

## BEER BOTTLES AN BAR SIGNS: BREWING IDENTITY IN POSTSOCIALIST POLAND

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### Introduction

Since 1990, Poland's industrial sector has been gradually transforming from a socialist to a market-based system through an extended period of industrial privatization. This dramatic change in economic orientation fundamentally altered the nature of the relationship between management and labor, causing corresponding changes in the organizational structures of Poland's manufacturing industries. The problem for these industrial organizations was literally how to survive this change, as relationships that were once predetermined by nearly fifty years of tradition and governmental control became economically impractical. The survival of an individual industrial organization, particularly in the context of the broader European economy, required an extensive organizational adaptation, an adaptation that precipitated the reinvention of both institutional and individual identities. Within contemporary Polish society, the redefinition of social identities is profoundly influenced by the history of socialism and the juxtaposition of capitalist and socialist ideologies, making the conceptualization of identity a product of renegotiating the reality of the past with a vision of the future.

This study examines the effects of privatization on the organization and social identity of *Browar Kostrova*<sup>1</sup>, a medium sized regional brewery located in the village of Kostrova in western Poland. Initially, this article examines the historical construction of the organization as a background against which to compare how old company structures have been realigned during the privatization process to form a new organization. In order to understand this realignment, this study utilizes a series of ethnographic interviews focusing on work history narratives to examine how dynamics of organization, technology, prestige, and age interact to produce social identities not only for individual workers, but also for the surrounding community and *Browar Kostrova* as a corporation.

Following a growing body of ethnographic work dealing specifically with understanding the restructuring of Polish industry and production after the end of socialism (Nagengast 1991, Gurr 1998, Dunn 1998 & 1999),

this article explores how individuals and organizations respond to the crises caused by the privatization process. Using the case of *Browar Kostrova*, this study investigates how symbols are appropriated and negotiated to inform and create individual and group identities. Here, I focus on how symbols, such as consumer goods or durable objects (e.g. machines, buildings, etc.), are employed as "incarnated signs" (Appadurai 1986: 38) to indicate membership in specific social groups, and how these symbols are reinterpreted and renegotiated within postsocialist contexts (Verdery 1996 & 1999, Berdahl 1999, Yurchak 1999).

### "Shock Therapy"

In 1990, Poland's adoption of the Balcerowicz Plan initiated the transformation from state socialism to market capitalism, deregulating foreign trade and legalizing private enterprise. The Balcerowicz Plan introduced a dramatically different economic system, throwing Poland's industrial organizations into a state of crisis. Dubbed "shock therapy" because of its speed and radical nature, the plan's techniques invalidated old management methodologies, and neither management nor labor could reliably define their relationship to one another. A process of redefining social identities ensued, during which time the patterns of action developed under socialism manifