle or if and when he reported it, Arkadiusz either erased it from the record or put down a lower hectare amount than had actually been ploughed. This *kombinacja* of decreasing or fixing Konrad's balance to the circle meant that Zuzanna and Konrad's farm was receiving a discount from the circle for using the machinery on their own

[102] Gendered worker-peasant strategies existed in the Podhale region of Poland (Pine, 1998) and Romania (Verdery, 2011).

land. The more he ploughed over with the tractor, the less he would spend paying the circle (for the service he performed anyway) and the less time he would spend on the farm. Through *kombinacja* in the circle, Czesław alleviated Konrad's and his own responsibilities back on the farm. They manipulated the boundary of subverting the state's division of resources and labour across state workplaces and farms, but displayed proletarian characteristics of 'not feeling like working as much land'. Thus, the shadow services sector was tightly knit into the operation of the circle because workers were finding more ways to stay on the job rather than go home and work extended hours to meet the state quota. Peasants' quota production responsibilities affected *kombinacja* activity in the state workplaces.

Figure 25 Konrad's medal from the circle: Fight, Work, Socialism. Zuzanna's private collection.

Although the shadow services sector was a new adaptation of the *kombinacja* strategy, the worker-peasants 'took' or 'stole' circle property. Since peasants had to now meet their personal production quotas, the incentive to take property from the circle to subsidise quota production for the state was intensified. The circle had its own

agricultural fields and hired worker-peasant labour to work its harvests to meet its workplace quota for the GSSC. Zuzanna explained that 'usually in the circles there was a lot of *kombinacja* near the threshing, near the digging of potatoes, oh, there were many of those who used *kombinacja* so that there would be some for oneself. One did not look to the state'. Again, there was a lot of code-switching between descriptions of 'taking' and 'stealing' socialist property. When Zuzanna and I went to conduct an interview with Matylda in her 1970s-era bloc apartment, built for workers and administrators in Dobra, the two spoke comfortably about *kombinacja* like old friends. While in other conversations with Jagoda (peasant), Zuzanna referred to *kombinacja* as 'taking' socialist property, whereas in her discussion with Matylda, Zuzanna switches to the word 'stealing'—accommodating to Matylda's identity as having been part of the circle administration.

> **Z:** Stealing, how they stole!
>
> **M:** Yes, we had to keep watch, what is going on, where everything is, no? They only waited around for Him [authority] not to notice.

However, both women were aware of the tactic used and the sites at which it was used (near the threshing sites):

> **Z:** And near the threshing? Near the threshers? Was not there a lot of it (stealing) there?
>
> **M:** Yes! When the combine came, everyone just kept a look out (for the opportunity).

There were hints of a well-networked, underground operation of transporting circle resources and selling them to buyers on the free market. Zuzanna related to Matylda her run-in with the underground export of grain from the circle. She emphasised that she and Konrad had been on the circle administration's side and had reported the 'thief' directly to the circle director.

> Jolek stole grain, brought it to our barn at night. He put the grain into the barn. They scratched out the hay, and the entire wagon of grain, and they covered it with hay, and we did not know anything about it! I walked up to him and said this 'Jolek, what are you doing here?' And he says, 'Quiet, quiet, quiet, quiet'. He takes out the grain on the bags, and is putting it onto the wagon. And I say, 'Where is that grain from?' 'Quiet', he says. And he put it onto the wagon for the person and the person drove to the GS(SC) and had the grain to himself. My husband comes home at

> night from the field. I tell him, and he opened his eyes, 'When did he bring that grain?' He told Bartek! (Circle director).

'Taking' and 'stealing' were politically charged terms that obfuscated rather than revealed the process of blurring the lines between state and domestic property. Other examples were when worker-peasants domesticated the circle's grain harvest to feed their own livestock that they subcontracted to the state or sold it as 'their' quota to the GSSC, or sold to other peasants and worker-peasants at market prices. Through that process, they altered the circle's economic standing and increased the porosity of its borders.

Matylda explained that the circle worked on an honour system and would not penalise worker-peasants who worked their own farms with the machinery as long as they owned up to doing it:

> **Self:** Did they (workers) have any discounts on the machines to plough their own land?
>
> **M:** They could take it and no one counted that he ploughed it for himself.
>
> **Z:** He wrote everything down.
>
> **M:** He wrote it down but—
>
> **Z:** Bartek said that when he did a hectare, he waved his hand.
>
> **M:** Yes, but, you know, he could plough his own land, but he just had to say it because if he went to plough someone else's land but said that he went to plough his own, no?

So there were some 'permissible' spaces of exercising *kombinacja* using the state machinery. It is this free space to use *kombinacja* that seemed to be at odds with Matylda's later statement reiterating the old Party rhetoric; that private work damaged the circle and worker-peasants' future earnings:

> There were mottos: that 'we need to work', that 'this is ours', and that 'it is a cooperative' and so and so. So, it was like as if it was ours. Everyone knew that he had to work honestly, one could not steal because 'that is our clean money', no? From the profits, there were various bonuses, and if they (worker-peasants) did not labour, did not work, did not guard it, then they got nothing.

Administrators, including my father, used *kombinacja* in the circle. Zuzanna mentioned that 'supervisors oh, the brigadiers, and the director and he cared about it, and looked at

it, and inspected it, but they *kombinowali* anyway. It the administrators did it, then everyone else could do it. Zuzanna interjected that Bartek worked his own fields which set the example for the other peasants. *Kombinacja* was only permitted when an administrator used it. Adamski (1965), who worked on circle interest groups in Polish villages run by circles, wrote that patronage was used in awarding more profitable State produce contracts, deciding the location and free usage rights of state machinery in the circles, private use of state-owned land, access to credits, distribution of building materials, as well as temporary non-agricultural jobs (cited in Lewis, 1973, pg. 77). Lewis (1973) writes that chairmen of circles owned large farms, held numerous State contracts, and 'represented the "private future" interests concerned with keeping ties with the State at a minimum; for him existing links were lucrative yet they did not pose any threat to private property'. Administrators of the circles, who were the 'old élite', directed state credits intended for the circle for their own independent farms (pg. 77). Although I am not aware of such dramatic *kombinacja* among the administration in Dobra's circle, it is clear that when worker-peasants noticed even some form of *kombinacja* by the administrators, they entered in the struggle to wrangle for those same resources.

Zuzanna once highlighted how *kombinacja* readjusted to the new aesthetic transformations of labour in the fields. In the 1960s, worker-peasants initially threshed by hand and bagged the harvest on site under the surveillance of a brigadier or director by their side—which required more negotiation with those who surveyed the workers in order to execute *kombinacja*. In the 1970s, mechanical combine harvesters replaced worker-peasants and expedited both the threshing and bagging of the grain. Worker-peasants followed the combine and picked up the bags while the director drove around in a car observing the operation. Zuzanna explained:

> When the combine was riding around, then the combine immediately threshed the grain, no? And the bags of grain, the grain went into the bags and the bags were thrown out…because there was a director on the field and when the field is big then the director cannot walk all around it, no? [so] he drove a motor [car]. And those who picked up the bags and threw them, they threw the bags into the bushes so that the director could not see. And then later, they stole them. And the money goes into his own pocket. Oh! And that was all the state's. Oh you see? Because it all went to the state. Because if there were no combines, then people made mounds which were then slowly threshed next to the other, but then the

> combines appeared, then one had to guard the wheat because people kombinowali so much!

In 1972, the state introduced the contract system which mandated that all farms (peasant, collective, circle, etc.) should produce agricultural quotas but that they had the choice over what they wanted to produce and how much they wanted to sell to the GSSC. Peasants' quota amounts were no longer measured by the *gmina* based upon their hectare size, but rather peasants decided for themselves how much they wanted to subcontract to the state to sell at fixed prices[103]. However, the persistence of *kombinacja* to offset quota production costs on the peasant farms suggests that even with the contractual quotas, the peasants evaded some facets of mandatory contracting because they had never consented to the fixed, low prices of the state. Most wanted to sell at market prices and selling to the state had become a chore. With farms decreasing their quotas to the state, the state had to engage with the market for peasants' produce.

In sum, when peasants produced individual quotas prior to collectivisation in 1953, they exercised *kombinacja* by withholding quotas from the state or purchased produce on the free market to sell to the state as if it was their own; in the collective farm from 1953 to 1956, peasants exercised *kombinacja* when they extracted the farm quotas which they kept for themselves or sold on the free market for profit. In the circle from 1961 to 1989, worker-peasants employed *kombinacja* by using state machines to perform and benefit from private agricultural services, as well as extracting circle harvest grain and selling it on the free market. Interestingly, when in 1972 the state introduced mandatory contractual quotas that gave worker-peasants the option to choose which resources and quantities they would want to subcontract to the state from their farms for fixed prices, it did not appear to initiate any change in the *kombinacja* culture, the worker-peasantry continued to prioritise their 'peasant' interests of their hybridised identities.

During the economic transition from 1989 to 1999, circles diminished by 40%[104], the circle in Dobra was privatised and all of the worker-peasants lost their jobs and their farms. Stasiek, an ex-*gmina* official, emphatically claimed that the state ought to have returned the circle in Dobra to cooperative peasant ownership that would have

[103] Law: Dz.U. z 1971, Nr. 27, Poz. 253.
[104] 'O spółdzielniach: Działalność gospodarcza Jednostek Kółek Rolniczych' (2013).

continued to operate as in the prewar period. In the Rolnicy *gmina* in the Wielkopolska region, Zbierski-Salameh (2013) observed that during the economic transition in 1991, the chair of the circle 'skillfully used the local agricultural circles (sic.) as a form to channel members' growing resentment of the one-sided policy of trade liberalisation' which translated 'into societal opposition to the state and its policy' (pg. 199). Peasants still continued to use circles around Poland to organise their agrarian platform and voice their concerns on a national level. Many Dobranians complained that the SKR had been unnecessarily liquidated during the capitalist transition. Without its services and machinery, peasants had to invest in their own machines and find their own labour to continue agricultural production into the 1990s. The fall of the SKR represents villagers' frustrations with the nomenklatura's push for liquidation from which they would privately benefit rather than readapting the SKR to the capitalist model from which it had originally sprung in the pre-Soviet era.

6.6. Conclusion: combination and (im)mobility

How worker-peasants deal with problems and how much permissible space they have to do so changes across contexts[105]. This chapter has shown how the worker-peasantry in the circles in Dobra was 'locked' in a worker-peasant class. They had nowhere else to seek employment outside of their formal roles as peasant producers for the state and as workers in the Agricultural Circle who provided services on those farms. Such constraints physically inhibited their movement. A worker-peasant, who was not at the circle on time or working on the state quota on his farm in the afternoon was treated with suspicion. There were only so many ways to manipulate the divide between state work and private work. *Kombinacja* became as much an aesthetic manipulation as an economic one. A tractor operator, who looked like he was doing his circle job on another's farm, might have been using state machinery to do private work or he might have been working his own farm while a relative recorded in the circle register that he was doing something else. Worker-peasants used *kombinacja* to bridge their state roles as waged workers and quota producers by domesticating state resources in the circle in order to subsidise their quota production in the domestic sphere. They reorganised the labour time and state resources that would be used to meet both of their obligations to the state in the public and domestic spheres.

[105] Thanks to Professor Gareth A. Jones for this point.

This differentiated them from the *kombinacja* used by other worker-peasants in Poland and others mentioned in the literature (see Holmes, 1983 for example) who split their time earning wages in factories and then sold their labour in return for food on peasant and state farms.[106] The worker-peasantry in the circle was mostly concerned with 'how can I manipulate my state work and access to state resources to minimise the amount of time and labour to produce those state quotas on my farm?' The cheaper and easier it was to produce their quota, the more 'space' the peasant had to produce food for their own families. Their *kombinacja* pattern, that consisted of domesticating state resources to subsidise quota production reveal that the worker-peasantry not only bridged agro-industrial divides but bridged the 'state' and 'domestic' spheres of everyday life. Through *kombinacja* they reworked the economic relationship between peasant and state, rather than just solving money or food flow problems.

[106] The Rubignacchesi had more rights to choose how to use *combinazione* like renting, share-cropping, and waged labour pursuits, than the Polish worker-peasants in the circles at least until 1972 when contractual quotas were introduced. Rubignacchesi, even though locked in their class status, possessed the freedom of movement to engage in *combinazione* whereas Polish worker-peasants had to manipulate the circles to ensure that the resources came to them without too much suspicious movement outside of the workplace or the village.

Chapter 7

Workers' *kombinacja*: 1970-1989

7.1. Golden age

Edward Gierek's rise to First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party in 1970 ushered in policy measures that sought to rapidly modernise the entire economy, with high investments of capital and technology borrowed from the West with hard-currency credits. Between 1970 and 1973, the state abolished compulsory quotas and introduced flexible contracts in 1972, increased prices on agricultural goods bought from the peasants, ushered in easier access to credits for peasants to purchase machinery, and improved social security provisions—all of which led to the growth of agricultural production (Kubik, 1994, pgs. 22-24). But, since most of these investments were based on ideological and political imperatives and not a drive to transform the structure of the command economy, mismanagement destabilised the flow of resources.

Widespread food shortages led workers across the country to riot and protest for higher wages. As early as December 1970, workers in Szczecin and Gdańsk rioted against high food prices and demanded a 50% wage increase. After the protests, the state froze price increases on certain foods and commodities, however by 1974 the price of virtually everything was increasing faster than the real income of the population (Ibid.) The state's underdeveloped services could not adjust effectively to demand and its dependence upon large enterprises generated delays for commodities and services (Kurczewski, 1993, pg. 143; Mazurek, 2012, pg. 298; Wedel, 1986, pg. 80). The combination of increased production on peasant farms and nationwide shortages of food due to market distortions caused the 'explosion of the unofficial economy' and 'unplanned secondary processes that resonated throughout social relationships'. Families focused on arranging their own access to food through family and other networks (*znajomość*) (Mazurek, 2014, pg. 298). People found ways to access and distribute resources through networks rather than relying on official channels in the command economy. The 'second economy' became publicly visible, 'a sophisticated and virtually open trading community' that took 'place on well-travelled public sidewalks and over the telephone, in masked language, between respectable citizens'

(Steven, 1982, pg. 48; Wedel, 1986, pg. 61). Goods were distributed through personal, not state, allocation. People began to 'share the burdens of the state and undertake the delicate task of distribution' and instilled their own sense of 'rationality' into that process (Kenedi, 1982, pg. 97). Wedel (1986) states that these informal networks helped the state meet its 'basic food production and distribution needs' and hence 'stabilised the formal (state) economy during economic crisis (pgs. 53-60). The second economy became a more reliable conduit of food distribution from which both the citizens and the state benefitted. Yet, Wedel (1986) observed that this domestication of state authority twisted concepts like legality and morality: 'what is legal is not often considered moral; what is illegal is often considered moral' (pg. 61).

During this period, Dobra saw the quiet ascent of its industrial identity and a swelling of its working class. The Garbarnia state tannery that opened in 1962 employed a third of the village (over 600 workers) and drew in migrant labour from the surrounding countryside well into the 1980s. A small shantytown of temporary worker housing emerged alongside of the tannery—as did the modern, cement block apartments for permanent workers in the 1970s. The sons and daughters of the worker-peasantry—like my mother—often worked full-time in the tannery while living in expanded family household arrangements with their worker-peasant parents and helped out on the peasant farm to meet the state agricultural quota[107]. This generation was eager to build their own lives and homes away from their parents' farms—increasing the demand for building and housing materials from the 'agricultural' section of the village. During economic crises when the state stores were empty, workers wanted food that the peasants produced and peasants wanted the industrial commodities that the workers had access to in their workplaces.

This chapter shows how workers used *kombinacja* en masse to gain access to food, commodities, and conduct wage negotiations as the state fell apart. They were model citizens who understood that they co-owned the workplace along with the state. Workers used this idea of co-ownership to justify their use of *kombinacja* to meet their domestic needs in diverse and complex ways. In effect, these 'co-owned' state workplaces (and the workers' roles within them) became an extension of the domestic

[107] Peasant farming decreased, which represented progress in eliminating medium and large-scale peasant farms (Żurawski 1985, pg. 53).

sphere and workers redistributed and circulated state resources as they saw fit. Not only was their *kombinacja* changing the state economy, but the free market as well. In 1981, a 'professional speculator' complained to a Polish journalist that 'There has been a flood of thousands of laymen, thousands of amateurs, who try to *kombinować*, grandmothers, pensioners, cashiers, drivers, various marginals and other bunglers, who have made a mess of a decent economic activity' (Drozdowski, 1981; quoted in Kochanowski, 2010, 93). This *kombinacja*, in its most amplified and highly organised form, was the only economic strategy that kept people alive as market capitalism began to encroach into their everyday lives. Rather than being an expression of 'resistance', *kombinacja* began to insert its own organising and hegemonic power into the order and everyday economic and social life in the village.

7.2. *Kombinacja* in ethnography

By the 1980s, workers openly practiced *kombinacja* in Dobra. Most workers' definitions of *kombinacja* revolved around the experiences of shortages and ration cards . Some defined *kombinacja* as the marginalised poor's 'method for survival' and 'resourcefulness' (*zaradność*), while others chastised it as a route towards 'enrichment' (*zbogacić*) in order 'to acquire material happiness'. The resources in demand were 'things that were rare' and 'things that one could not buy' like meat, coffee, cement, wood, paint, metals, stationery, fuel, appliances, mechanical parts, screws, toilet paper, etc. Any resource that became extracted through *kombinacja* was called a '*kombinacja* resource' (*zkombinowane*). Networks were lifelines. For example, Fidelis, a *gmina* administrator by that time, had his coffee shortage solved one Christmas holiday by his daughter who worked in the clothing section of a state department store in the city, and who used her networks to illegally acquire a packet from the food section. Everyone had their own solutions. Workers garnered the chutzpah to use *kombinacja* because by now they were conscious that 'everyone did it'. Fidelis, Kacper—an ex-*gmina* official—, and Gosia, an ex-factory worker, said that *kombinacja* 'went full force', and 'was practiced everywhere' across 'the whole nation'. Those who did not engage in *kombinacja* faced suspicion as state sympathisers.

A small body of anthropological studies, that mentioned the existence of *kombinacja* in other parts of Poland, suggests that the villagers in Dobra were right: *kombinacja* was a

nationwide phenomenon during the 1980s[108]. In his anthropological study of 1980s Wisłok village in southeastern Poland, Hann (1985) wrote that kombinować was an 'ugly verb' which 'refers to the whole undignified, frequently underhand and devious, maneuvers persons must make to accomplish anything' (pg. 91). In her ethnographic work studying Łódź and Podhale in the 1980s, Pine (2007) writes that *kombinacja* was a skillset that one had to know. '*Trzeba umieć kombinować*', which she translates as 'It is necessary to know how to combine things, to juggle', was a common phrase spoken by her informants. Pine argues that this type of work of combining resources around the household was 'the most basic way in which villagers make themselves social persons and craft their social world' (pg. 193).

Other definitions of *kombinacja* have emphasised its negative qualities: 'to scheme up an ingenious, often illegal solution involving what outsiders might define as theft', ''finagling', 'searching out gaps, loopholes, and semi-legal solutions within the official distribution system', 'thinking', 'apprehending', 'trying to find a solution', 'swindling', 'contriving' and 'contacts that allow one to beat the system'. Examples of it varied: 'stealing light-bulbs from public elevators for use in "private" flats' or 'ironing already validated bus tickets so they could be used repeatedly' or 'bribing a watchman with a bottle of vodka to "get" a bag of cement from a municipal construction site' or 'using company time and resources for personal ends' (Barcikowska, 2004, pg. 1; Kifner, 1983b, pg. 1; Kusiak, 2012, pgs. 296-297; Mazurek, 2012, pg. 306; Pawlik, 1992, pg. 79). The most accurate are Barcikowska's (2004) broad definition of *kombinacja* as 'the distinct way in which Poles negotiated their everyday lives' (pg. 1), and Kifner's (1983) definition of an 'underground alternative' (pg. 1) which opens up the definition as a platform for economic innovation and difference, rather than an ethically-defunct strategy of survival (as if the state was any 'more' ethical!).

Another important contribution the literature makes is to explore just how complexly intertwined *kombinacja* is with other informal activities. Pawlik (1992) in particular has coupled *kombinacja* with code words and phrases like *wynośić* ('to lift' or 'take out'), *załatwić coś* ('to arrange something'), *pogadać z kimś* ('to chat with someone'), *coś przynieść* ('to bring something back' from the workplace), *opić coś* ('to drink something

[108] Conjugations of *kombinacja*.

over' in order to arrange something), and *przyswoić sobie* ('domesticate for myself')—all used to refer to making deals that were unplanned by the state. He explained that *kombinacja* was different from the other second economy activities like reciprocity, mutual help, bribery, and the other Polish phrases, because it could refer to 'larger-scale wheeling and dealing' (Pawlik, 1992, pgs. 79, 93). Stenning et al. (2010) claimed that there was a 'fine line' between *załatwić* (arranging) and *kombinować* in that the latter had/has 'more dubious connotations of speculation and dealing. The border between these terms was policed by moral judgments of others' behaviour, which had either crossed this line or veered into blatant illegality (e.g. 'taking' property from another person rather than the state)' (pg. 260, footnote 5). How *kombinacja* intersects with all of these is still largely unexplored.

How workers justified the use of *kombinacja* highlights the 'common goods' problem under state socialism. Barcikowska (2004) observed that the 'use of *kombinowanie* was nourished by the system's championing, even fetishising, of "common goods"', meaning that 'the ownership of all property by the state combined with the ownership of the state by the people meant that universal common goods belonged to all. Everybody was the owner of everything' (Barcikowska, 2004, pg. 1). They knew the Party mantra: that state production belonged to everybody. Hence, 'We are all robbing Poland', said one informant in Pawlik's study (1992, pg. 81). According to that rationale, 'If common goods belonged to everybody, they belonged to nobody. No single owner was responsible for any particular item in the public realm, to care for it and ensure that it was used in a proper way' (Barcikowska, 2004, pg. 1). Thus, using *kombinacja* was a state-given right to arrange the state as the workers saw fit, which happened to be into the domestic sphere. Fidelis's definition of *kombinacja* as a 'right' highlights this issue quite well. '*Kombinacja* was not stealing. It was not stealing. It was normal. If I could not purchase it, I had to *kombinować*'. He added, 'To steal it, it would have been that she would have stolen it, put it in her pocket, and would not put the money in the cash register. That is stealing. But, she took it and sold it to normal people. It has to be someone who has a right to it'. Thus, according to his definition, it was not stealing because the cashier was part of the workplace and a rightful co-owner of the state who operated the store that sold these goods. State action against *kombinacja* would have subverted that party mantra because it would be a declaration that the state had separate

interests from workers, and that the State held exclusive ownership over common goods.

Another theme was that people were conscious that *kombinacja* against the hegemonic power corrupted them. *Kombinacja* was the product of, as Barcikowska (2004) put it, 'a Polish reality corrupted by the communist system that ruled the country for over four decades after the second world war' (pg. 1). Retaliation through *kombinacja* was a way to restore the balance of power and resources, as per the quote, 'The State robs me, I rob the State, and it all comes out even' (Pawlik, 1992, pg. 89). The notion of the state 'robbing' workers of the commodities they produced was a common feeling of resentment. In Mazurek's (2012) study, Grażyna, who during late socialism worked in the Kobra shoe factory, wondered how it was possible that the factory produced so many shoes at the same time that shoes remained rationed in the state economy. The only way to access those shoes was to use *kombinacja* because they were not sold in the store (pg. 306). In Steven's (1982) study, a sociologist explained that:

> 'We have all been criminalised. When you start to buy meat regularly on the black market in defiance of the law and get away with it, it's not long before you start buying other things too. From there it is a short step to cheating the system in every way open to you' (pg. 52).

Barcikowska (2004) explained how this cycle of corruption broke down the state system:

> The citizen may have been enslaved by the communist system, but he was a client of it, feeding off what goods communism offered him. These were supposed to come free, but in reality *homo sovieticus* paid an enormous price: a spreading corruption of mentality where *kombinowanie* was encouraged and even sanctified. Thus, although *kombinowanie* could feel like a way to outmaneuver the system, in reality it became a mere adaptation to its habitat (pg. 1).

'Adaptation' prompted more shortages, officially, and in turn encouraged *kombinacja*. A possible explanation for this relationship between processes that seem to both preserve the system and prompt its apparent self-destruction, is that various local groups competed for scarce resources in the common goods pool—ones which even the nomenklatura were competing over. In Pawlik's (1992) study, a 30-year-old mechanic

explained the layered corruption of not only the state economy but the nomenklatura's —'them'—*kombinacja* activity against the ordinary worker ('us'):

> In every trade there's an opportunity [to make money on the side]. If you can't steal, then you can take bribes. Even the director, who doesn't trouble himself with production, steals: he "arranges" something from someone, "takes" from him in return and this is really stealing from him. Maybe this is an even worse crime than stealing from society, since society as a whole gets robbed [by the Communist state]. But that director robs an individual (pg. 80).

An us/them binary emerged that split 'good' *kombinacja* among those who exercised it in their milieu and 'bad' *kombinacja* when the competing group exercised it against them. Although this dichotomy existed that set the rules of the game for a family or milieu on what they ought and ought not to do, there was no debate about the necessity of *kombinacja* in everyone's lives. 'Everybody did it' was a major justification for why people engaged in good and bad *kombinacja* activity. A foreman in Pawlik's (1992) study stated that 'Everyone has some "in" ('*dojście*') somewhere, regardless of his occupation'. Another store manager explained that 'I live according to one assumption—that today you can't "arrange" ('*załatwić*') anything without gifts, money, and so on. In Poland this is the one law of the universe' (pg. 79). This was not so much about 'getting in the game' as much as it was that 'this is the way that Poland works'. Pawlik (2004) argues that colloquial terms like '*kombinowanie*' or '*wynoszenie*' ('carrying out') represent a worldview in which the marginalised only perceive themselves on the 'outside' of resource pools and that accessing them was only possible through transgression (pg. 140, footnote 3). Not engaging in *kombinacja* was a dangerous way to stand out in the crowd, of being a sympathiser to the state[109]. However, the classification of good versus bad *kombinacja* in the redistribution of state assets was a narrative device that competing groups in the village used to define the parameters of their economic interests and reproduce their social identities through their

[109] Firlit and Chłopecki (1992) stated that factory workers who would not be open to favours and to returning them would be considered 'antisocial' and 'legalistic' (pg. 101).

engagement in their 'brand' of *kombinacja*[110]. Networks were reproduced through this engagement with state assets.

The lack of consequences and responsibility for *kombinacja* was furthered by the eschatological idea that their socialist world was coming to an end. Poland's increasing credit line from the West, which exceeded 20 billion dollars in debt by 1979, and the rise of Solidarity, which had over nine million members by 1981, signified to the ordinary citizen that the state was falling apart and that they would have to survive the transition (Davies, 1982, pg. 627; Kurczewski, 1993, pg. 210). According to Wedel (1986), the introduction of Martial Law prompted fear that they had eaten their 'last piece of cake' and drunk their 'last bottle of alcohol' in preparation for war with Russia (pg. 12). This apocalyptical reasoning justified the widespread theft of state resources and the second economy became 'a dominant vehicle for consumption' (Mazurek, 2012, 299). I remember my mother telling me of the transition period when she would keep taking out housing credits (loans) from the state knowing that the state would collapse and that they may or may not have to repay them (they did not). The 'state is collapsing' mentality justified *kombinacja* because of villagers' perception that whatever they did at the end of that world would not bring real legal consequences in the new one.

7.2.1. (Anti)hero

Kombinators were depicted as enemies and anti-heroes. The state defined these private entrepreneurs as enemies. In one famous example, the director of a state-run meat warehouse, Stanisław Wawrzecki, who had admitted to taking bribes received the death penalty for 'economic crimes' against the state ('Syn Warzeckiego', 2012, pg. 1). Richard Kowalski, who was Jewish, was persecuted for selling water instead of wine to the state on a 26 million *złoty* contract. He owned several dozen 100-hectare apple orchards, each under a different name because at the time private ownership of over 100 hectares was illegal. The unmasking of a Jewish entrepreneur fed into the undercurrent of anti-Semitism (see Steven, 1982). The state was sending a message to deter people from *kombinacja* because it was linked with Jewishness.

Some progressive scholars did not have a positive view of the *kombinator*. Gliński (1992) claimed that the *kombinator* was a 'schemer, and sometimes even swindler in

[110] Thanks to Professor Gareth A. Jones for this point.

engaging in clever speculation'. The *kombinator* was one who benefitted from arranging economic loose ends, rather than an activist for reform and real change: 'Rather, his work serves to reinforce it. Most often he is active in areas of the private sector that offer opportunities for large if illegal profits' (Gliński, 1992, pgs. 147-148). According to this perspective, *kombinators*' sole purpose was not to make the world a better place, but to benefit from the broken system.

Other stories about *kombinacja* lauded the ingenuity of ordinary people. For example, a Party member who had been turned away by a bus tram conductor at a station in Warsaw received an odd response from the state bus office after she complained at her treatment. Apparently, no such bus number as the one she provided existed. Months later, she saw the bus again and gathered witnesses. An investigation revealed that two bus operators had cleaned up an old bus and hooked it into the tram system and ran it as a 'free enterprise bus' for eighteen months (Steven, 1982, pg. 56). It was an odd example of the nomenklatura being treated as second-class citizens by the *kombinators*. In Łódź, a pensioner and trout fisherman, who lived across the street from a state nylon thread manufacturer, cast a line with a hook through the factory window and onto a giant bobbin allowing him to draw a single thread to his room where he had a similar giant bobbin. Drawing a single thread across the street he became Poland's largest supplier of nylon thread on the 'free' market (Ibid.). These stories celebrated *kombinators*' more robust economic presence in the public sphere.

Context is everything when we speak about *kombinators.* It was common for an informant to explain their *kombinacja* activity proudly or with a few chuckles and then later in the interview chastise someone else for being a *kombinator* (even without the good/bad distinction). For instance, Kacper, the ex-*gmina* official, who had told me so much about his *kombinacja* activity during the 1980s later said that the *kombinator* was someone who 'wanted to live through it easily' or who 'wanted to drink' and 'not to work too much'. Being labeled a *kombinator* meant that the individual had drawn too much attention to themself to the point that they had acquired a so-called 'form'—which was against the rules of *kombinacja*. Yet, those who temporarily became *kombinators* recreated their perfectly executed plans in duping authority. *Kombinacja* was like a drug.

7.3. *Kombinacja* as a miracle

Kombinacja's 'magical' or 'miraculous' qualities deserve mention. I was struck by Barcikowska's (2004) description of *kombinacja* as a 'magical and extremely flexible word' with 'endless and multiple' variations and which 'refer to almost every attempt to manage a situation' (pg. 1). During fieldwork, villagers often ended their *kombinacja* stories in an absurdist tone and the phrase, '*Cudy się działy*!' (Miracles happened!). The term miracle (*cud*) carried negative connotations and was used in multiple ways to describe a dystopian reality produced by the exploitation of or profiteering from others' labour. The idea behind the 'miracles' was that the subjects already lived in a dystopian reality and necessarily used dystopian or immoral strategies in order to survive. To acknowledge miracles was to deal with two competing dimensions of rationality that converge on a given landscape.

The state used 'miracles' to force people to work, who then responded with *kombinacja* by extracting the tools the state provided for them to give the gift of free labour. When Fidelis explained to me how subbotniks (*czynny społeczne*) were organised so that workers could give the gift of free labour to the socialist revolution, he said:

> The tools had to be supplied by the enterprise. So they would buy all of these rakes, and shovels, and miracles. Then they distributed them during the *czyn* because one had to work somehow! But then, it was like this: one person walked off somewhere from the *czyn*—because no one patrolled it!

Peasants' *kombinacja* in evading quotas were examples of miracles. When I asked Stasiek, the ex-*gmina* official, whether the state knew about the evasion of quotas, he responded, 'Everyone knew! Those were miracles! Miracles occurred here'. *Kombinacja* was proof that within a specific 'mixture' of economic and aesthetic activities, the *kombinator* could produce an alternative to the plan.

The coupling of *kombinacja* stories and 'miracles' emphasised *kombinacja*'s evasion of form, like a 'spirit' that temporarily transforms a villager into a *kombinator*. Zuzanna's statement 'if it is not frame-able (*ujęte*), then it is *kombinacja*' emphasises the importance of existing in between 'form'. Fidelis similarly pointed out the importance of *kombinacja* as escaping from structures—'Use *kombinacja*! Think! One's own method! To, somehow from the poverty or from this structure (*załorzenia*) or whatever

it was, to somehow escape from it in some method'. Vagueness, Pawlik (1992) writes, gives *kombinacja* a 'functional advantage' because 'it enables people to avoid elucidating how they get scarce goods and services' (pg. 79). Fidelis explained that he used the term to preserve secrecy when he exchanged resources with another person: 'So I would say "I used *kombinacja*" but I did not say from whom. Yes! It is my secret'[112]. The idea of *kombinacja*'s miracles captures the vague back-door strategies peasants used to partially disconnect from the economic and political structures that exploited them. The emergence of 'miracles' to describe these activities could expose the encroachment of capitalism in the late socialist period.

7.4. Progressive alcoholism

In the late 1980s, there was a Polish joke: 'Between the stages of advanced socialism and full communism, there is an intermediate stage—progressive alcoholism'. I was taught this narrative by my parents—that the state used vodka in order to 'dumb down' people's will (*chęć*) to act and quell resistance —and it was occasionally heard during fieldwork as well. This argument was amplified by the leaders of the independent labour movement at public rallies, that the alcoholism that has eaten away at farms, homes, villages, and city streets, was the result of disordered state policies that have 'succeeded' in spreading the seed of socialism (Darnton, 1981, pg. 1). Indeed, a state over alcohol production had been a long-standing symbol of the state as far as 1944 when the first law passed by the PKWN provisional Communist government nationalised alcohol production and distribution[113]. The PRL cracked down on domestic *bimber* (moonshine) production and public alcoholism (500 *złoty* fine), making the consumption of state alcohol a financial backbone for the socialist revolution (Chase, 1984, pg. 417). The state's ability to control alcohol consumption and production demonstrated its grip on power.

[112] This resembles Taussig's (1980) story about the 'highly secretive' and 'individualised' stories about contracts with the devil as a form of peasant resistance against the capitalist exploitation of their labour—'so that he could get money without working' (pgs. 96-97).
[113] Dz.U. z 1944, Nr. 9, Poz. 45.

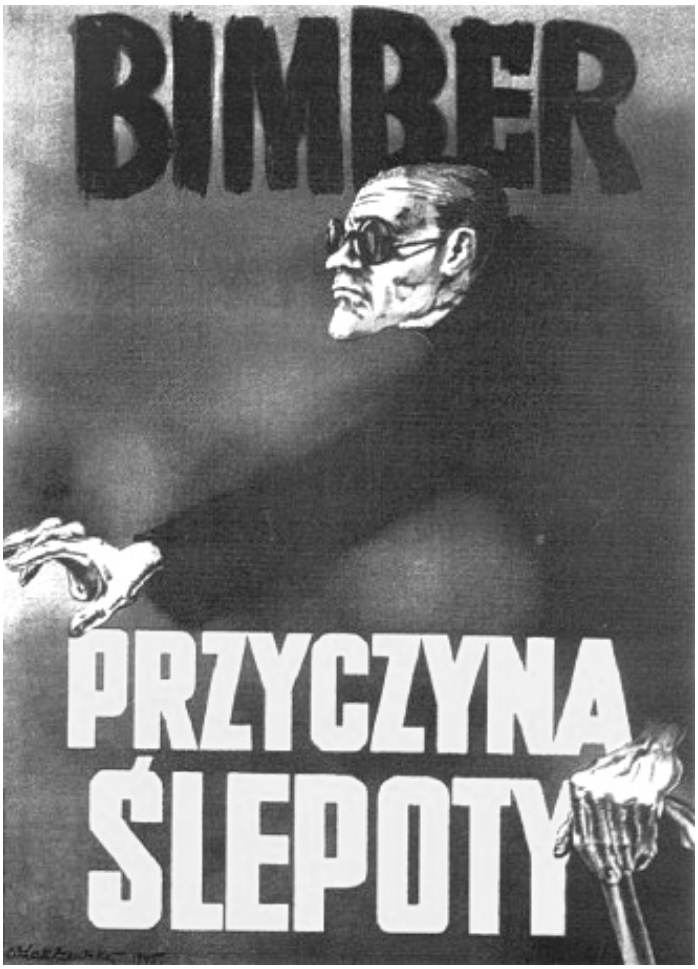

Figure 26 '*Bimber*: cause of blindness'. Man on the poster is Wojciech Jaruzelski, Prime Minister from 1981 to 1985[114] (http://propaganda-prlu.bartlomiejspeth.com/).

Although vodka was rationed at half a litre per adult per month during Martial Law, 2 million people out of 35 million were excessive drinkers and needed medical care in 1981 (Chase, 1984, pg. 417). Alcohol consumption made workers lethargic, unruly, and uncontrollable. By 1981, the price of vodka had shot up 55%—in part due to the state's anti-alcoholism campaign—and was unobtainable in many places (Hann, 1985, pg. 89; 'Poland Raises Price of Drinks', 1981, pg. 1). The New York Times reported that it was the lines for vodka that were the longest, especially during the holidays (Kifner, 1983a, pg. 1). Yet, the quality of the vodka was questionable. One newspaper, Kurier Polski, reported that some customers who had received their vodka rations 'upon unscrewing

[114] Thanks to Dr. Frances Pine for this point.

the caps, found to their dismay and fury that it contained only ordinary water' (seen in Tagliabue, 1988, pg. 1). Those with network connections in the state stores acquired vodka through *kombinacja*.

An important phenomenon emerged during this period in Dobra and on a national level. People distilled their own *bimber* (90-100% ethanol) to serve at family occasions and celebrations (see Hann, 1985). Poles knew the basic 'Battle of Grunwald'[115] recipe by heart and most families in Dobra guarded recipes to produce legal liquors (*nalewki*) from berries, sugar, and cherry leaves or 'wine' (*wino*) by adding wheat and yeast to the *nalewki*. To produce *bimber*, people needed copious amounts of (rationed) sugar and distillation technology, which was unavailable in the state stores. *Kombinacja* offered an option. One had to be cognisant about who had a sugar ration and which networks to use to gather knowledge. Who used less sugar or had extra? Who stole enough sugar that I can benefit from in my production of *bimber*? Whom can I bribe? Whom can I use *kombinacja* on? Answers to these questions required keeping of tabs on the circulation of rationed sugar across the entire village. The resurgence of widespread *bimber* production not only symbolised Poles' rejection of the state monopoly on alcohol and the retreat of state surveillance from the domestic sphere, but the introduction of a mature form of *kombinacja* that allowed the domestication of state property to the point of splintering off from state production. 'Private' production of a state monopoly began to take off to a point that the state could not suppress it.

While the state militia uncovered over 15,000 *bimber* operations annually, most households risked the 10,000 *złoty* fine to produce it (Chase, 1984, pg. 419). I only met one person, a Belarusian woman who had worked on a state farm adjacent to Dobra, who had a run-in with the militia due to her family's *bimber* production:

> For the baptism, my husband made *bimber*. And for that *bimber*, we suffered so much! There was one man, he was not from our areas, but he was not good, let him live there in peace. Because of him, many people sat in prison. And he contacted Słupsk. They took my husband to prison for a year.

[115] The Battle of Grunwald in 1410 was a decisive victory for the Polish Lithuanian Empire against the German-Prussian Teutonic Knights (Davies, 2005, pg. 98). The recipe was 1 kilogram of sugar, 4 decagrams of yeast and 10 litres of water.

It would appear that most state interventions were symbolic gestures. In 1989, Jan Cieślak's famous vodka and *bimber* recipe book was published and made it onto many families' bookshelves, including ours. By that time *bimber* production had many different variations and recipes. With *kombinacja*, villagers were able to 'reclaim' domestic production from the state monopoly as a form of symbolic reclamation of national victory.

Illegal *meliny*—private household bars that sold vodka and *bimber* to customers—emerged to solve alcohol shortages during the 1970s and 1980s. Most of the alcohol was purchased on the free market or produced at home (Kochanowski, 2010, pg. 221). In Dobra, the *meliny* were often run by women who pooled their vodka rations and sold them at high prices to workers in 50 ml shots. This was the case in Frances Pine's ethnographic study of the Górale ethnic group in Nowy Targ, southern Poland, where the researcher observed that the women served vodka in their basements to village men, their 'customers' (Pine, 1993, pg. 238).

Figure 27 '*Bimber* rules', 1980s. Police officer succumbing to *bimber* production. (Langda, 2013).

Without a doubt, these private spaces where *zkombinowane* state vodka was sold were sites where people held political debates and made further *kombinacja* deals. During one interview in the industrial section of Dobra, a retired factory worker expressed the

sense of camaraderie she felt when people visited her *melina*: 'We had the television in the window in the other room. We put it out in the window [...] the men would come, we put down half-a-litre, they drank some, they talked, they did not get drunk but they drank a half litre, sat, talked, and somehow it was good'. *Meliny* represented the physical emergence of a culture which revolved around *kombinacja* and alcohol.

When local authorities sought to shut down the *meliny*, Kochanowski (2010) writes, clients would defend the owner, because the melina was the only place where they could have access to vodka every day of the week (pg. 223). To protect the *meliny* from the state most were not operated by a single family but carried out by a trusted network of friends, family, and neighbours. The alcohol would be held in the neighbours' basement or in the trunk of someone's car (pg. 224). When authorities burst in, the *melina* could have just pass the scene off as a group of friends sharing a drink, not an enterprise that was selling smuggled, state produced, vodka and home-made *bimber*. In effect, people protected the private sphere as an entrepreneurial space by manipulating the aesthetics of both to evade the state. While they 'saved' or preserved the domestic or private sector, they did so at a great cost to their bodies and future economic potential.

7.5. Vodka as currency

When vodka was rationed to half a litre per person per month in the 1980s, it became more valuable than currency. High inflation rates in the 1980s lowered the value of the Polish *złoty*, and many people started using foreign currency—then worth about $2 billion—sent by family abroad or earned on a foreign trip. The value of the dollar on the free market was approximately five times its real value. Not everyone had access to dollars and the *złoty* was worthless, so in Dobra vodka became the new currency in many relations (Łoś, 1990b, pg. 37). Workers who moonlighted during state work received half-litre bottles of vodka for any private services that they performed in their clients' households (see Hann, 1985 on vodka as 'gift, usually in the form of shared consumption after a service has been performed, pg. 89). So, one can imagine a *kombinator* taking out state property from his or her workplace and then installing it into another person's house for which he would be paid with state produced vodka. The state both supplied and paid for the private services!

As vodka replaced currency, moonlighting became a means of drinking rather than making extra money for the household. 'The nation drank—it was like this under

Communism, I will tell you honestly. They drank! They even *kombinowali* for vodka alone, yes!' Gosia, an ex-factory worker, told me. This appeared to have been the case in Pawlik's (1992) study on informal practices across multiple workplaces in Poland. In one workplace, a 26-year-old worker stated that, 'When I'm paid less, I go to work on the side…Otherwise I couldn't survive. I treat this as part of the salary that I have to bring home to keep the family going. As for *fucha* (informal earning), that's when I don't take money but vodka instead. That's become the custom; vodka as pay for side work' (pg. 81). Firlit and Chłopecki (1992) wrote that when there were services performed between fellow employees, 'the most common form of payment for a service is a "treat"—usually drinking a bottle of vodka that one person brings to consume with his cohorts' (pg. 101). They claimed that this was the 'main integrating factor of the worker community in all factories, the lubricant that facilitates friendship' because it was 'a mode of informality, drinking promotes entering into informal contracts and facilitates informal business dealings at work' (pgs. 107-108).

But there was another reason. Vodka was a safer way to engage in *kombinacja* than in paying the private services with *złoty*—which would have attracted state surveillance. Fidelis explained:

> Usually people were working on construction, then simply, he sold something for a half litre (of vodka). For money, no. Because what was in the law, that if I took a *złoty*, then it was a big crime. But if I gave him a half litre, then it was not a crime. [chuckle] That is how it was. It was still evident, but it was not as threatening in the court, or elsewhere. So, one did not give money.

Which is not to say that vodka and the money economy were not linked. In Firlit and Chłopecki's (1992) study, a construction company inventory clerk explained: 'That's why I sit up late at night so often writing reports, making calculations, sometimes giving them to someone who is drunk for signing, or treat this someone [his superior] to vodka' (pg. 103). Availability of vodka allowed shortages in the accounts to be 'overlooked'. As Wedel (1986) explained, vodka facilitated the 'transition from an official to an unofficial situation' which allowed 'wrangling which could not be done officially' and promoted the 'privatisation of public roles' (pg. 29). Vodka was a fundamental form of indoctrination in workers' and nomenklatura's *kombinacja* networks. '[W]hen one put the half litre [on the table] it meant for there to be silence

and that was that', Zuzanna explained. Sharing vodka represented a code of silence among those engaged in *kombinacja*. It reproduced the 'milieu' and shared economic interests.

7.6. Securing construction materials

The reforms of the 1970s and 1980s eased the state's grip on the private housing market, and most Poles began to renovate and modernise their homes. Many of these homes were still the original German structures that they or their parents had moved into after the Second World War. Most people wanted to repair and modernise walls, roofs, plumbing, sinks, toilets, etc. But, although the private sector was being legalised this did not mean that the state economy had adjusted sufficiently enough to provide access to the materials needed for that private activity to flourish (Kenedi, 1982). As my mother put it, 'Let's say I have money. I want to build a house. I will use *kombinacja* to extract the bricks from here and there because it will be cheaper'. An ordinary worker could get resources on the free market, however these were often expensive; so, they used their networks to access those very resources in the state workplaces for 'free' or through other exchanges like vodka. In one outstanding example, when the *gmina* in Dobra began the construction of four worker apartment blocks to house the influx of workers in the 1970s, the materials for an entire building disappeared; only three were built! Most of the everyday instances of *kombinacja*, however, occurred in the state tannery and the ZNMR mechanical enterprise; because they were both connected to a state production line and their warehouses were regularly replenished with new materials sent from the *powiat* level of their enterprises.

Most *kombinacja* was performed by individual workers who worked in the factory. Kacper, an ex-*gmina* official, and Gosia, an ex-factory worker, who lived together in the industrial part of the village adjacent to the Garbarnia tannery explained that individuals hoarded state materials whenever they could get access to them (even if they did not need them right away) with the possibility of selling or exchanging them in the future.

K: There was nothing in the stores.
G: There were no such things!
K: If one wanted to paint something—
G: With what?

K: There was no paint or anything anywhere. If someone worked in a painting enterprise—

G: —he stole it!

K: Then he had his own supplies

G: He stole it and that was that. Then he sold it and had it (money/vodka)!

K: He stole it and saved it up next to some finishing work they had, he used it up and the rest he smuggled out.

Self: But what for example could they steal from Garbarnia except skins.

G: Skins, everything. Hydraulic things.

K: From the warehouse all of the hydraulic things. All of the electrical things—

G: Electrical things, of course! All of Dobra was building, so everything from cables, not cables, they carried everything out! They carried it out!

K: Well, now they are building. Before, they were not building as much. But even into the house, into one's private home.

G: Whatever it was, they used *kombinacja* to extract out of it. One brought it home.

It appears that a lot of this *kombinacja* of resources occurred during the 'finishing' stage of the production line, where workers diluted paint and saved the rest for themselves. So there must have been some loose form of organised *kombinacja* in order for individuals to take the resources from the state workplaces back to their homes. My mother recalled that everyone in Dobra had the same colour walls and fences—an aqua green—that accented their properties because a group of *kombinator*s had stolen the paint from the State Agricultural Machine Enterprise (ZNMR; henceforth mechanical enterprise) in the village and sold it off to their networks. She remembers this fondly because when one walked into someone's house and saw that colour, they knew that they had engaged in some form of *kombinacja*.

The state, however, neither provided those types of services nor sufficient access to the resources necessary to make those repairs, renovations, and construction plans. One of the benefits of working in the state was that if one was a repairman for toilets, they could use that expertise to use *kombinacja* to acquire those toilets and then install them into private clients' homes. *Kombinacja*, as a solution to the housing problem, ran in conjunction with the private services sector and everyone openly used it to modernise their homes. Franciszek, my brother who grew up in Dobra, explained a similar scenario of moonlighting: 'A very common case: let us say a welder would accept a private job,

but perform the work in the factory during work hours. Double salary!' Much of the moonlighting consisted of installing factory resources like pipes for plumbing, screws for washing machines, and sink fixtures, into private homes. Those who wanted to modernise and fix up their homes found access to commodities that were not in the state stores through their family or networks in the factory or enterprise in the village. Kacper and Gosia explained how it worked:

> **K:** For example, the sink broke here.
>
> **G:** Oh. There were no sinks!
>
> **K:** There are none! There were no parts!
>
> **G:** So then the repairman has to use *kombinacja*. He says that he will use *kombinacja* and he will bring it.
>
> **K:** He said that he would use *kombinacja* and he brought it, yes.
>
> **G:** And will it be or not? So he brings it, and now he says "this and this much for vodka or half litre". Whatever it cost, one gave it to him. That is how it was.

This was not specific to Dobra—according to Firlit and Chłopecki's (1992) observations of informal activity in five villages across multiple voivodeships[116] in the 1980s, state workers 'carried out' (*wynośić*) nuts, screws, plaster, plastic pipes, scraps—all of which were necessary for household renovation (pg. 98). Workers took time out during their work day at a municipal construction company to move furniture with other workers for 400 *złoty* and a beer; or spread soil in a private garden for 500 *złoty* each. In all cases, their public displays drew attention from passers by who might offer them private jobs (pgs. 105-106). A 1983 article in *Życie Warszawy* (Warsaw Life) about the Lenin Steelworks in Kraków reported that 10% of the workforce was out on sick leave each day, presumably working 'on the side' (in Wedel, 1986, pg. 63). Moonlighting was a way for workers to (re)organise the production cycle and bring commodities to the locals. Firlit and Chłopecki (1992) observed that this 'free time' began to be considered separate from 'work time' in that it was highly valued as an additional source of income for the household, and was 'one form of "organising" in a factory' (pg. 103). When all of the workers were organising private activity, then it would have been difficult for the state to crack down on such widespread activity. The effect, as put by economist Marek Bednarski in an *Życie Gospodarcze* (Economic Life) article in 1984, was that state work

[116] Administrative subdivision.

became secondary in importance to private work when workers treated 'the job in the state enterprise mainly as a basis for qualifying for social insurance benefits and, often, as a source of free materials and orders' (in Wedel, 1986, pg. 62).

Figure 28 Tannery in Dobra, now owned by a German businessman who employs locals part-time to produce mink fur accessories. Author's photo (2009).

Moonlighting and protection were synonymous. Many workers' informal activities within the state workplaces occurred under the support or knowledge of Party officials and directors (Łoś, 1990b, pg. 42). My brother recalled in an email about how my father's co-worker in the Agricultural Circle had a side job in the mechanical enterprise just down the street: 'He worked together with our father, but was much better off than him. It turned out that he gained his wealth stealing auto parts from the ZNMR and then selling them. His bosses knew about it, but, since they were paid off by that person, they would allow it'. A similar pattern existed in a metalwork factory in Firlit and Chłopecki's (1992) study: 'A mechanic fixed the shop director's private car during work hours, using state-owned tools and materials. The director paid him and promised to let him use the metalwork factory's tractor for his own purpose'. They claimed that

such services were difficult to observe because the payment was not immediate (pg. 101).

In other instances, workers paid off those above them, like brigadiers, to keep their *kombinacja* quiet. Firlit and Chłopecki (1992) observed that a worker at the municipal construction company would 'skip out' for an hour with the foreman's permission to use the state power-shovel to level ground in front of an acquaintance's house. The foreman would warn him to come back at a specific time before the boss got back. They stated that the foreman knew 'very well that he has no choice' because if he would refuse, then the power-shovel would soon 'go out of order' or work would go very slowly, etc. (pgs. 100-101). Without informal activity, the workers rescinded their consent to carry out state work.

The authorities turned a blind eye because they too needed services. Kacper (who himself was an official) and Gosia again explained 'They were looking through their fingers, the Directors, and in the enterprise just like here in Garbarnia, they stole all the time!' In addition, by the 1980s and the subsequent economic crisis of Martial Law, *kombinacja* became so pervasive in the factory that the trade unions organised trips to Bulgarian black markets where workers sold factory leathers for extra income to bring back home. Unlike in the other examples, where *kombinacja* occurred under the state's radar, in this case the state workplace helped its workers to supplement their incomes by liquidating state capital.

7.7. *Kombinacja* in the legal 'private' sector

The state opened up the 'legal' private sector in the 1980s. The 1981 resolution of the Council of Ministers called for equal treatment of both private and socialised handicrafts and other branches of the small-scale economy. Such legal private enterprises were taxed and registered. From 1982 to 1984, 600,000 new employees (5% of the work force in the state sector) transferred into the non-agricultural, non-state sector. Agricultural, housing, small-scale industry and handicrafts dominated the private sector. By 1984, there were 470,000 private, non-agricultural enterprises. The handicrafts sector employed 74% of all private employees, transport employed 12%, retail and catering 8%, and there were 670 foreign firms that by 1987 employed 62,000 people, accounting for 5%. As a whole, the private sector produced over 20% of the

national income and employed 33% of the population (Łoś, 1990b, pgs. 29-31; Gliński, 1992, pg. 145; Wedel, 1986, pgs. 53-54).

Although the private legal sector was not synonymous with untaxed and unregistered free market or with *kombinacja* activity, it relied heavily on smuggled state resources. Mazurek (2012) writes about a Warsaw man named Romuald who left his public sector job and became a private taxi driver upon gaining entrance into an exclusive 'informal guild' of entrepreneurs (*przywaciarze*) in the 1970s. Romuald exercised 'kombinowanie' when he negotiated with state gas stations for extra fuel or found creative ways to avoid taxes (pg. 303). For better or worse, the legal and illegal private sectors were 'linked' with the state sector and *kombinacja* was important in that relationship. In Dobra, there were two examples of this: the emergence of a 'private' factory alongside the state tannery and the infiltration of nomenklatura privileges into a privatised state restaurant.

Private sector enterprises that struggled with constant supply shortages acquired their materials through the free market or *kombinacja*. Again, *kombinacja* was not necessarily synonymous with the free market because it provided a cheaper option by directly taking resources from the state. Workers used *kombinacja* to secure state resources from their workplaces and sold these to the private sector entrepreneurs. Many managers of state enterprises reportedly adjusted their production to the needs and preferences of other *kombinators* with whom they collaborated to sell off state resources. For example, in June 1985, police shut down 80% of furniture shops in Warsaw because they were selling 60% of the furniture on the free market. However, the practice was so open that even the furniture sales clerk told the state media that 'One cannot live on wages alone. When they fix our income they already assume that everyone will earn something on the side'. Once the legal private sector enterprises finished their required production, they then sold their commodities to state companies (which faced shortages) and further increased their interdependency in supplying materials, producing, and distributing commodities (Łoś, 1990b, pgs. 30-43).

In the 1980s, *kombinacja* was such an ingrained part of the culture in the state Garbarnia tannery in Dobra that a worker started his own private tannery in the village. When my uncle and mother recalled this story to me, they claimed that this was 'advanced' or a higher form of *kombinacja*. My mother, who worked as an accountant

in the Garbarnia factory for 15 years said that the 'private' business was not legally registered. Yet, this 'private' tannery produced leather and fur goods using locally-caught foxes and mink by using chemicals and processing equipment systematically extracted from the state tannery at night by commissioned *kombinator*s. The 'private' tannery was the most organised form of *kombinacja* in the village.

Figure 29 My mother's fox shawl and fur cap she bought from the 'private' tannery that existed along-side the state tannery. Author's photo (2009).

The private tannery met local demand for fur and leather goods. State production of these commodities was geographically distributed—the Garbarnia in Dobra only

performed part of the production process (tanning) before selling its product to another state factory in Słupsk to complete the commodity for foreign export. Locals received nothing. The private tannery met the demand by producing hats, scarves, and gloves on-site in Dobra and selling it to locals. It was wildly successful and to this day even my mother owns a fox shawl (pictured above) and fur hat which she purchased from this 'private' tannery[117]. My family members spoke positively of this 'private' tannery because it provided a service to the village that answered to a 'local' demand. It even provided a more 'ethical' economic activity because it allowed locals to benefit from local natural resources.

The Garbarnia director knew about this private tanning operation. When he was interviewed for a small book that was published for the village's 40th anniversary in 1985, he made a remark that allows us to peek into his mentality and power regarding factory profits: 'It does not matter to us, obviously, to work up to large profits. It [meeting quota] is enough—unless a production site would burden in any special way the development budget. And we have already accomplished that [the quota]' (Żurawski, 1985, pg. 81). The non-competitive environment in the state economy was ripe for hiding profits by selling off surplus factory materials to 'private' businesses. By doing this, he would have simultaneously kept state authorities at bay for suspecting him of engaging the factory in private competition against other state factories and would have helped the 'private' business to flourish. Exercising such self-preservation of both the state factory and his position was an economically advantageous position especially if he helped the 'private' tannery flourish on the side.

Kombinacja during the nascent privatisation period did not benefit everyone in the village at all times. For instance, my mother benefitted from the 'private' tannery because she purchased a fox shawl that she otherwise may not have been able to buy in the city. In the late 1980s, when the *gmina* began the privatisation process of its state workplaces, one of the first in Dobra was a state restaurant associated with the GSSC (the state workplace that processed all of the peasant agricultural quotas in the village). My parents, who waited part-time at the state restaurant, decided to take over the operations when the *gmina* offered it up for sale. But when they became the new

[117] When state control of the factory collapsed during the transition into capitalism, so did the shadow private business that fed off of state capital.

'private' owners, the socialist-era norms continued to dictate how the restaurant would run. My mother explained her unfortunate experience with the *kombinators* who came to eat:

> It was 1987[118]. In those years communism was no longer around, but people lived under the *communist ghost*. One of the bigger problems was people's dishonesty. Often people did not have money but they came to the restaurant, ordered meals and alcohol and after eating or drinking said that today everything was *na kreche*. That word means, "Today, I do not have money and when I get paid then I will pay the bill". Often, the '*krecha*' visited our restaurant. We set up a notebook of debtors but all for nothing because they were in talks with the sly foxes (*cwaniakami*) and hooligans who played pranks and vandalised the restaurant. The police did not react to our complaints. It could have been the case that the police was afraid or was waiting for extra money.

It is interesting to see this 'switch' between *kombinacja* as being something positive when it was exercised on the state's account, versus negative when it was exercised against a private individual or entrepreneur. Along with the 'communist ghost' came a new 'transcript' of how to identify such *kombinators* who were once the people's heroes. The account attests to the blurred private-state sector relations—even a restaurant under private ownership could not deal with the embedded *kombinacja* among clients, especially the nomenklatura, who had not paid bills in years and still had the ability to threaten the owners. They acted as if there was no 'real' change to the restaurant and continued to operate in the same manner as they had before. The 'private' restaurant went bankrupt and they sold it in 1990.

7.8. Achieving socialist utopia through *kombinacja*

Kombinacja in the workplace was such a widespread and open phenomenon in the 1970s and 1980s that workers began to make decisions about where to work based upon the tolerance of *kombinacja* (Firlit & Chłopecki, 1992, pg. 96; Wedel, 1986, pg. 63). Kurczewski (1993) observed that some people rejected well-paying jobs if not enough informal benefits were promised (pg. 368). There is no better example of this in Dobra than the 'lure' of the three state farms adjacent to the *gmina* that were the most lenient workplaces for exercising *kombinacja*. Some like Roman, an ex-mechanical enterprise

[118] Note the different 'timeline' to the end of Communism. It 'ended' when workers could buy and privatise the GSSC cooperative store in the village.

worker who was once sent out by his workplace to fix silos on state farms, equated the very definition of *kombinacja* with the state farms: 'take from the state and the state—the PGR—pays for it'.

Figure 30 A 19th century German Junker estate in Krynica which was transformed by the Red Army into a headquarters for the state-farm in 1945 then privatised in 1990s. Author's photo (2009).

Ironically, the state farms were the exemplars of the Soviet-inspired socialist revolution in Poland. They were considered to be the bastion of socialist modernisation, with even airplanes landing on their fields to deliver and export equipment. State farm workers boasted the best wages and owned the most cars of anyone in the *gmina*, and were often most closely linked with the success of Soviet agro-industrialialism. They resembled, and operated like, enclosed worker colonies where workers received everything from the state like free housing, clothing, food, education, and medical care. Workers stayed on the farm and did not participate in trade union activity. Each family received a 0.25 hectare allotment garden (*działki*) where they could produce for their own private consumption and bi-annual shares (*deputat*) of clothing, livestock, milk, potatoes, etc. Theoretically, the state farms would be enclosed economic ecosystems in which

workers were the ‘co-owners’ —which in the sense of *kombinacja* caused the farm a lot of trouble.

The farms were simultaneously associated with grandeur and the ‘good life’ in the official discourse as well as poverty, but turning a blind eye to *kombinacja* was the only way that workers could ‘achieve’ and ‘live’ the vision of that utopian socialist workplace. Irena, an ex-state farm worker who now resides back in the village, associated the lure of the state farm conditions with *kombinacja* due to the conditions of poverty.

> A lot of people went in the PGR because in the PGR, one had a home and guaranteed work. Because in the PGR, one did not earn a lot—one could steal a lot because one was raising a cow and pig and everything to that, right? It was the state’s. Everyone somehow made it through. Everyone received their own ration, but if one wanted more, one stole it, right? Brought it and fed it and no one was interested with that because the earnings were small and the work was difficult in the PGRs, but many people made ends meet in the PGRs. The mind has to work! Use *kombinacja*! Without *kombinacja*, no one will make money, because one would only make pennies! Yes!

Most stole food from the fields and warehouses. There were many examples of state farm workers recalling stories about poverty. ‘We did not have any tools. So father took the PGR horse and ploughed a small area of wasteland and planted potatoes to have something for the following year’. Mothers milked the state cows to feed their children who relied upon more milk than the 2L allowance. Some state workers admitted that they divided up state fertiliser and (illegally) sold it to the peasants in the *gmina*. With Directors’ permissions, some used state farm tools, seeds, and fertilisers to produce food on their allotment gardens for private consumption or sold what they produced on their gardens to other workers who needed food in the *gmina*. Halina, an ex-administrative worker in the *gmina* explained how she used her personal networks to get a PGR to renovate her house for her:

> I sent a letter home and my sister came. We poured water, scrubbed it with the shovel, and cleaned it all. A building group from Skarszów came, because my husband worked in the PGR. The PGR came, painted it, renovated my house. For a worker, that is what they did. The building group came and did everything. This was a *gmina* house, an ownership house, the *gmina* gave me the house to own. But since my husband worked in the PGR, within those boundaries, for their worker, they came

> and cleaned the house. They did it for free. They did not take money, no, no. It was done for free.

Kombinacja, either as petty theft or 'favours', seemed to have been an equaliser of some sort for the conditions, which these non-unionised workers could supplement their meager wages with. *Kombinacja*, through the systematic 'taking' of state resources for private use, was a creative form of 'collective bargaining' with the state farms' administration.

State worker interviewees justified *kombinacja* through their creative twisting of the idea of 'common goods'—the idea that the workers collectively owned the state workplace and the means of production. If that was the case, according to such a rationale, then they could redistribute the state resources to ensure that they were 'compensated' for any additional labour or any slumps in their wages or quality of life. 'They did not steal over there. They did not steal. When they dug-out the potatoes, one took some potatoes in one's pocket or in a bag for dinner. I did not consider that stealing' or ' No one even saw'. or 'What they stole was not visible' or 'People took, they walked around, they stole, they took!' all suggest that *kombinacja* was an open and positively sanctioned activity. Some perceived this to be a part of the job or a form of self-compensation for free labour that they were forced to carry out in order to help other state farms meet their production quotas.

One private farmer Cobra (see Section 8.3) called this type of state farm worker, who compulsively used *kombinacja* because of their notion of the 'co-ownership' of state resources, a 'HomoPGRicus' —a play on the idea of *Homo sovieticus*—to refer to his or her 'natural' reptilian compulsion to disregard state property and accumulate for private gain. To explain it, he rehearsed the idiom: '*Nie grabie się od siebie, tylko do siebie* (One does not rake away from oneself, only toward oneself)/ *Tylko kret ma ręce od siebie, wszyscy inni, do siebie* (Only a mole has hands [positioned] away from it, everyone else has hands that are positioned toward them)[119]. The difference between a HomoPGRicus and a *kombinator* is subtle but important. The former used 'co-ownership' as a means to complete the socialist vision of a workers' utopia. The *kombinator* emphasised the existence of a broken economic system from which

[119] October 7, 2009 Fieldnotes.

resources could be extracted. HomoPGRicus was utopia's cheerleader; the *kombinator*, using Zholkovsky's (1994) phrasing, was 'dystopia's Provocateur' (pg. 254). They both, however, used the similar strategy of extracting resources from the state.

State farm workers believed that the farm was theirs, to use *kombinacja* to their needs. Marek recalled that during potato harvests urban dwellers drove to the state farm fields at night and filled up bags of potatoes from the mounds. State farm workers would wait until these poachers had filled their bags and then shine a light on them, and took the bags to their own homes when the poachers fled. Some explained that *kombinacja* on state farms carried a high risk of imprisonment; others claimed it was a type of everyday relation. Most workers, however, did not get 'caught' and *kombinacja* was practiced openly and without the fear of consequences. Franciszka, an ex-state farm worker, explained:

> **G:** Supposedly, they kept watch, but people stole anyway! How much could one steal? Either in the pocket or in the sack! I will admit today and I even admitted before: wherever I went, whether to the threshing, or I went to the cleaning division in the warehouse, I never came back with an empty sack and stuff in my pockets and in trousers.
>
> **Z:** I did that too!
>
> **G:** Peas, wheat, because it was needed. Yes! It was needed. Barley, which mother burned on a metal plate on the stove and it was coffee!
>
> **Z:** Coffee!
>
> **G:** Yes! And that is how a human had to live!

And when someone got caught, they used the 'art' of humour and their personal networks with the authorities in order to avoid punishment. Helena, a postal worker, explained what happened when she got caught:

> But they (PGR administration) did not say anything. There was theft but no one was punished for it. I put my fingers into the soil, and took a couple of potatoes. And the director is driving by from the PGR. He comes, and says this, 'Hello, what are you doing?' And I said, 'Mr. Director, I do not have potatoes, I do not have a husband. I do have my own field, but it is very far. And here, I have them so close (to the PGR) and I did no harm'. And he said 'Helena' because he knew me well because my in-laws lived in that PGR. So he says, 'Helena' he says, 'You know it is not allowed'. And I said, 'I know it is not allowed, but I did it quickly!'

Allowing wide-spread *kombinacja* was the surest way that the farm administration established a work environment that produced consent among the workers. The conditions were ripe for a worker uprising on a state farm: the administration was small, the settlements were isolated, manual work was gruelling, the working hours were long, wages were low, severe shortages existed for years at a time, and workers were pushed aboutto help during harvests on other state farms, etc. State farm workers had no independent trade union representation so workers who were unhappy with their wages and lifestyles on the farm could not easily make their voices heard. Domesticating resources and selling them was a way to increase a workers' income and foot-dragging was a way to control the hours being put into the job—activities that helped define the equilibrium of wages and hours that would have normally been sought after by an independent trade union. The Directors had a lot to fear, thus turning a blind eye to *kombinacja* was one of the ways to win over the workers' consent to the conditions and in turn, the preservation of the power structure. This way, everyone but the state won.

7.9. Conclusion: the withering away of the state?

The economic crises in the 1970s and the transformation of the state in the 1980s necessitated a new organising logic to ensure that resources were circulated to as many people as possible. This was the golden age of *kombinacja* during which the strategy became public, morally sanctioned, and used to order the state rather than to be ordered by it. The site of morality was 'private' while the public sphere became a free-for-all space for hunting state resources and domesticating them into the household. This process unified all classes in their common project of taking apart the state. There was an enormous degree of differentiation and competition between individuals' and groups' *kombinacja* for a limited amount of state resources. *Kombinacja*'s implicit message became wrapped up in Catholic, nationalist, cultural, and economic ideologies.

People used it as a platform for renegotiating how resources ought to flow (through the exchange of state resources and services for food), how much their transaction cost (half-litres of vodka for example) and ought to be, etc. They used it to build their own socialist utopias, sometimes at the expense of others. The state farm workers used it to distribute resources among themselves, a big payday at the end of decades of work on the farm. The nomenklatura continued to pressure private business—such as with the case of the restaurant—to subsidise their lifestyle like the state had done. Those with an

entrepreneurial spirit established their own 'private' businesses that thrived off of state resources gained through *kombinacja*, and created their own state-private mode of production. *Bimber* producers used *kombinacja* to take their production system to the next level; the elderly saw 'miracles' of *kombinacja* in an eschatological light; vodka became currency as workers moonlighted, installing state property into domestic homes and so on. It was at this point that the workers could be said to have truly 'owned' the state and to have decided for themselves what they wanted to do with it.

In a way, *kombinacja*'s golden age shows that it can partially replace the function of a modern-state and its formal economy. It can be used to form new cleavages between new publics. It was an expression of freedom of the 'private' in the public sphere, of wanting to sell or buy whatever one wanted in public. It was an opportunity to create new public spaces (like *meliny*). However, while it is an agent of transformation of space, capital, landscapes, and networks, *kombinacja* itself has its limitations. While it was a force of innovation to produce alternatives to the 'formal', it was never shown how the process in itself could be an engine of production or industrialisation without state capital. It seemed to be a response to the 'formal', building or subtracting from it, rather than a model of innovation in itself. This furthers my argument that *kombinacja* exposes the interplay between informality and formality. Although both constantly change one another and make new inroads into each other's territories, they cannot survive without the other. *Kombinacja* exposes this.

In 1992, Gliński posed the important question—'Will the *kombinator*, Capitalist, Committed Craftsman, or the Enfranchised Nomenklatural Man model prevail?' Sceptical, he stated that Poles 'learned how to do business' by 'arranging' and 'exploit(ing) informal contacts to overcome bureaucratic barriers' instead of acting in a competitive market (pg. 151). The following chapter investigates whether *kombinacja* neatly aligned with capitalism, if *kombinator*s found new ways to 'arrange' or 'domesticate' capitalism, and if so, how they have creatively solved (or benefitted from) the structural and economic problems in the post-socialist era.

Chapter 8

Post-socialist *kombinacja*: 1989-Present

8.1. Domesticating neoliberalism

Building upon Creed's (1998) thesis that people 'domesticated' socialism by reworking the state through everyday practices in order to survive, in their research on everyday economic strategies in post-socialist Poland and Slovakia, Stenning et al. (2010) note the prevalence of *kombinować* in the broader set of activities they define as 'domesticating neoliberalism' (pg. 260)[120]. They argue that neoliberalism 'is not just an economic project which sits "out there" in the circuits of international policy and business, but a set of practices, rationalities, and commitments which flow through homes, communities, workplaces, and institutions' (pg. 224). People supplement their low-paying formal wages with illegal and informal employment opportunities, temporarily migrate overseas, produce food for domestic consumption and trade on their privatised workers' allotment gardens, organise private caregiving due to the lack of affordable and adequate state caregiving programmes for the elderly, as well as engage in activity like squatting, accessing electricity illegally, and claim benefits while working. These 'acts of desperation' are in response to inadequate state programs and rising under-employment (pg. 221).

Similarly, in her empirical study of Polish families' migration patterns to the United Kingdom after Poland's entrance into the EU in 2004, White (2011) writes that families that chose to stay in Poland commonly used the term *kombinować*[121]. Luzia, a nurse from Grajewo who rejected her son's invitation to become a migrant worker in Iceland, explained to White how she fed her family of five: '"And how about dinner and supper? Well, it's a pity, but you need money. That's why you find different way to make ends meet [*dlatego człowiek kombinuje jak może*]"'[122]. By pooling resources from her son's remittances and her husband's job, she did not become the cheap labourer that many

[120] They only referred to '*kombinować*' by its deviant and illegal qualities.
[121] White defines it as a process, 'to find a clever way of getting something done' using personal networks and 'exemplifying the idea of combining various assets'.
[122] My translation: That is why the human uses *kombinacja* however he can".

Poles have become; rather, she preserved her socialist-era position and networks to put food on the table.

An unexpected site for *kombinacja* in the post-socialist period has been in the start-up technology boom. Barcikowska (2004) writes that while *kombinacja* was expected to fade away with socialism, it has gone through a renaissance in which the 'old communist mentality has been given a new cut-throat "entrepreneurial" twist' in which people 'think that there must be a trick to everything and that if only they could find out what it was, life would be easier' (pg. 3). For example, in October 2012, The Wall Street Journal published a piece on Poland's start-up technology scene in which Arkadius Hajduk—who started Huge Thing accelerator—spoke about the 'strength' of the Central European region, which is the ability to 'find a way through' to get ahead of the competition with the spirit of innovation. He said: '"We have a word in Polish—*kombinować*—it's not really translatable, but it sort of means finding a way to do something but without a lot of resources"' (Rooney, 2012, pg. 1). *Kombinacja* can embody the entrepreneurial spirit in the start-up scene.

During fieldwork, I found no consensus among villagers on how *kombinacja* exists today[123]. For the old nomenklatura in the village, like Fidelis, it is possible to claim that, 'Today, there is no such thing that I would have to use *kombinacja* if I can go to the store and buy everything! I only need to have money for it'. He explained that *kombinacja* has been phased out because food is no longer scarce:

> That *kombinacja* disappeared very quickly from the post-Communist times. It lasted, maybe, up to three years. So one used *kombinacja* here and there. Maybe it exists somewhere, but it is very, very, minimal these *kombinacja*. Maybe someone uses *kombinacja* here, but they use *kombinacja* for vodka, but it does not count, it does not count. Absolutely not, because we do not have a need to use *kombinacja*. The need today is money. Money. If I do not have money, then I cannot buy anything![124]

Yet, in Dobra, for most people the main function of *kombinacja* remains a reliance upon networks (*znajomość*) to access food by negotiating supply routes, services, labour, and exchanges in order to get the cheapest and highest quality food from other villagers or

[123] Thanks to Professor Sharad Chari for this point.
[124] Earlier, he mentioned however, that *kombinacja* still is used by those who believed in socialism. Those who converted to capitalism no longer have a 'use' for it.

from other private farmers (*prywaciarze*) in the *gmina* and region. It is as if *kombinacja* is undergoing a transformation that, yet again, has unclear boundaries and parameters.

This chapter investigates how *kombinacja* transformed from domesticating state socialism to domesticating neoliberalism and the ways in which it is being used today in Dobra[125]. First, I explore *kombinacja*'s role in the nomenklatura's preservation of their positions of state power throughout the 1990s. Second, I investigate how ex-state farm workers are using *kombinacja* to negotiate access to food and labour on privatised state farms and thereby reworking the idea of 'private property'. Third, I provide two examples of an emerging gendered dimension of 'good' and 'bad' *kombinacja* practiced in Dobra. The first is the 'bad' *kombinacja* exercised by male ex-workers and peasants in the village, who pool resources to buy alcohol and force their labour upon the villagers to secure diminishing labour niches. The 'good' *kombinacja* is exercised by part-time female workers who sell surplus candy they produce in the local factory in order to supplement their earnings[126]. This is not an exhaustive explanation of how post-socialist *kombinacja* works, but it provides some insight into how it is entangled in the struggles of property, labour, and resources between the various interest groups within the post-socialist village.

8.2. Nomenklatura privatisation

On 1 January 1990, the Balcerowicz Plan[127] launched Poland's neoliberalism project via the 'shock doctrine'[128]. Its reforms sought to privatise state property, slow down inflation, eliminate shortages, increase market-based mechanisms for the economic system, devise a framework for divesting state ownership, begin the sale of state assets, break up monopolies, and eliminate central planning (Telgarsky & Struyk, 1991, pgs. 107-111). Jeffrey Sachs, an architect of the shock doctrine, was so confident of Poland's

[125] The state continues to mediate the population's relationship with the economy—i.e. the transition to neoliberalism is not done without the state reform and regulations.
[126] There are no specific terms for good or bad *kombinacja* but the binary exists.
[127] Named after Polish minister Leszek Balcerowicz.
[128] I use Harvey's (2005) definition of neoliberalism as a 'theory of political economic practices that proposes that human wellbeing can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices' (pg. 2).

'jump to the market economy' that he wrote that 'The hardest part of the transformation, in fact, will not be the economics at all, but the politics' (1993, pg. 3). While shock therapy was aimed at a sense of 'systemic transformation', Buchowski (2003) argues that for rural people, these were 'just links in a chain of history' that had controlled their agricultural production (pg. 48). Zuzanna's phrase, 'for me, not much has changed', rings true.

Zbierski-Salameh (2013) claims that in order to understand post-socialist ownership, we cannot look at the transition as one from homogeneous state ownership into private ownership. Rather, 'post-socialist ownership changes should be conceptualised as multifold, mutually interdependent transformations of heterogeneous state socialist conjoint property into various (incomplete) exclusive ownership forms' (pg. 25). In other words, the existence of mixed property under post-socialism highlights a transition not from the ideal-type of state to private property, but from not-quite state property to not-quite private property (pg. xii). During the 'transition' from socialism to post-socialism, entrepreneurial actors created public-private assets and new property forms by pulling horizontal and vertical personal networks into chains of inter-enterprise ownership and to spread risk among multiple units of measurement during economic transition.[129] The failure of the shock doctrine to identify the exact property forms under socialism and the centrality of socialist networks in moulding the neoliberal project give us ample space to investigate the ways in which *kombinacja* was utilised to create makeshift, mixed property.

The gradual privatisation of the state farms (*sovkhozy*)—the symbols of the Soviet-inspired socialist tradition—began in the 1980s when the nomenklatura still held the reins of power and could leverage privatisation for personal gain (Zbierski-Salameh, 2013, pg. 232). In 1986, the State Enterprise Law allowed state-owned enterprises 'to enter into associations with private partners and contribute a part of the physical assets as a share', and as a result, Directors and *gmina* officials undervalued those physical assets to generate higher profits—which gave rise to a popular rage among the majority that the nomenklatura were 'using their position to transform themselves into fledging

[129] 'Recombinant property' (Stark, 1996; Stark & Bruszt, 1998) in post-socialist Hungary also explains how the neoliberal project was reworked through socialist-era personal networks.

capitalists' (Hardy & Rainnie, 1996, pg. 124). The widespread process of the socialist-era administrators, managers, and nomenklatura seizing state property into their own private hands during the privatisation process is known as the 'second embourgeoisement of the nomenklatura' (Zbierski-Salameh, 2013, pg. 222) or 'nomenklatura privatisation' (Myant, 1993: 238; Hardy & Rainnie, 1996, pg. 124). The liquidation of the state property represented the nomenklatura's form of domesticating neoliberalism—taking the biggest chunk of the state through *kombinacja* into their own pockets once and for all.

Laws in the 1990s further cemented the nomenklatura's grasp on state farms' privatisation. In January 1992, the Polish state created the State Treasury Agricultural Property Agency (AWRSP) to lead the privatisation of the 1,576 state farms—900,000 hectares of state farm—that had an amassed bank debt of 7.4447 billion *złoty*. After six months, 16,000 petitions from the old owners whose properties had been expropriated after the Second World War had been filed with the agency disputing ownership. However, the state was reluctant to pass comprehensive legislation regarding reparations because of the threat this would pose to potential buyers who might be too afraid to make investments out of fear of the old owners' return (Zbierski-Salameh, 2013, pgs. 222-223). Although these procedures prevented the return of the previous owners, the state farms were not sold quickly to newer entrepreneurs in large part because the properties were complex entities with colonies of ex-state farm workers still living on them.

In Zbierski-Salameh's (2013) study of the Wysoki *gmina* in 1992, the state retained or 'restatised' the farms and allocated managerial control to the old nomenklatura (pg. 209). Although the privatisation policy prioritised PGR employees' formation of joint-stock companies out of the state farms, the ex-state farm workers complained that they had not been properly informed about their roles and eligibility to participate in the privatisation process. The Wysoki administrators responded that the workers had displayed no interest in the matter. In reality, employees who were well informed faced financial barriers—not least the necessary advance of 2 million *złoty*—a month's salary—to belong to a joint-stock company. Even employee-formed joint-stock companies leased the state property to a narrow managerial and administrative group who had governed the farms under socialism. The nomenklatura recruited only just

enough employees to meet the 'employee' quota for the joint-stock company, but in reality secured profits and benefits within their nomenklatura networks (pg. 226). The privatisation process, therefore, mostly excluded peasants from contending for those assets and afforded a preference for either state ownership, nomenklatura, or bourgeoisie ownership of the farms. As Verdery (2003) writes, the reforms were supposed to 'rectify an historical injustice' through the restoration of rights (pg. 162), yet privatisation in Poland and much of the eastern Bloc shows the continuation of socialist-era injustices.[130]

Figure 31 Alfred showing me a liquidated state farm. Photo by Neil Anderson (2008).

The most prevalent form of privatisation of state enterprises, between 1990 and 1995, was ' liquidation privatisation' or sale of state assets (Hardy & Rainnie, 1996, pg. 127). In Dobra, the liquidation of state farms was deemed *kombinacja* on the part of the state and nomenklatura. Zuzanna said that 'When they took apart the PGRs, it was *kombinacja* [...] because they were liquidating the PGRs and people were pushed to the

[130] Bridger (1997) argues that the privatisation of state farms in the USSR was largely a change of names rather than power and authorities on the farms (pg. 39).

side. And those who liquidated them, benefitted from that. It was their *kombinacja*!' After the enterprise or state farm had decided to liquidate, its assets were passed to the Ministry of Privatisation to be sold piece by piece. This piecemeal asset sale was literal as the state farms lay in ruins; anything of potential value was stripped out of them. Or, a new company would be created which would then lease the assets and liabilities from the Treasury (Zbierski-Salameh, 2013, pgs. 235-336, see footnote 45). Even those partnerships were tenuous. In Dobra, the vice-*gmina* mayor who co-owned an ex-state farm with a German investor played off of his *gmina*/private owner status to privatise the property under his name and sold it to a Danish owner—who cultivated the farm—without sharing profits with the German.

Today, when someone in Dobra conspicuously uses or buys *gmina* land, locals suspect *kombinacja* and begin to gossip profusely about how the deal was made (Figures 32 and 33). Leonid, a Ukrainian peasant who still owns one of the last horses (named Basia) in the village and who still works a small portion of his farm, explained to me in a frustrated tone that in 2009, the mayor's[131] brother purchased the *gmina*-owned Agricultural Circle house and base, and then somehow acquired EU structural funds intended for *gmina*—not private—projects to plough the fallow land that had belonged to the circle. He hired a man with those funds who harvested the cereals and transported them to a private processing facility in the adjacent village where it was then sold for private profit. Although Leonid himself has received a 10,000 *złoty* (about 2,390 EUR) grant from the EU, he was still frustrated that the mayor's brother could buy expensive agricultural machinery while he only had a horse and wagon. He said that he did not understand the process of how the EU and Polish state could give away such disproportionate sums of grant money to some farmers while neglecting others like him. Leonid may suspect *kombinacja*, although that is difficult to prove, but the story does demonstrate peasants' perception that nomenklatura's power over the distribution of EU funds poses a major constraint to ensuring peasants are well informed about funding opportunities. The problem is who gets to access the EU funds available to the villagers.

The issue of funds, access to the state and *kombinacja* extended beyond agriculture and 'liquidation privatisation'. A scandal broke out in Dobra during fieldwork over the

[131] The mayor twice refused an interview with me about the *gmina*'s transition since the 1990s. His father was mayor during socialism.

acquisition of EU funds for road works in the wealthiest part of Dobra village where the administrators and bureaucrats lived (see Figure 35). Most villagers had never heard of such funds[132]. Gosia summarised the general feeling, that 'Authority *kombinóje* now, yes. People no—Authority. Now, they call it "corruption"'. In order to gain access to EU funds, peasants would have to get around the nomenklatura's *kombinacja* centralised in the *gmina*. The nomenklatura in this case had absorbed funds meant for public goods for their own private gain. It was able to do so through its continued control of the *gmina*—interviewees noted that this was composed of just a few families who all pull one another into administrative positions and strengthen the grip on information and resources—and their flexibility to being 'politically rehabilitated' (*rehabilitowani*) in order to continue their grasp of state power.

Figure 32 Fallow fields surrounding the village. Author's photo (2009).

The socialist-era nomenklatura still have a physical presence and access to the *gmina.* Matylda, the retired treasurer of the Agricultural Circle, was very willing to help me

[132] Many do not even try to look for funds because they do not know who to ask and ultimately feel excluded from the club of private property farmers who vie for them.

with my project, and used her networks to get me face-to-face with the mayor in a matter of minutes. She opened the door, walked freely past the lines of people, opened doors and informally chatted with the secretaries and even a village academic in the *gmina* attic who wrote about property transformation. Then, she briskly opened up the main conference room lavishly furnished with carpets and wooden beams and banners (from the socialist-era) at which point she spotted a retired state farm director sitting at the main conference table. He opened up to an interview, speaking with authority and a manner as if he was in his own home. Time had stopped inside the building.

Figure 33 'Land for Sale: North Neighbourhood'. *Gmina* advertisement intended to attract urban professionals to buy ex-state farmland under *gmina* ownership. Notice that ranches have no vegetable gardens or farmland. Author's photo (2009).

Angry villagers have begun taking to the Internet. Since 2012, forums have been dedicated to criticising the nomenklatura. Villagers complain that the mayor is buying out private forest land for himself, misusing EU funds, buying allotment gardens and a new car with taxpayer's money, raising taxes so that his staff could use more petrol to go farther distances to conduct their informal business relations, only promising renovations before elections, and so forth. They accuse him of corruption (*korupcja*),

cronyism deals (*układy kolesiostwo*), and of having a 'super appetite'; the '*gmina* and people do not interest him'. One villager wrote, 'He does not think, he just *does* it, and to add, corruption is unraveling beautifully[133] but as always there is silence, etc'. At one point, a pro-mayor villager writes that the mayor had hardly finished high-school but managed to lead a business and then get elected. A responder wrote that 'he had to use *kombinacja* a lot' (*musiał dobrze kombinować*) to get to that point. The entrepreneur is no longer valorised; he is demonised as a bad *kombinator*. One villager sarcastically wrote that 'the people are sowing taxes and [the mayor] is gathering the harvest, a true peasant of the people'.

Figure 34 Posts on an online forum annotate this cartoon with the comment, 'the reconstruction of roads in Dobra', July 2013 (http://forum.gp24.pl/*gmina*-[Dobra]-w-innych-gminach-ok-a-u-nas-bagno-dlaczego-t78813/page-13).

We get a sense of *kombinacja* being a site of privilege in post-socialist society. Only those close to power can access the last resources left over from socialism, and by definition, they are corrupt in doing so. Another entry from December 2012 states that 'Clearly, he [mayor] is not the only one, look at what villa his vice-mayor built…and do you know how much he paid for the "Agricultural Circle" with machines??? For a laughable 40,000 *złoty*!!! That is how one uses *kombinacja* (*Tak się kombinuje*)'. The

[133] Similar to Reymont's description of *kombinacya* unraveling upon landscape.

vice-mayor is even more hated. They call him, 'The Expert of Nothing' and recommend cutting his job first to balance the budget (*Gmina* Dobra, 2014). Villagers, seeing the positive change in other communes, are angry that corruption hinders their development projects (see Figure 34). Many villagers are too scared to speak up. Most online forums have been calling for a referendum for two years without progress.

Figure 35 Cobble road built with EU funds in Dobra.
Author's photo (2009).

8.3. Negotiating privatised state farms

Today, the rural and provincial regions with the highest percentage of privatised state and collective farms have the highest concentrations of poverty in Poland (Stenning et. al., 2010, pg. 8). Stasiek, the ex-*gmina* official, was very upset about the privatisation of the state farms that left workers stuck on isolated settlements with no jobs or way out:

> I would hang [Lech] Wałęsa by his legs and Balcerowicz by something else. Those sons of bitches! What have they done with the PGRs!? They

> argued that socialist farms could not exist but what did they do with those people? Did they take care of those people? They destroyed everything! Those who were close to power stole and sold the machines, the inventory and abandoned everything. There were wooden barns left, the authorities took them down and burned the wood. They took apart the grain ethanol plant and sold it at the scrap metal yard. They destroyed everything! And yet they left such a massive amount of people out in the cold! They should have merged the enterprises together, freed the people from taxes for 3 to 4 years and let the ex-PGRs be managed by the ex-PGR workers. But "No".

The Polish state has yet to provide humanitarian relief for these isolated rural colonies of ex-state farm workers who suffer from alcohol addiction, poverty, low education, violence, and insecure property rights. Even on the state farms that have been privatised, many of the inhabitants live off of welfare, retirement cheques, still pay rent directly to the state, and grow their own food. The relationships between the new private property owners of the ex-state farms and the underemployed ex-state farm workers living in the state housing blocks vary. I outline three state farms—Lipowa, Buda, and Krynica—to show the ways in *kombinacja* gets entangled into the politics of how resources are negotiated on these farms.

In Lipowa, an ex-state farm bordering Dobra, the barns and other infrastructures look as if they have been bombed. All of the windows, metal, and bricks have been stripped off of the barns. Spotted white and black pigs roamed the street. Marek suggested that we stay in the car as we drove down the street. I felt that all eyes were on us from behind the curtains in the kitchen windows. Some men were processing a grain in a large warehouse that stood in the middle of the village, but there was no sign or indication that this was a registered operation. A German investor has bought out a portion of the land (not the estate) and cultivates rapeseed but does not live on the premises. He employs some of the ex-state farm workers to work the land using private machinery. The estate is still state owned and is used as public housing occupied by 'squatters' (many of them children of the ex-state farm workers). Many ex-state farm workers never privatized their apartments and still pay monthly rent to the state. The rest of the farm is a fuzzy assortment of fallow fields and small-scale agricultural production on the ex-farm workers' allotment gardens (*działki*). The economic activities are tied to collective life by paying rent to the state, receiving state welfare, and using state land

for food (there were no stores, schools, or supermarkets on the premises). Residents continue to be mostly dependent on the state and 'control' the ex-state farm.

Figure 36 Fallow fields in Lipowa. Ex-state farm workers working on a deceased neighbour's allotment garden in the background. Author's photo (2009).

The state farm in Buda village revealed a much more conflicted relationship between the ex-state farm workers and the new owner (whom the ex-state farm workers nicknamed 'Cobra' for his stringent rules) who lived on site as the 'new' bourgeoisie. I spent an evening with Cobra and his German-Polish wife discussing property transformation. They were the most 'Western' individuals I had encountered throughout my fieldwork. After having saved up money working construction jobs in the United Kingdom in the 1990s and 2000s where he learned English and met his wife, Cobra

came back to Poland to buy a German Junker estate and become a large-scale private property owner (*prywaciarz*).[134] Their beautifully renovated house has been the subject of German documentaries about the *Heimat* (Recovered Territories) and the site of German tourism trips that did not always go well. Cobra and his wife live in Gdańsk where their children go to school for most of the year, but they come to the estate regularly because they employ the same ex-state farm workers that continue to live on the premises.

Cobra's relationship with the workers could, at best, be described as antagonistic and has resulted in altercations that on one occasion resulted in a group of workers threatening him with a knife to his neck. In our discussion, Cobra complained that his farm workers, whom he calls 'HomoPGRicus', do not respect 'private ownership' (*własność*). Instead of pressuring the *gmina* to build better roads, the ex-state farm workers drive over his fields. They steal from the farm because during the socialist period the authorities allowed them to steal from the farm. Their actions affect him in the same way that they once damaged the state farm and affected the state. This explanation is reminiscent of Fidelis's description of post-socialist *kombinacja* as being a *vestige* of the socialist past: 'it is difficult to uproot *kombinacja*. The mentality! The "something from somewhere". Because they are still accustomed to it, the elderly. In general, it is those who believed more in communism. They are accustomed to it, to "use *kombinacja* for something!"' Like the socialist state, Cobra complained that he now picks up the bill for their *kombinacja,* and their wrecking and mismanagement of the farm capital. Riding the wave of *kombinacja* from the socialist period, the HomoPGRicus renegotiate the collective versus private boundaries of their privatised state farms rather than changing into the new *Homo economics*. The ex-state farm workers, who were told for decades that they 'co-owned' the state farm and had a lot of leeway in recalibrating its resource flows and labour arrangements, are struggling against the rules imposed by Cobra's 'ownership' that set out how the farm should now be run.

[134] Cobra has taken advantage of EU agricultural subsidies and his wife receives EU funds to conduct summer school lessons for Romanian orphans throughout the summer on their estate.

Krynica, another ex-state farm that lies across the street from Lipowa and borders Dobra, presents another case of domesticating neoliberalism. A Danish man bought the state farm *and* the German Junker estate but does not live on site. He uses the farm for large-scale, mechanised, potato production and employs a handful of machine operators from the ex-state farm to harvest the potatoes. However, in Krynica, the German Junker estate is managed by the ex-state farm Directors' son (another example of nomenklatura privilege) who had once worked on the farm. The warden now uses the German Junker facilities for his own small projects (*bimber* production, cooking potatoes, fixing machines, etc.). Even in the case of our unannounced arrival with Marek and Zuzanna, the warden (who knew Marek) simply took us into the house and showed us around without any regard to inform the owner. Exclusive property appeared not to exist in that moment. Inside the building was a socialist time capsule with the old Director's furniture and curtains still in place as if the authorities were on a lunch break. Nevertheless, in other respects the place was falling apart and numerous small projects around the building were suspended. The mansion itself looked like it was used for whatever purpose the warden felt like exploiting it for; there were beds and other belongings of squatters arranged around the house, alcohol, and the original German furniture. We only got a small taste of access to private property without the notification of the owner (Figure 37).

What Lipowa, Buda, and Krynica show is that private property, regardless of whether owned by a Pole or foreigner, is renegotiated in various ways by the ex-state farm workers who still live in those colony-like villages. In farms where the private owner is not around and the villagers rely upon the state for welfare, there is more flexibility in renegotiating the private property to access the villagers' old subsistence grounds or needs. On farms where the farmer is present, tensions arise between who owns the farm; the ex-state farm workers who have worked on it for decades, or the new private property owner. On farms where the owner is absent but the property is managed by the nomenklatura, strangers can come and go as the nomenklatura permit. All three state farms continue as terrains of struggle for the rural poor to gain access in order to supplement their non-existent or meager incomes wrought by the privatisation process. Through *kombinacja,* the rural poor express their claim to the land.

Figure 37 Interior of Krynica. Old furniture of the farm administration's meeting headquarters still untouched a quarter century later[135]. Author's photo (2009).

8.4. Foraging across private and public land[136]

After having completed archival work in the city on a rainy day in late October, I took the bus back into the village. Usually, the thirteen-kilometre stretch of multiple, privatised farm fields that buffered the city and village were expanses of a single crop with a few combine-harvesters or tractors in the distance. That afternoon, however, the

[135] The estate is guarded by the ex-PGR director's son who lives in the warden's house by the gate entrance and has managed it for multiple foreign owners since the 1990s. The furniture may have some sentimental value (*gotyk*).

[136] Initially, I defined this as 'stealing' and 'poaching'. I thank Professor Gareth A. Jones for helping me find the right word 'foraging' and who helped me synthesise my data about its expression across public and private land.

fields of the Krynica and Buda state farms were dotted with dozens of cars haphazardly parked and people surrounding them filling up white pillowcases with potatoes. The small groups were spread out. Upon my arrival to the village, I encountered Mychajlo, an elderly Ukrainian peasant, who had cycled back from the harvest action on his bike holding three pillowcases full of potatoes. He proudly informed me that people from the village and the city were picking potatoes in Krynica that the harvesters had missed on the private farms. I frantically called Marek and we sped toward the fields.

The potato foragers arrived at the same time and sought safety in numbers, reproducing the socialist-era aesthetic of manual potato harvesting that sharply contrasted with the mechanised harvesting on the private farm. This communicated the message that 'we all need this food'. They were the middle-aged and elderly poor from the villages and Słupsk who were moving around and quickly filling up the sacks (Figure 38). Then they heaved the lumpy pillowcases into the trunks of their vehicles and kept on filling and packing them to the brim. When they saw my camera, the potato foragers turned their faces away or looked at the ground and the children huddled closer to the adults. Far off in the distance, I saw small groups congregated around tractors. Tarkowska (2002) writes that in Poland, theft caused by poverty is considered by many Poles to be justified. 'The truly guilty is, in such circumstances, not the acting person, but the authorities: the government—"them"—are responsible for poverty and unemployment in the country' (pg. 426). People feel entitled to use the land to feed themselves, even if it means crossing private property[137]. A private property ownership document is not enough to keep people off of these vast expanses of land. More importantly, the fact that Krynica is a private property managed by the nomenklatura suggests that there is more leeway in renegotiating the boundaries of private land. I could not imagine Cobra allowing something like this to happen on his farm. I remember when Roman mentioned that while *kombinacja* still exists, 'maybe that *kombinacja* has become smaller because one is more afraid of the private property owner (*prywaciarz*)'. Where the private owner is not present, that fear subsides to some degree.

[137] Thanks to Dr. Frances Pine for this point.

Figure 38 Foraging potatoes on private land in Krynica. Author's photo (2009).

People looked like they were 'stealing', however they could have not done so en masse without the cooperation of the warden I had previously met, tractor drivers, police, *gmina* authorities—that is, if these figures of authority were not out in the fields picking potatoes too. Marek explained to me that during the Danish owner's potato harvest on the field, the Polish tractor drivers and combine operators left behind patches of unharvested potatoes around electrical poles and between each row on the fields. Once the first harvest was complete, villagers who had the 'will to work' (*chęć do pracy*) could come to the fields with the tractor operator's permission to manually pick the second harvest for free. This was more economically advantageous for the ex-state farm workers, who would rather go and pick the potatoes than work for 60 *grosze* an hour and then buy those same potatoes from the farmer.

Marek explained that foragers were not doing anything illegal. They took loose potatoes that otherwise would have rotted on the field. If foragers thought that they were doing something wrong, they would have not picked in broad daylight. He contrasted this situation to the socialist-era foraging when urban dwellers arrived at night and packed potatoes into their pillowcases that they consumed and sold on the free market.

Somehow, the performance of foraging in daylight (like with mushrooms below) justified the action. Marek's explanation was not based upon how this action related to existing private property laws (asking permission from the owner, paying for produce from the farm, police protection of private property, etc.), but how it related under conditions during the socialist period.

Again, people have figured out a way to work 'in between' the surveillance and production pace of agricultural production. Whereas authorities used to be physically present at the properties and monitored the mounds on the fields, now, many private owners were based abroad and exported the potato harvest, which meant that those who came to pick the second harvest were relatively safe from getting caught by the owner. For mass trespassing to occur without the owners' permission (or economic benefit), the cooperation of providing legal overhead was necessary between the private farm workers, *gmina* authorities, and the police. Thus legal overheads must be provided during temporal loopholes for poor villagers and urban dwellers to pick potatoes and fulfill their subsistence needs for the upcoming winter. This was a clear indicator that *kombinacja* was taking place en masse, by ordinary villagers, who were making a public claim to the privatised commons that were still their subsistence territories, especially after becoming economically marginalised in the post-socialist era (Pickles, 2006, pg. 178).

Although it was implied by Marek that the owner did not know about this foraging fest, one could argue that the farm benefitted from foraging in the sense that the owner saves money on labour and machines by having people who rely on these socialist-era subsistence territories to weed out the leftover potatoes. Their unpaid labour performs a sort of service within the full production cycle of the farm. If the owner does not know about it, then the workers he does employ to plough the fields cut their labour time by allowing ex-state farm workers to do the work for them. Thus, it is interesting to see how workers and locals 'rework' access rights to the now Danish-owned farm so that everyone 'wins'—the workers, the ex-state farm workers, and even the owner—without any monetary transaction taking place.

Through *kombinacja*, the marginalised poor rely on their socialist-era networks for protection in order to encroach on the privatised farms owned by foreigners and meet their potato subsistence needs. This exemplifies the act of domesticating neoliberalism

that the marginalised poor use on these large farms, because they are ignoring the idea of exclusionary property and instead use a different set of justifications for their action that would clearly be 'theft' in the market economy. The ex-state farm, as a site of extraction—or *kombinacja*—has remained constant from the socialist to the post-socialist era—the *kombinator*s come to the farms, extract resources from the farm with extra-legal overhead, and use them to meet their subsistence needs. Given that the warden is part of the nomenklatura, it is an interesting 'twist' to see how he manipulates his position with the Danish owner to open up the fields for the public to use after the primary harvest.

In sum, after the torrent of 'bad' *kombinacja* discourse directed against nomenklatura privatisation in the 1990s, this case displays how the nomenklatura's allowance of this activity in the 2000s helps preserve their position of power. It bears close resemblance to their allowance of pilfering on state farms in order to keep the ex-state farm workers happy and their positions safe. In the case of state farms, 'bad' *kombinacja* is classified as a critique against class inequality; 'good' *kombinacja* activity is protected through the moral economy. The nomenklatura have found a way to play on both sides.

8.4.1. Mushroom foraging

The expansion of the forests in the post-socialist era represent this blurring of boundaries between public and private property, and in effect, the foraging across these two property regimes. One October morning, while on my way to an interview on the southern side of the village adjacent to a large forest, I noticed that the last bus stop in the village was populated with middle-aged and elderly mushroom foragers ready to head back to Słupsk[138]. Many urban dwellers had roots in the village and still returned to their foraging territories (*swoje ścieżki*)[139]. At the bus stop, some carried mushrooms in plastic bags or cages; others had traditional baskets adorned with caps of the prize mushrooms showcased on the top like a bouquet of flowers. I got on one of the buses with the foragers and their full buckets to head back to the archive office in the city. The

[138] Skulans (1998) writes that Latvian forests provided physical refuge during invasions and have symbolised physical survival as well as a site where one can achieve agency (pg. 82).
[139] In the 1970s and 1980s, state workplaces organised mushroom foraging trips to far-off foraging grounds that were only available to the workers and their families.

bus filled with excited chatter as foragers inspected each other's baskets. It was one of the few moments you are able to see Polish people cheery in the public sphere in the village. They exchanged stories about mushroom locations, quality, processing ideas, recipes, and networked future excursions to other territories. One man asked another why he hid his mushrooms and pressured him to show them to the fellow passengers. Another man negotiated to buy an entire basket for 50 *złoty* from another forager, but the forager replied that he would sell his top basket only for 100 *złoty*. He could probably earn more by disseminating it to his trusted informal networks in the city.

Foragers perform a free service to the state owned forestry, as poachers do to the private owner of the ex-state farms. By foraging mushrooms and berries and circulating them among other villagers through various reciprocal relations to meet their subsistence needs, they take the pressure off the *gmina* to initiate poverty-reduction programmes. The younger generation (<50) sells them through a *skup* selling point to urban and foreign customers. Skup points are homes with a blackboard outside with the day's harvest and prices per kilogram. The elderly generation usually consider skup points taboo and purchase mushrooms below skup prices from unemployed foragers who canvas them for vodka money. When I asked whether a village drunk who goes to forage mushrooms and then wants to sell them to her is a form of *kombinacja*, Zuzanna responded:

> **Z:** No, that was not, because if he goes to mushrooming and picks them himself, and wants to sell them, no? Then, then, that is not *kombinacja*. Because he is not stealing but is rather working on it, because he is picking them, no?
>
> **Self:** Yes, but, yes.
>
> **Z:** Because if he went to someone's garden and dug something out and brought it to me, then that is *kombinacja*, because he rips it out, steals it, and now wants money from us. If he has a receiver (*odbiorce*) then he will sell it cheaper a little bit and the rest he will put into his pocket.

Zuzanna was sensitive to such *kombinacja* because her neighbours often came at night and stole her vegetables. Here we see that the rule of *kombinacja* does not apply to the commons like the state-owned forests, where everyone can go and forage mushrooms. It does not even apply to the contexts in which those foragers try to sell the mushrooms. *Kombinacja* only applies if someone had encroached on a person's garden plot,

extracted their vegetables, and sold them to someone else. It would be synonymous with theft—where someone extracts something they have no legal or granted access to and then capitalises from it. Access rights define whose activity is *kombinacja* and whose is not. However, one person's *kombinator* is another person's thief. According to Fidelis, *kombinacja* is only an outdated term for outright theft. He explained that anyone who manipulates or steals 'are the *kombinator*s but they are criminals, they are not *kombinator*s—we maybe call it like that in the old ways, *kombinacja*! But they are normally criminals. In the law, they are not *kombinator*s but are criminals'.

Figure 39 Processing wild mushroom harvest. Author's photo (2009).

There are no rules about foraging on public land in Poland that I have come across, however, *kombinacja* would occur if for example someone encroached on a villagers' well-known mushroom territory. For instance, when I went to interview a Ukrainian peasant in the nearby colony, my driver went to forage mushrooms in the forest behind her home. When the interview ended and he bought back a bucket full of mushrooms, he thanked Anna for letting him use her foraging territory. She did not seem to mind at all, however, the exchange stuck with me because why would anyone need permission or to thank someone else for using public forest land? If he had hidden them away or returned again to constantly feed off her subsistence territory in the forest he would have committed a *kombinacja.* But because he showed them to her and revealed his

harvest, he had used a light version of *kombinacja*. However, such activity and whether it was *kombinacja* or not, could be the subject of debate between two Poles. This would not have been the case under socialism where the rules of *kombinacja* were more identifiable.

8.5. Men's *kombinacja*

Reunification Street, running through the centre of Dobra, is lined with liquor and convenience stores heavily stocked with vodka. Long, wooden, bus-stop benches adjacent to the *gmina* headquarters are populated by elderly men with red faces, toothless smiles, missing fingers, and dusty hair wearing trucker hats, woolen sweaters, and old worker clothing. These men who suffer from alcohol addiction are called *bumy* and they represent Dobra's broken dreams. Some are passed out on or underneath the benches or half-consciously prostrating to their knees; others, with propped elbows on their knees, are engaged in slurring conversations until one spots a patron, jumps up from the bench, and asks for spare change. Then they pool their *złoty*, purchase vodka, beer, or cheap wine from the store and split it. Władysława, a retired machine operator who lost her son to alcoholism on the benches, explained their modus operandi:

> When they get together in the morning, they are so deprived! One searches, searches, and meets a known face and 'Lend me [money] sir, lend me'. And so they pool [the money] together, come to the store, and in the store, they are short 2 to 3 *groszy*[140] and the woman at the store waves her hand because they are regular customers. Or the store clerk is sweeping outside of the store, so then he grabs the broom from her and helps out. Then she gives a grosz or two and they beg like that. He will stand and will see a female acquaintance coming, 'Can you please lend me [money]' so for holy peace, one gives it to them, and that is how they help one another. Some will find bottles and cans, yes, yes. Sometimes, that Szymon—when there is some place to cut some wood, or to hold even the piece of wood, then he is there. When here Janina was cutting wood, here (gestures), the neighbour Władek was doing it (for her). So, Szymon—no one called him over here. He came and looked, and then they were holding something up and he immediately came and helped them carry it. And then at the end, she, because he stayed behind. They finished cutting the wood, she gives Władek the money and (Szymon) says, 'And me? 5 *złoty*?' and she says, 'For what? I didn't ask you!' and he says, 'But I was helping' and she said, 'And did I ask you to help?' So they force, they force [money] out like that.

[140] 1/100 of a *złoty*.

Here is an example of how Szymon tried to impose his labour where there was no granted access and then attempted to use *kombinacja* upon an existing arrangement that Janina had with a 'helper' (*pomocnik*, a neighbour Władek). The *kombinator*s, who had under socialism domesticated state resources had several major trajectories to choose from during the transition: from private businesses that enveloped those services in the formal economy, become migrant workers, or continue working in the informal economy. The men on the alcohol benches 'chose' the latter route but have been excluded from the labour market due to old age, lack of training, and their ever-present struggles with alcohol consumption. They refuse to migrate overseas because they rely on their networks and regularly perform alcohol libations at homes and pool money together. Each raises money individually in his neighbourhood before congregating on the benches, pooling it, and raising more from old co-workers, friends, and family who pass through the village centre. This territorial centralisation of funds on a daily basis provides a consistent demand for alcohol in village stores, attracts alcohol business, and drives up competition between liquor stores in order to attract their patronage. They repeat this cycle all day, every day, until they pass out, fall into a ditch, or are brought home by the police.

Socialist-era networks are all they have left to secure some odd jobs around the village. This is not only particular to those with alcohol problems. According to Stenning et al. (2010), 'pooling' is one of the defining facets of domesticating neoliberalism, in that its 'social transfers are becoming an increasingly important part of family budgets and state benefits can be seen to enable economic practices in other spheres' (pg. 71). These victims of alcoholism use the benches as an organisational platform to find innovative ways to secure informal labour using their socialist-era ties to family and friends in the village. However, they pool their earnings back into the informal guild in a self-destructive way and repeat the cycle. Because these men rely on the social reproduction of their networks as a form of gaining access to temporary labour, they could be in the category of what Leonard and Kaneef (2002) call 'post-socialist peasants' who 'draw inspiration from the relative security they experienced during the socialist period' but who do not mean to recreate the socialist past (pg. 30).

Figure 40 Alcohol benches before the men wake up. Taking a photograph while they were there was too dangerous since Roman was one of them. Author's photo (2009).

Their skillful usage of time to domesticate neoliberalism needs mention. They are skilled at switching between dual labour and capital cycles on the benches and in the domestic sphere. In the former, they fundraise, pool, and imbibe, to reproduce fraternal and labour identity. In addition to the services mentioned above, they scare children away from traditional helping jobs like holding church gates during weddings for candy, foraging mushrooms and blueberries in the forest, or foraging vegetables from farms and selling them to the elderly below market prices. Women and children fear them and give in to their services—which furthers the confidence and support of their new services.

Roman is a regular on the benches. Until he suffered a massive stroke in 2013, he had been the proud ringleader of the group because everyone else who kept up such habits had died off. His body was especially 'strong', an expression of peasant-worker masculinity. Roman became unemployed when the mechanical enterprise shut down in the 1990s. He has struggled with alcoholism since the 1970s—after he returned home from the Polish People's Army—and unsuccessfully underwent multiple detoxification

programmes in the 1980s and 1990s. Whenever he returned to the village, the alcoholism returned as soon as he met up with his drinking fraternity.

He assumed the role of the patriarchal head (*Gospodarz*) of Zuzanna's farm after his father's death in 1997. While his role requires him to work on the farm, secure it from poachers, produce profits, reinvest into production, and so forth, the agricultural collapse in the village has left behind only the patriarchal authority of the title. Zuzanna and Roman have in reality lived off of Zuzanna's 1,000 *złoty* retirement cheques that pay monthly for taxes, alcohol, medical expenses, food, clothing, seeds, water, ploughs, hay, and fertilisers. With rising prices, this budget has pushed them into poverty. Without structural funds, adequate rehabilitation programmes, and community action, Roman and those like him, who are in their middle-age but do not qualify for retirement and are too stricken with alcoholism to even dedicate the time to register for unemployment or welfare benefits, are left stranded. When Zuzanna gave him money to secure welfare in Słupsk city, he never got past the bus stop.

Roman had liquidated the farm by advertising its valuables to villagers who wanted cheap goods. Depending on the resource that season, flowers or eggs, Roman directed the fraternal guild members and others to his farm. In the 1990s and 2000s, Roman sold his rabbits to the village and urban patrons during Christmas for alcohol money. When the extended family put an end to this in 2010, he began selling off family *gotyks* for vodka, which Ludwik then had to find and buy back from the villagers. He makes deals with villagers and urban dwellers by promising resources on his farm in return for alcohol money.

One day, a city couple drove into the yard and told Zuzanna that they wanted to pick up the horseradish they had paid for through Roman. On another occasion, a fraternity member entered Zuzanna's farm without asking her permission and hacked away at another horseradish bush. The system worked the other way around too. Once, Roman and Zuzanna walked across the street to another fraternity member's house to take, without permission, several bundles of hay that came in on a wagon. To pay-off his alcohol pooling debts to other neighbours, Roman allows others to access the resources on his property; when other fraternal members are indebted to him, he goes to access resources on their properties. Zuzanna benefits and participates in this debt system negotiated by the men in this guild.

Figure 41 De-capitalised peasant farm. Author's photo (2009).

Ludwik, his brother who is a migrant-worker in Norway, claims that Roman is a *kombinator*, a master of disguises who manipulates space, events, and faces–all to end up with money for alcohol. Roman has 'neoliberalised' his domestic duties. He collects fees for his chores that he is expected to fulfill as the patriarchal head of the farm. Instead of hiring a private sector construction crew to take down an agricultural barn that is costing them high property taxes, Zuzanna 'hired' Roman who has been taking it apart for over a year. She pays lower rates for poor-quality labour with major delays in addition to property taxes on the unfinished barn. Hiring crews would betray Roman's labour 'niche' and could be potentially dangerous to her safety as Roman is territorial about the job and will not let anyone help out. In addition to the larger projects, each morning Roman performs a small 'job' like loading the coal oven to 'earn' money from Zuzanna. Then after breakfast, Roman asks Zuzanna for 'cigarette money' (*pieniądze na papierosy*), meaning alcohol money.

Tarkowska (2002) who has studied gendered dynamics in Polish rural households, points out that men have allotted a special portion of 'private money for personal spending' that is not allotted to women (pg. 423). Often, Roman would not even have to ask Zuzanna for the money. When I was in the kitchen, the two skirted around me,

working together as a team to evade my eye and to make sure that the 5 *złoty* were passed unnoticed. When I asked Roman about post-socialist *kombinacja*, from his viewpoint, it existed everywhere—'Where is there no *kombinacja*? It appears to me that it exists in every country—that *kombinacja*. It appears to me like that. Someone always does something "on the left" (*na lewo*)'. He justified his *kombinacja* because he lived in a world that was riddled with it. Roman, even though he earns no money and ruins his body, refuses to eat any store-bought produce. He says that they are riddled with chemicals and do not taste good. He only eats food produced mostly by Zuzanna on their farm. Even though they cannot afford it any longer, he ploughs over the land to grow fresh food even though Zuzanna pleads for him to stop because of the costs involved. However, to him, opting out of this way of life is his resistance against it.

Figure 42 Roman get a helping hand on taking apart the barn to pay less property taxes. This has taken him over 6 months—what normally would have taken 1 week. Author's photo (2009).

Figure 43 Roman (back) being 'good' and working on sauerkraut production with Zuzanna for which he earns cigarette money. Author's photo (2009).

The men on the benches secure and negotiate agricultural jobs on their farms among themselves. One autumn afternoon, Roman opened up the front gate into the yard. Leonid, an elderly Ukrainian man, rode in on a half-mechanical, half-wooden wagon on

rubber wheels, pulled by an old, brown horse. Leonid unharnessed Basia, took an old plough, and went with Roman to the back yard where he began to plough the field. The precision and expertise in Leonid's work was awe-inspiring and Basia needed little direction. He split the field down the middle and perfectly ploughed each without respite. Leonid ploughed into the fallow land (*odłogi*)—something Zuzanna told Roman not to do because it forced her to put more labour into the farm. Roman, however, wanted extra vegetables to exchange for alcohol money. Instead of paying Leonid for the job, Roman boarded Leonid's wagon, and Zuzanna informed me that the two were off to drink. Looking out the window, I saw the back of two men jovially talking as Basia pulled them toward their libation.

Figure 44 Leonid and Basia plough Roman's vegetable garden for free while he watches. Author's photo (2009).

Socialist-era networks are all these men have left to secure labour in the post-socialist era. They do not hold formal jobs and many do not receive welfare from the state. Rather, they split their time monetising their domestic labour, liquidating their farms and valuables, and scoping out informal jobs for cheaper prices than the formal services sector can provide. Their aggressive activity secures agricultural labour—or what is left

of it—in their guild. Because all of their investment goes into purchasing alcohol and collectively consuming it on the benches, these men do not reinvest into the private sector, but bring in more alcohol business and price competition to the village. What is most important is not getting out of poverty, but doing everything in the neoliberal era to reproduce their socialist-era identity and networks. Their struggles have certainly been unresolved in the transition and all they can do in their marginalised status is to rely on those who shared their past.

8.6. Women's *kombinacja*

DAMA is a small, private candy factory hidden along Reunification Street in Dobra. It is owned by Jolka, a Polish woman who kept close contact with the German family who had owned the factory prior to the German expulsion in the late 1940s. In the 1980s, the German family invited Jolka to West Germany where she received investment funds and training to restart the candy factory under her private ownership. Thus, DAMA is a prime example of how the continuing transnational networks, between Germans families who had been expelled from the territories and the Polish families who had settled on their properties have continued to reap rewards for both parties. Jolka got ahead of the entrepreneurial game with funding while the Germans could socially secure their property by having someone they knew and could influence the factory.

The factory produces its own recipes of Polish candy such as bird's milk (*ptasie mleczko*), a rectangular, vanilla-flavoured, spongy 'milk' covered on all sides with a thin layer of hardened chocolate; fruit-flavoured gelatin candy covered in sugar crystals or chocolate, and chocolate-covered gingerbread cookies (*pierniki*), etc. DAMA blends in to the dilapidating warehouses and factories that are surrendering to nature after the state's retreat from production in the province. In 2009, there was no sign in front of the rectangular, one-story building with pastel blue paint chipping off and large, dirty, windows and a metal fence; there were no cars, trucks, nor people that stood outside of the parking lot. Yet, as lifeless as the factory grounds appeared, the bird's milk candy were neatly stocked in their signature yellow boxes in the small convenience stores, priced at 11 *złoty* and competed on the same shelf against the global candy manufacturer, E.Wedel, that produced bird's milk and sold it for 13 *złoty*. DAMA's bird's milk was larger, darker, grittier, with the external chocolate covering less sweet and crisp, and with the vanilla interior more watered down than its competitor. Wedel's

candy underwent a much more streamlined manufacturing process with taste experts, more rigorous inspections, more advanced machines. DAMA's production process was less advanced and the candy had—what I would describe as—a more 'Soviet' feel to it.

On an early October night, when the usual thick smoke caused by coal fires coated the village streets, two DAMA workers, Leona and Ola, made their way toward Zuzanna's front door. Leona and Ola looked like most middle-aged women in the village. They had thick, non-manicured hands, self-dyed hair, second-hand industrial shirts, and jeans. Magdalena, a migrant worker in Norway, sat in the kitchen but looked much more polished. With the exception of Zuzanna, all three women were ex-tannery workers. In 1991 the state tannery was privatised and downsized its workforce from 600 to 100 workers, which left most of the workers in the village unemployed. After multiple workers' strikes due to major lay-offs and unpaid wages, the tannery collapsed in 1994. Today, a German owner produces small fox and mink furs in the tannery employing seasonal, temporary labour. While Leona and Ola stayed in the village and have worked temporarily in Jolka's candy factory at 7 *złoty* per hour, Magdalena chose migrant labour. Leona and Ola were Zuzanna's neighbours, both with husbands who suffer from alcoholism, and the three women engaged in constant economic exchanges of food and services because they were the breadwinners of their households. Tarkowska (2002) writes that many women in rural households take on temporary, unregistered jobs in the 'shadow economy' (pg. 426) or what is usually called *na czarno* ('on the black', see Buchowski, 2003, pg. 53).

The women sat around the kitchen table drinking 50ml shots of homemade cherry-plum fruit brandy (*śliwowica*). Magdalena brought out a thick chunk of cured bacon from the pantry, placed it on a wooden cutting board, and kept it warm atop the iron furnace that was slightly ajar with wood and coal crackling inside. Leona placed a plastic bag filled with DAMA bird's milk on the table. When I enquired about which candy took the longest to produce, she said that machines did all of the work, but that candy types and quantities depended upon the production cycles. Leona casually mentioned that in late October, the factory was making its final push for candy production for the Christmas season. The stores only received the boxed version of the candy, but loose candy was available for purchase for the workers at 10 *złoty* per kilogram. Zuzanna then interjected and asked for Leona to bring her a kilogram of the bird's milk for Christmas and to

bring some for me, which she would pay Leona for. The friendly chat quickly transformed into a business meeting of women using their long-standing networks to get candy for free or for less than price at the supermarket.

But there were several factors that did not sound right in the exchange and which lead me to suspect that there was *kombinacja* in play between Zuzanna and Leona. No money was exchanged, only free food and services. Perhaps there was no loose candy sold at DAMA for 10 *złoty* nor was Zuzanna expecting Leona to accept her payment for the delivery. Nor did Zuzanna pay Leona for the large bag of candy Leona brought out on the table. In a village where everyone lives on or below the poverty line it would have been a risky purchase to spend 10% of her seasonal daily-wage to put bird's milk on Zuzanna's kitchen table during a friendly visit. Either the candy did not cost 10 *złoty* and Leona increased the price to make a future profit from Zuzanna's purchase or the candy cost nothing and Leona just wanted to show Zuzanna that she was taking care of Zuzanna's guests—an act for which she would win future favour since she relies so much on Zuzanna's free produce during harvests. This experience exposed to me just how confusing 'finding' *kombinacja* is in the present moment. If it is not encapsulated in a story about the past as the interviewees had recalled it, it is difficult to identify it playing out in real time.

Upon my departure from Dobra, Leona again came by with several boxes of bird's milk that would have represented an overwhelming cost for both her and Zuzanna. Regardless of the details, the deal showed that DAMA workers used factory candy to carry on other economic activity in the village by selling, exchanging, or distributing them to their networks. The selling of loose bird's milk at below market prices, less than the DAMA boxes in the local supermarket, lowers DAMA's competitive edge alongside the E.Wedel boxes. How could the owner allow this? I was reminded of my conversation with Stasiek, the ex-*gmina* official, who claimed that the activities that would have constituted *kombinacja* under socialism began to qualify as theft because the workplace structures and capital flows became more closely monitored. Yet at Jolka's factory, it appeared that workers were comfortably making deals involving 'surplus' candy among their female acquaintances (*znajome*) like Zuzanna in the village.

After the *kombinacja* deal, Leona and Ola complained about Jolka which shows that the workers and employer did not share similar economic goals. Jolka was once a tannery worker among these middle-aged women, but in the 1990s, she chose the entrepreneurial route while most of her co-workers became workers. Whenever Jolka needs temporary labour, she telephones the middle-aged women in the village and asks them to come 'help out' (*pomóc*)—without individual or group working contracts—for twelve-hour shifts in the factory for two or three consecutive days. She exploits socialist-era networks to access a cheap labour pool. DAMA only produces its products in batches and puts workers on the workshop floor only during production bursts. Thus, before each production cycle, Jolka organises unemployed women in the village to come in to work temporarily. These middle-aged women were particularly desirable because they had enough years of work to secure retirement but had yet to reach the proper age; thus Jolka did not need to hire them full-time and take on the responsibility of paying workers' benefits to the state branch (ZUS[141]) and that would count towards retirement years. Thus, to stay competitive, DAMA relies upon cheap labour organised through socialist-era networks and the ingrained logic of 'help' to complete the production quota.

While the non-union women workers despise the arrangement and want full-time employment, most grudgingly consent because they have no other employment opportunities. Leona complained that when Jolka calls each individual worker, she expects them to drop everything and rearrange their plans for the production period and to exert themselves in long shifts. If they try to negotiate, Jolka threatens to call other willing women. Some workers, however, have begun to reject Jolka's request for help because the work is temporary, earnings are only enough to cover a single supermarket trip, and there is no guarantee of a call-back in the next production cycle or of job security. They describe these arrangements as moving 'from work to labour' (*od pracy do roboty*), meaning descending down the slippery slope of full employment under socialism into temporary, hard labour under post-socialism. Without formal employment, union representation, or pay negotiation, when the factory women gather, they communicate their dissent in social terms. For example, Leona complained that Jolka is acting like a robot, does not communicate properly with the workers, and

[141] Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych.

ignores them. The women compared their struggling livelihoods to Jolka's opulent lifestyle, for example that she is building a brand new house in the village and that her daughter brags about purchasing from the top shelves at the supermarket—an attitude Leona claimed she hated. Gossip was an important medium they used to communicate these economic hardships in the factory.

The function of neighbourly help (*sąsiedzka pomoc*) for mobilising and organising workers towards production goals without proper compensation under socialism continues as a management strategy that coincides with the increasing flexibility and temporary contracts in the Polish workplace today. Women workers who once helped the state economy meet its workplace quotas are mobilised by their old co-workers to help private factories stay competitive. In both cases the women are not independently unionised and are organised based upon this management principle. What this means is that they use *kombinacja* as self-compensation for this labour that they consent to out of necessity rather than will, which exists in some form. This exemplifies another way that 'help' and *kombinacja* jar against one another: Neighbourly help is bad *kombinacja,* a top-down extraction of labour from the workers, while good *kombinacja* is a bottom-up extraction of commodities. If Jolka was a good employer, she may even use loose bird's milk as an incentive for workers to take on the labour and then sell or exchange the surplus candy to supplement their earnings. This may be her way of 'domesticating neoliberalism' by exploiting socialist-era networks and using socialist-era strategies to ensure she saves some money on labour and taxes in the long run.

After they made candy deals and gossiped about their temporary jobs, the women asked me not to bring Jolka into any sort of trouble (*kłopotów*). This caught me by surprise, partly because they were not looking to voice their economic conditions for the world to save them—in fact, it was a non-nostalgic comment. In its most exploitative form, DAMA, even in spurts of production, is one of the few employers in the village, especially for female pensioners. Jolka's *kombinacja* was well known, as was the factory workers' *kombinacja*—however, their strategies were a negotiation tactic to make both the producer and the workers agree on labour-work conditions. Outside surveillance of Jolka's exploitative economic practices would put both her factory and their temporary employment at risk, as well as their access to whatever *kombinacja* activity they were carrying out with the bird's milk to supplement those temporary

wages by making deals with their networks. While the labour conditions disenfranchise these women workers, some work is evidently better than no work because there is always the possibility of *kombinacja*. The women factory workers still exchange commodities from the workplace with peasant produce to supplement their sporadic wages and to socially reproduce their domestic roles as mothers who secure candy for Christmas.

8.7. Conclusion: diverse economies of *kombinacja*

This chapter has drawn together multiple strands about how *kombinacja* has been adapted to domesticate neoliberalism. I have shown how the rural poor who once engaged in these acts of *kombinacja* in the state workplaces have been excluded from full-time jobs, information about EU funds, access to proper medical care, etc. Access to the benefits of EU funds, subsistence territories on ex-state-farms, or cheaper produce all still have to be 'arranged' through networks. Networks are essential to carry out the neoliberal project.

I agree with Williams and Onoschenko's (2014) that families in the post-socialist period 'show a textured mapping of the diverse economic practices' as families secure livelihoods through an array of formal employment, informal employment, reimbursed favours, paid household labour, formal unpaid employment, off-the-radar unpaid labour in groups, one-to-one unpaid labour, and self-provisioning labour (pg. 32). Informal and formal are not 'binaries', but as Morris (2014) puts it, occur in a 'continuum' (pg. 64). This idea of an economically fragmented landscape through which individuals flow in and out of in a type of continuum, establishing relations and bringing back resources into the household, links it well with Creed's (2006) and Stenning et al's (2010) notion of 'domestication', that opens that channel between the merging of economies, public, and private spheres. 'Domestication' does not necessarily mean bringing back resources to the site of the household, but can occur in public spaces, as in the case of pooling resources on the alcohol benches in order to socially-reproduce working-class identities.

This investigation of *kombinacja*—the way it has been fragmented depending on the opinions of each milieu—shows that socialist-era strategies are not simply 'reworking' neoliberalism; rather, they too are changing in the process. This brings to mind Morris and Polese (2014) claim that informality undergoes partial transformations, adopting some element of the past with the present. They add that it has 'an important role to

play in reinforcing the relevance of a multiple modernities perspective…away from *homo economicus* and towards more "embedded" forms of economics: human, diverse, and "real-world"'(pgs. 7-9). *Kombinacja*, even the bad kind, that was once lauded by almost everyone is now demonised and covertly used by those in the *gmina* who are most desperate for an exchange of resources. Whereas in the socialist period there was more of a consensus that *kombinacja* was something that was used as a bottom-up strategy by the people against higher echelons of the state, there is a loose consensus that *kombinacja* is now being exercised against them by neoliberalism, the state, etc. The post-socialist period eerily feels more like a 'dormant' *kombinacja* period, much like during the transition into socialism in the post-war era where the 'formal' had not been clearly defined until Stalinism.

Accommodation to one part of neoliberalism has the opposite effect of resisting against its organisation of economic space. For instance, the nomenklatura's privatisation of state property and monopolisation of EU funding is the most blatant example of how socialist-era networks stifle economic growth for the peasantry but support the gentrification of the countryside; however, without the nomenklatura's legal protection, ex-state farm workers would not have access to forage foreign-owned, ex-state farms, to secure a potato harvest on their old subsistence territories. While poachers exercise *kombinacja* by extracting resources that they have no legal access to, they simultaneously perform a 'free service' to the private property owner and increase the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of the farms' production cycle. Private property, EU funds, and control of *gmina* power all flow into the system of patronage which emphasises socialist-era power relations filtering into neoliberal reforms. However, they help fight poverty that the state itself has not adequately tackled and help those private farms become more efficient with a free labour force. Morris and Polese (2014) argue that post-socialist informality is 'evidence of a lack of hegemony of capitalist relations in these spaces' (pg.7). But by implementing *kombinacja* through a complex system of local protections, those who are the 'losers' of the transition use *kombinacja* to secure their own supply chains and labour niches in order to unfix their rural livelihoods from the gentrification of the countryside. They themselves are staving off hegemonic capitalism through their diverse economic practices using *kombinacja.*

Chapter 9

Kombinacja across time and space

9.1. Refusing boundaries

This thesis has mapped *kombinacja*'s polysemic expressions across the treacherous historical terrain of postwar reconstruction, collectivisation, decollectivisation, late socialism, and post-socialism. In doing so, I have pinpointed contentions over scarce resources that have occurred between competing groups, at specific sites in different points in time and on various spatial scales. I have found that *kombinacja* defies boundaries and form. No one owns *kombinacja*—it can be used by anyone for any purpose. Neither are any two *kombinacja* activities identical—each is an amalgam of a previous recombination. *Kombinacja*'s linguistic meaning has been used relationally and its applications to new sites and fields have changed over time. However, these arts of combination are linked by the common thread of innovation that people have used to adapt to changing fields and to access scarce resources within them. They also expose historical continuities of corruption and marginalisation; states that promise change through 'socialism' or 'capitalism' continue to recreate the very conditions of inequality that foster the social reproduction of *kombinacja.*

Kombinacja's diverse expressions and evasion of form subverts any holistic theoretical framework that attempts to wholly encompass it. Although this thesis initially framed *kombinacja* as a type of informality, I have found that informality provides a limiting framework for understanding this institution's slippery and polysemic expressions as well as the social reproduction of its social and cultural dimensions. Informality is a more amenable concept when *kombinacja* is depicted as a historical-geographic concept within a given time and space. On the other hand, Bourdieusian terms like habitus (feel for the game) and fields (sites of competition for resources) are better suited when *kombinacja* is depicted as a transhistorical process *across* time and space[142]. They are more effective tools for understanding how struggles over resources map and remap boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, how people rework their economic systems over

[142] Thanks to Professor Sharad Chari and Professor Gareth A. Jones for these points.

time and how, in the process, they socially reproduce *kombinacja* on individual and everyday scales[143]. Unlike habitus and fields, however, informality is still an important concept that pinpoints the specific role of the state within these very struggles. In this chapter, I will first explain my five general findings about *kombinacja* using habitus and fields. I will then discuss *kombinacja*'s tenuous link with informality and will argue that a more theoretically and methodologically enhanced understanding of informality is necessary to complicate our understanding of the modern state. Lastly, I will outline my future studies into transnational *kombinacja.*

9.2. Shifting fields

In this section, I will outline five main findings about *kombinacja* and its transformations from the postwar period to the postsocialist era. Tracing *kombinacja* in this fashion can help us get an ethnographic glimpse into how fields and habitus crystallise, how language can be discursively used to frame the habitus and identities between competing groups within fields, how habitus itself is socially reproduced, and how both habitus and fields differentiate and diffuse. My purpose in thinking through these concepts is to show how a focus on group dynamics, access to resources and distribution of them can remap binary divisions of space propagated by transition narratives that put socialism and capitalism, capitalism and noncapitalism, informal and formal, private and public into different camps.

My first finding was that *kombinacja* is a specific type of habitus in a specific field of struggle over resources at a given point in time. In postwar Dobra, the reemergence of the term *kombinacja* coincided with peasants' perception of the nomenklatura's exploitation of state power. Unlike their vivid recollections of using *kombinacja* during the Nazi occupation, peasants initially omitted it in their description of their unregulated activities in postwar Dobra that would have been called as such during the Nazi occupation. One explanation for this is that during that time, the Party was still struggling to consolidate power and the command economy was still in its nascent stages. There was no sense of what the formal was and who represented it. It was not until *gmina* officials deployed feudal institutions and forced peasants into unpaid labour on state and their private land, that the term resurfaced. The 'formal' now had a human

[143] Thanks to Professor Sharad Chari for this point.

face—corrupt families who exercised state power to their desired ends. *Kombinacja* at this point did not encompass all informal activity nor was it a critique of all state 'formality'. It unmasked a specific type of 'formal' power and economy negotiated by informal relations. Perceiveing the nomenklatura as *kombinators* working against peasants' interests justified their retaliation with a counter-*kombinacja* (habitus) to control as much of the resource flows within subsequent fields (e.g. collective farms). This finding that *kombinacja* marked the encroachment of nomenklatura hegemony sheds light on how a field crystallises, which parties get involved, and how they reach a 'consensus' on the habitus within it.

Second, *kombinacja* was discursively used to define the scope of a given network's strategies (habitus) in juxtaposition to those exercised by competing networks in a field. In the *gmina* archives during the Stalinist era, local officials accused '*kułaks*, *kombinators,* and peasants' of sabotaging the command economy's supply chain (field). Since no other trace of the state acknowledging *kombinacja* in national archives or laws, I think that *gmina* officials used this term to unmask 'bad' *kombinators* who outmaneuvered them in securing fungible state assets. Having been accused of being 'bad' *kombinators*, officials used the state archives to 'formalise' their specific definition of the 'good' versus 'bad' *kombinacja* to increase their control over the field. Habitus was relationally applied. Officials could act as the state and hunt down 'bad' *kombinators* that disrupted the supply chain (their private interests) while also being 'good' *kombinators* acting on behalf of the villagers against the 'higher' echelons of the state. For example, they cited using 'good' *kombinacja* to secure resources for the state plan, furnish state schools, and even sell state assets on the 'free market' (*wolny rynek*). If peasants did that, it was 'bad' *kombinacja.* The converse was true from the peasants' perspective. Officials who diverted resources were committing 'bad' *kombinacja,* but when peasants consented to collectivisation and then purposely kept farms half-broken in order to divert state resources to their own farms, they committed a 'good' *kombinacja* that was aligned with the peasants' plight for liberation since the prewar period. People redefined *kombinacja* to occupy multiple fields and increase their chances of acquiring resources while keeping their activities 'in line' with their group's political and moral economies.

Third, the social reproduction of *kombinacja* along kinship lines reworked how state resources would be acquired within a given field of struggle. Between the postwar period and the decollectivisation of agriculture in 1956, many settlers occupied a single class position (peasant, collective farm worker). For example, peasants' *kombinacja* in the collective farm was mostly defined by their competition over resources against the nomenklatura. By the 1970s, however, those peasants' children were reaching working age and entered administrative, *gmina*, bureaucratic, factory, mechanical enterprise, circle, and state farm jobs across the village while still living on the farm. *Kombinacja* competition over resources was no longer defined solely by class but between families with more diverse networks scattered across the village workplaces (and in the right places). A single *kombinacja* operation could be deployed by family members at multiple sites of the field. In effect, different families began to corner different 'niches' of the field of resources through their strategic positioning of kin in the right places and exercising their familial brand of *kombinacja.* This reformulation of the group exercising habitus changed how resources were accessed within that field.

Fourth, *kombinacja* has shown how a habitus can create fields. In the 1970s, the state's vertical integration of the Agricultural Circles under a single administration located in the village headquarters of the entire *gmina* paved new opportunities for *kombinacja* to acquire new dimensions. The circle allowed its working peasants more mobility across the *gmina* in order to perform state services for the peasants who ordered them. The machine operators of these services used this access to state resources and authorised mobility to establish a shadow services sector cloaked under the 'formal' service. They finagled the conditions for the performance of the job—ploughing more than the peasant requested or ploughing their own private farms without reporting the job—often in exchange for arranged benefits. These services went unchecked because kin in administrative positions offered protection. This variant of *kombinacja* manipulated the spatial dimensions of the field (away from the state's gaze) in order to create a shadow field of activity (services). This was further demonstrated in the late socialist period when *kombinacja* became popularised, public, and socially sanctioned—which resulted in the transformation of new sites into fields. Workers appropriated state resources from state factories and installed them as a private service during work hours; the nomenklatura opened up small 'private' factories alongside their state factories; peasants directly sold produce to workers in the cities. These fields were so valuable to

everyday survival that villagers did not even celebrate the transition into 'capitalism'. Their collapse threatened to sever access to state assets, cut off distribution networks, and thwart social reproduction of *kombinators*' group identity. People politically aligned themselves not with 'isms' but which people who could keep fields open.

Fifth, *kombinacja*'s transition into from socialism to postsocialism demonstrates how differentiation can form within a habitus and field. Some groups continue to dominate the same fields. In the 1990s, the 'old' nomenklatura from the socialist period took charge of privatisation and liquidated the state workplaces. Villagers considered this to be *kombinacja* because the nomenklatura distributed state assets to themselves and their own networks. Officials today—the kin of socialist-era officials—continue to misappropriate EU funds for private projects. To counter this 'bad' *kombinacja,* villagers complain on internet forums and build group alliances against them. Other groups like ex-state farm workers continue to struggle to access their old fields (literally) now controlled by a new authority who defines access rules. Access to old fields sometimes this requires negotiation, like in the case of the women factory workers who offer protection to their boss who employs them illegally but who gives them access to the candy. Other times this involves violence, as in the case of the the nomenklatura who threatened new restaurant owners who did not give them free meals. Then there are those who claim to have abdicated *kombinacja* altogether and only operate in the legal and formal economy because there is no longer a 'need' for *kombinacja.* The continuity and change of certain fields and not others shows who is benefitting from the transition and who is reeling from it.

These findings show how habitus and fields take shape and change over time and space, but they are by no means an essentialist depiction of how these categories form and transform. They merely show how the arts of combination are relational—they can be expressed differently, in different sites, toward different ends, in different points in time. Habitus and fields cut across many 'formal' rules of access to limited resources. For example, the men on the alcohol benches whose only interest is reproducing socialist-era fraternal bonds first use 'noncapitalist' strategies like pooling money and then turn into consumers to buy alcohol which in effect attracts more alcohol shops to the village and lowers the price of alcohol for their future consumption. They use 'noncapitalist' habitus to transform a 'capitalist' field. Their innovative usage of

kombinacja 'marks' this blurred boundary between capitalism and non-capitalism. Interpreting ethnographic data using these terms and in the spirit of the arts of combination can help locate sites at which binaries get blurred, which in effect, lends empirical support to Gibson-Graham's diverse economies.

9.3. Informality's limitations

When J.K. Gibson-Graham (2006) introduced the idea of diverse economies, they encouraged further research into informal economies—especially in ex-Soviet bloc countries—in order to complicate the capitalocentric discourse of capitalist hegemony. The problem that I immediately ran into was that the concept of informality and informal economies was predominantly a term used to refer to 'capitalist' development in first and third world countries since the 1970s. Even Chris Hann and Keith Hart claimed that ex-second world needed a term comparable to informality in the rest of the world. Thus, one of the immediate issues was that the literature treated second economies and informal economies as symptoms of two separate worlds rather than economies created through the regulatory powers of the modern state. Although some scholars of postsocialism have adopted the diverse economy and informality language, they did so without explaining the theoretical linkages and repercussions of abdicating second economies altogether. My objective was to bridge these literatures by tracing how a certain type of informality could exist both under so-called 'capitalism' and 'socialism'. This would show how informality is socially reproduced and thus constantly adapting to new conditions that in effect reproduce differentiation and empirically support the idea of diverse economies. My results are rather mixed.

In tracing informality's transformations, my most pertinent finding is that informality plays an important role differentiation (deconstructing an imagery of hegemony) *and* co-optation (building an imagery of hegemony). In the postwar period, the state co-opted the energy dedicated to informal labour and integrated it into the command economy. Its continuation of various feudal-era obligations that—although integrated into the command economy—were unpaid gifts of labour that burdened peasants to subsidise quota production and maintenance in the commune. Co-opting peasant labour was a way the state manipulated informality to build an imagery of hegemony (through the continuation of links with power dynamics from the past). Conversely, in order to partially liberate themselves from these obligations, peasants used informality through

foot-dragging or the theft of socialist resources. In effect, this was 'differentiation' from the formal economy that subverted the imagery of hegemony. This treacherous terrain of 'informality' that could be used towards economic liberation and subjugation, adds a precautionary footnote to Gibson-Graham's optimistic spirit in exploring economic possibilities and their romantisation of informality as a process of differentiation that debunks the ideal-type of capitalist hegemony. Anyone can use informality to explore or co-opt economic alternatives towards many different ends. A more complete ethnographically and theoretically informed theory of informality must acknowledge this spectrum.

I also encountered informality's limitations. What initially drew me to informality was Alsayyad and Roy's (2004) definition of it as the 'unmapping of space' (pg. 5) that linked up with *kombinacja*'s refusal of form. Throughout the course of writing my thesis, however, I began to see the pattern that while all cases of *kombinacja* might be classified as informality, not all cases of informality (e.g. mushroom foraging) are identified as *kombinacja. Kombinacja* too shed light on only a specific brand of informality occurring at a specific point in time—it never charted the entire terrain. One may write about post-socialist informality on the alcohol-benches and in the candy factory, but without *kombinacja,* one would not be able to identify the gendering of good versus bad *kombinacja* practices that reflect villagers' moral economy. In other words, the term informality is a neat term for locating activities occurring in the present to juxtapose them from the 'formal' economy, but it does not possess the language nor the methodological tools for investigating the social reproduction of these practices. Informality needs a methodological overhaul that theorises its change over time, like the Bourdieusian concept of habitus and fields that prioritise social reproduction and access to resources rather than a subject's specific positionality vis-à-vis a 'formal' state or economy. It also needs a visual repertoire that helps readers imagine its processes, kind of like Creed's idea of domestication that helps us imagine the process of centralising resources acquired in a given 'field' into a single site[144]. Without these substitutions, informality is a limiting concept to place at the centre of an historical ethnography.

[144] Creed (1998) and Stenning et al.'s (2010) show that domestication takes pressure off the state to pass reforms to help ease the conditions that force people to domesticate

Comparative studies into specific types of informality (e.g. *kombinacja* and *combinazione*) that co-exist across varied political and economic contexts can bring greater enthnographic precision to understanding how modern states produce similar conditions that influence groups to engage in certain brands of informality. Or, focusing on a single brand of informality across space can shed light on how it may simultaneously express itself differently across economic and political landscapes[145]. Investigating brands of informality operating in close proximity to one another can reveal on how they overlap, diverge, link-up, and perhaps even produce hybrid brands (e.g. how do Russian *blat* and Polish *kombinacja* relate to one another in a Slavic immigrant community in London?). We need to map the real resource flows and linkages that exist between these system in a globalising world.

Lastly, future explorations of informality should not overlook kinship and the household as sites for the mobilisation and social reproduction of strategies that give expression to informality. Rather than investigating how entire 'informal' economies change, we should rather investigate the transformations of individual networks and households to get a more detailed picture of the multiplicity of transformation. Informality and kinship need further exploration. At the moment, I have shown that some networks and sites have made more incremental changes to their habitus and moved onto less competitive fields (e.g. migrant workers using transnational *kombinacja* between Norwegian farms and Dobra). Others have not had to make as many changes to their habitus and continue to control the field itself (e.g. ex-state farm workers in Lipowa who still live in state housing, receive state welfare, and have access to their foraging territories on the partially privatised property). I think that domestication literature has already made some headway into this theoretical terrain because it focuses on how the household and groups twist legal rules and cultural norms surrounding access to resources in order to reproduce their identity. It draws attention away from resistance against the state and towards the everyday innovations to improve their quality of life. Just like J.K. Gibson-Graham have asked us to start in the 'here and now' to build alternative economies, we can also start investigations into informality by look at its effects into our own lives as I have attempted to do in this thesis.

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resources. By seeking non-capitalist alternatives, people produce economic alternatives that support and resist hegemony. I make a similar claim about informality.

[145] Thanks to Dr. Alena Ledeneva and Dr. Roxana Bratu for this point.

In sum, informality is predicated upon the existence of the formal, yet we know much more about how formal economies have formed and transformed over time. Informality literature still lacks the theoretical language that help map the processes in play in its social reproduction across time and space. We have very little ethnographic and empirical evidence to display informality's autobiography. How does it form alongside the 'formal', is discursively used to justify or reprimand encroachments upon fields, adapts to changing access rules to limited amounts of resources, and is remembered (or not) by the people who use it? Without a more historically informed understanding, we will never really understand the intricacies of how modern states continue to create similar economic conditions that cause people to seek solutions that rework its very order. This could change our very understanding of the modern state.

9.4. Towards transnational *kombinacja*

Kombinacja's pirouettes across the stage of history, as a preserver and a subverter of feudalism, industrialisation, Sovietisation, and Nazi occupation present both a frightening and an empowering slice of consciousness about what it means to 'inherit' *kombinacja* and view history through its prism. Imagine finding out that your grandmother had been forced into unpaid feudal labour and had received no restitution from the state? Or to learn that due to state shortages (or local corruption) during the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, you received iodine medicine but your parents did not? I *am* angry at these injustices; not only what the state did to its people, but what neighbours did to each other, and what individuals have done to their own bodies. The very people who had essentially forced people into unpaid labour are still living out their lives down the street. I am also perplexed that up to this point, there has been no national conversation about the existence of *kombinacja*—an activity so fundamental to everyday life. Not one sociological or anthropological text in Poland has positioned this phenomenon at the centre of investigation. There is no template on a personal or academic level on how to deal with *kombinacja.*

Kombinacja as a colloquial term shows how the words we use 'mark' our struggles and have direct influences on access or exclusion from resources. The usage of the term helped signal either suspicion on vague activity that someone else was using or to hide the details about the specifics of vague activity that one was performing herself. Keeping *kombinacja* vague protected identities and probably saved lives. On a personal

level, I am troubled by the idea that *kombinacja* is a type of kinship-based corruption that gets socially reproduced. In such cases, I am comforted by Zuzanna's survivalism. Without her *kombinacja* with which to adapt to each state attempt to control her life, who knows if I would have even been born. In a very personal sense, therefore, I *feel* empowered by *kombinacja*, but am aware that romantic depictions of 'good' *kombinacja* should not overshadow the pain that 'bad' *kombinacja* can bring. I still harbor mixed feelings about it, but through this research I have come to understand its various dimensions.

This institution is so much 'bigger' than just a historical ethnography from 1945 to the present, located along the boundaries of Poland. Today, *kombinacja* is beginning to mark villagers' encounter with the 'global' in diverse ways. Villagers are increasingly using internet forums as a site to 'out' nomenklatura *kombinacja* and build political networks against them without revealing their identities. In response to Western oil, gas and energy companies that are using political leverage to build an American-style shale gas revolution on their lands, Kashubians are stealing and breaking equipment (like in the collective farms) to protect their private property and agrarian identity. This does not only occur on the 'local' level. Throughout the late stages of my doctoral research, I became increasingly 'aware' of *kombinacja*'s transnational characteristics. Migrant workers are using transnational *kombinacja*[146] between Poland and Norway to cut living costs; milliennials are adopting it to increase their competitiveness in the Berlin start-up technology scene; undocumented immigrants have adopted it to build a network of protection in the United States. Transnational *kombinacja* is currently adapted to navigate and creatively rework host economies outside of the ex-Soviet bloc. Based upon this preliminary data, I think that *kombinacja* is beginning to represent people's activities within this economic 'grey zone' between the 'local' and the 'global'.

Looking ahead, I want to develop one final piece of research on *kombinacja,* returning to study a group mentioned at the start of this thesis—Polish cleaning maids in Trenton—and consider how they have adapted a form of transnational *kombinacja* to run informal businesses, hire cheap labour, and supplement income in order to navigate and rework the American brand of market capitalism. An investigation into women's

[146] Thanks to Dr. Keith Halfacree for this phrase.

kombinacja networks, resource flows and discourses in Trenton may shed light on how transnational informality adapts across spatial, legal, and economic divides and in the process forms its own resource flows that play by its own rules. Women may be relinking post-productivist cities to global capital flows and producing diverse economies that negotiate formal economic policies. This project may add to policy debates regarding the role of informal economies in bolstering economic development in post-industrial cities like Trenton.

Starting in the 'PGR' where I grew up, I will use a snowball sample to conduct open-ended interviews with undocumented and documented immigrant women who work (or have worked) in an informally run cleaning service. Trenton has only one legally registered Polish cleaning service—the rest are informally run out of private vans. In addition to my mother, there is another maid living in Trenton who emigrated from Dobra and another one who emigrated from Słupsk. Their narratives will provide an important bridge across these two projects. I have learned from experience that bringing a lengthy questionnaire on paper is not a useful tool for interviewing people about sensitive topics. I will simply ask them to tell me about their occupations in Poland, their arrival to the United States, what sorts of adjustments they had to make from living under 'socialism' to 'capitalism', how they chose to become cleaning maids, if they had any memorable stories about events that happened on the job, what the benefits and drawbacks are of cleaning for cash rather than waged labour in a factory, how they make ends meet during the course of a year, and if they could tell me of any difficult economic event that they overcame through *kombinacja* or 'resourcefulness' (*zaradność*). Depending on the interview, I might outright ask them to tell me how their *kombinacja* strategies have continued or changed from Poland to the United States.

The participant observation stage of this research will seek these same answers exactly in the place that I have tried to avoid for years—the Polish cleaning service van. I will temporarily join an informal cleaning service to meet fellow immigrant women, get a sense of their daily conversations in the van, work alongside of them, better understand how they negotiate their labour with themselves, their bosses and their clients, how they manage and invest their earnings, and try to understand their goals and aspirations both in the United States and back in Poland. It is only by working with undocumented maids that I may get some insight into their daily lives and economic worlds. Since

many of these vans are filled with Slavic speaking women—not only Polish—I am curious to find out how *kombinacja* interacts with other informal economies and niches carved out by other ethnic groups. How does *kombinacja* interact with *blat*? I do not see a need to clandestinely conduct this part of the project. Women have different reasons for entering the service at different points in their lives and it may even be beneficial to my project if I explain to them that I am writing a chapter about them. How to react to my status and perhaps even establish economic relations with me may be key to understanding their needs and the ways in which they use economic relations with documented immigrants to stay afloat. Ironically, this experience will double as a sort of 'rite of passage' for me into Polish immigrant womanhood.

In combining my data from the interviews and observations in the cleaning service, I hope to map out the sites and contours of *kombinacja* being practiced by women in the immigrant community. How do they use it to socially reproduce their identities back in the Polish village (if they think that they will return) or build their futures here in the United States? What elements of their socialist era *kombinacja* were retained, and which elements have changed? How does it overlap (or not) with similar institutions imported by other Central and Eastern European immigrants from the ex-Soviet bloc? Is there a reason why Trenton has not cracked down on this informal service sector? How has the city benefitted? Furthermore, I am interested in the potential policy implications. How can these informal assemblages of resource flows breathe new economic life into a postindustrial city like Trenton? By completing this project, I encourage more research both on how people use transnational *kombinacja* in innovative ways to survive and in the process, build possible worlds.

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*Figures 4-6, 8, 14-16, 18, 24, 28-30, 33, 35-44 are photos taken by author in 2009.

**Figures 7 and 31 are photos taken by Neil Anderson in 2008.

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Name	DOB	Self-identified Ethnicity	Origin prior to Recovered Territories	Migration type	Occupations under socialism
Zuzanna	1923	Polish	central Poland	voluntary migration	kułak/kołchoźnik/worker-peasant
Jagoda	1924	Polish	present-day Belarus	repatriated	kułak/kołchoźnik/worker-peasant
Kornelia	1912	Polish	present-day Lithuania	voluntary migration	kułak/kołchoźnik/worker-peasant
Henryka	1926	Polish	eastern Poland	repatriated	Siberian gulag survivor/factory worker
Stanisław	1929	Kashubian	former Germany	repatriated	state forestry worker
Czesława	1938	Kashubian	former Germany	repatriated	state forestry worker
Fidelis	1920	Kashubian	former Germany	repatriated	state forestry worker/activist/ state forestry Director/bureaucrat
Irena	1930	Polish	present-day Lithuania	repatriated	Siberian gulag survivor/ seamstress/ factory worker
Walentyna	1923	Belarusian	present-day Belarus	repatriated	state farm worker
Władysława	1928	Polish	central Poland	voluntary migration	worker
Jadwiga	1927	Kashubian	former Germany	repatriated	state farm worker
Mychajlo	1929	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	forcibly resettled	kułak/kołchoźnik/worker-peasant
Anna	1934	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	forcibly resettled	kułak/kołchoźnik/worker-peasant
Janina	1932	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	forcibly resettled	kułak/kołchoźnik/worker-peasant
Stasiek	1921	Polish	central Poland	voluntary migration	gmina official
Janusz	1927	Ukrainian	present-day Ukraine	forcibly resettled	gmina official
Weronika	1930	Polish	central Poland	voluntary migration	worker
Stefania	1925	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	forcibly resettled	kułak/kołchoźnik/worker-peasant
Stefan	1931	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	forcibly resettled	kułak/kołchoźnik/worker-peasant/ deceased
Anna	1931	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	forcibly resettled (Siberian gulag survivor)	state farm worker
Kaźimierz	1915	Polish	eastern Poland	repatriated	gmina official/deceased
Irena	1929	Polish	eastern Poland	voluntary migration	seamstress/worker
Franciszka	1937	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	forcibly resettled	state farm worker
Helena	1927	Polish	eastern Poland	repatriated	postwoman
Józefa	1928	Belarusian	present-day Belarus	repatriated	kułak/kołchoźnik/worker-peasant
Radosław	1943	Belarusian	present-day Belarus	repatriated	kułak/kołchoźnik/worker-peasant
Maria	1930	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	forcibly resettled	factory worker
Leonid	1931	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	forcibly resettled	state forestry worker/peasant
Aneta	1931	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	forcibly resettled	state forestry worker
Marian	1935	Polish	central Poland	voluntary migration	factory brigadier
Małgorzata	1937	Polish	central Poland	voluntary migration	factory worker
Arena	1926	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	forcibly resettled	kułak/kołchoźnik/worker-peasant
Elimia	1935	Polish	central Poland	voluntary migration	state forestry worker
Janina	1927	Belarusian	present-day Belarus	repatriated	state farm worker

Name	DOB	Self-identified Ethnicity	Origin prior to Recovered Territories	Migration type	Occupations under socialism
Zygmunt	1938	Polish	central Poland	voluntary migration	kułak/kołchoźnik/ worker-peasant/ EU-funded farmer
Edward	1938	Belarusian	present-day Belarus	repatriated	kułak/kołchoźnik/ worker-peasant
Jan	1928	Kashubian	former Germany	repatriated	state farm worker
Elżbieta	1930	Kashubian	former Germany	repatriated	state farm worker
Lore	1935	German	former Germany	repatriated	state farm worker
Bożena	1915	Belarusian	present-day Belarus	repatriated	state farm director's wife
Bernard	1929	Polish	central Poland	voluntary migration	factory worker
Weronika	1928	Polish	former Prussia	repatriated	factory worker
Helena	1917	Polish	central Poland	voluntary migration	state farm worker
Trauta	1925	German	former Germany	repatriated	bakery worker/ Polish commander's wife
Jawoda	1931	Belarusian	northwest Poland	repatriated	state farm worker
Julia	1933	Lithuanian	repatriated	Siberian gulag survivor	state forestry worker
Iryna	1929	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	forcibly resettled	factory worker
Ivan	1929	Ukrainian	southeastern Poland	forcibly resettled	factory worker
Renata	1920	Polish	central Poland	voluntary migrated	peasant farmer (never collectivised land)
Matylda	1943	Polish	unknown	unknown	treasurer of mechanical enterprise
Andrzej	1919	Polish	unknown	unknown	state farm Director
Benedykt	1918	Silesian	former Germany	repatriated	priest
Kacper	1920	Polish	unknown	unknown	PZPR President/gmina official
Gosia	1950	Polish	unknown	unknown	factory worker
Roman	1947	Polish	born in commune		mechanical enterprise worker/state forestry worker
Cecylia	1951	Polish	born in commune		factory worker
Cobra	1960	Polish	born in Gdansk		migrant worker/ large-scale private farmer
Kamila	1960	German-Polish	unknown	unknwon	teacher
Danuta	1950	Polish	born in commune	unknwon	librarian
Franciszek	1970	Polish	born in commune	unknown	pianist
Sylwia	1950	Belarusian	born in commune	unknown	state farm worker
Sylwek	1950	Belarusian	unknown	family was repatriated	state farm worker
Marek	1947	Polish	eastern Poland	repatriated	state farm worker
Lech	1949	Polish	unknown	unknown	state farm director's son/ warden to Danish farm

Appendix

Informed Consent Form

Dear Sir/Madam

You are invited to participate in a research project conducted by Edyta Materka, a doctoral student from the London School of Economics and Political Science in the United Kingdom. The purpose of this project is to better understand the development of micro-histories in the communist-era. I would like to know how and why people arrived to this village and what the dynamics of village life were up to the point of collectivisation. Have you ever thought that living in this village was temporary? When did you feel that this village became "yours?" What were some of the 'visions' for how this new village would be build?

To achieve this goal within the time-frame of 2 months (August-September in Dobra and October-November in Zag), I will need your help as I conduct at least 20 semi-structured interviews (total) in both villages with people like you who can share their experiences about their migration to the village since 1945, their lifestyles from 1945 to 1950 and personal opinions about the collectivisation process. Each interview will consist of open-ended questions in addition to a short questionnaire to be filled out by each interviewee. The open-ended interview is designed to bring out your personal story while the questionnaire is designed for me to better understand some broader, quantitative patterns between the characteristics and life-processes of all interviewees.

The interview process will take a relaxed approach as I will stop by your house (or we can schedule a home-stay) at a scheduled time periods spanning a couple of days. I will ask you some questions and will give you a 2-page questionnaire to complete. Most of the time I will be writing key points down on a notebook and if need be, I will digitally record our conversation. You can decline to be digitally recorded if you feel uncomfortable. Please make sure to reserve a substantial amount of time for this interview. You have a right to stop the interview and/or questionnaire at any point if you begin to feel uncomfortable with the questions, are fatigued, or would like to terminate it altogether.

Any identifiable information such as your name, address, photographs of the face and name of your village will be kept strictly anonymous and confidential and will not be used in any unpublished, published work, interview or personal discussions. All personal names and names of villages will be changed. Your identifiable information will be used for my personal reference only and will be kept in a private safe during the course and upon completion of my work on this project. If you would like all of the information about you destroyed upon the completion of this project, please tick this box □.

Please contact me at the above address (right hand corner) if you should have any questions or comments about the interview and the usage of your information.

Upon the completion of my research, please tick this box □ if you will like to receive a copy of the chapter in which your story is used.

Thank you for your valuable participation! Your contribution to this project will be a vital source of information for generations to come about the struggles and successes in the creation of new villages in the Reclaimed Lands.

Signature of Interviewee: _____ Date _____

Signature of Interviewer: _____ Date _____

Questionnaire

!!!! You can stop the interview if you should feel tired, distressed or would like to continue the interview at another time. If you choose to terminate the interview, your information will not be used in the research project. You are welcome to skip over questions you do not feel comfortable answering, feel are too sensitive to answer around others or think are making you give answers which do not represent your lifestyle, memories or outlook.!!!!

Name: _____ Village: _____ Date of Birth: _____
Birth Location: _____ Religion: _____ Nationality: _____
Occupation: _____ # Siblings: _____ Ethnicity: _____
Languages: _____ Old Village: _____

Pre-Migration

1. Size of your family's farm holding/property (in hectares)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ (if 10+, state amount:

0-.9 1-1.9 2-2.9 3-3.9 4-4.9 5-5.9 6-6.9 7-7.9 8-8.9 9-9.9 10+ _____)

2. *What type of farming activities did your family engage in? (Tick as may as possible)*

Dairy ☐ Livestock ☐ Crops ☐ Horticulture ☐ Grazing ☐ Goats ☐
Sheep ☐ Poultry ☐ Cows ☐ Pigs ☐ Horses ☐ Other ☐

3. *Were the kolkhozy in your old village?* Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know ☐

4. Was there a powerful Communist party in the old village? Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know ☐

5. What happened to your old property? Sold ☐ Expropriated ☐ Still Owning ☐ Destroyed ☐ No Idea ☐

6. Where were you during World War II? Labour Camp ☐ Army ☐ Hiding ☐ Home ☐ Other ☐ _____

Migration

7. How did you get to the new village? Voluntary Migration ☐ *Forced Resettlement* ☐ *Already Lived Here* ☐

8. If voluntary, how did you know about the Reclaimed Territories? _____

9. If voluntary migration, what brought you to the Reclaimed Lands? Land/Property ☐ Industrial Work ☐ Marriage ☐ Education ☐ Reunite w/ Family ☐ Return Home ☐ Create New Identity ☐ Political Reasons ☐ To Hide ☐ Military ☐

10. *On a scale of 1-5 (5 being excellent), how would you rate your migration?* 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

11. *What did you bring to the village?* _____; _____; _____; _____;

12. Who did you come with to the village? _____

13. Did you have a choice between living in the village or the city? Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Remember ☐

Arrival

14. Did you like the village when you arrived? Yes ☐ No ☐ No Preference ☐ Don't Remember ☐

15. *Did you choose to live in this house?* Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Remember ☐

16. *Did you think that your settlement was temporary?* Yes ☐ No ☐

17. *How many parcels of land did you receive?* _____ *Where they far from one another?* _____

19. *Did you have to learn new farming techniques?* Yes ☐ No ☐

20. *Did you share land with your neighbors?* Yes ☐ No ☐ Sometimes ☐

received ha	**0-.9**	**1-1.9**	**2-2.9**	**3-3.9**	**4-4.9**	**5-5.9**	**6-6.9**	**7-7.9**	**8-8.9**	**9-9.9**	**10+**	
land (in all)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	*(if 10+, state amount:_____*
arable land	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	*(if 10+, state amount:_____*
forest land	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	*(if 10+, state amount:_____*
meadow	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	*(if 10+, state amount:_____*
pasture	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	*(if 10+, state amount:_____*

21. What type of new farming activities did you engage in? (Tick as may as possible)

Dairy	☐	Livestock	☐	Crops	☐	Horticulture	☐	Grazing	☐	Goats	☐
Sheep	☐	Poultry	☐	Cows	☐	Pigs	☐	Horses	☐	Other	☐

22. *Did you trade food/tools/ etc. with your neighbors?* Yes ☐ No ☐ Sometimes ☐

23. *How would you compare the standard of living in the new village in comparison to old?* Better ☐ Same ☐ Worse

24. *Did you think that you got a fair share of the available property?* Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know ☐

25. *Did you think that the Oder-Neisse border was/is legitimate?* Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Care ☐ Dont' Know ☐

26. *Did you feel guilty that you were taking over German property?* Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Remember ☐

27. *Did you live with German families who still had not left?* Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Remember ☐

Village Life

28. *How did you get to know your new community?* Group meetings ☐ Political gatherings ☐ Church ☐ Over the fence ☐ Private Invitations ☐ Work ☐ Common Pastures ☐ Other ☐ _____

29. *Did you like your community?* Yes ☐ No ☐ *Did you think your community was unique?* Yes ☐ No ☐

30. *What types of problems did you have within community?* Economic ☐ Ideological ☐ Political ☐ Religious ☐ Personal ☐ Ethnic ☐ Property Management ☐ None ☐

31. Did you have any communication with other villages? Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Remember ☐

Collectivization

32. Did you like the local government? Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know ☐

33. Did you partake in local politics before collectivization? Yes ☐ No ☐

34. Did you belong to any political parties? Yes ☐ No ☐ *If yes, which one?* _____

35. Were you in support of collectivization? Yes ☐ No ☐

36. How much land would collectivization require you to give to the government?

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	(if 10+, state amount:
0-.9	1-1.9	2-2.9	3-3.9	4-4.9	5-5.9	6-6.9	7-7.9	8-8.9	9-9.9	10+	_____)

37. Do you feel that your local government was listening to you? Yes ☐ No ☐

Today

38. How is this property going to be handled in your will? _____

39. Would you ever support a restitution process in the Reclaimed Lands? Yes ☐ Maybe ☐ No ☐ Don't Know ☐

40. If there is one strategy that you have used to live your life to survive, what would it be? _____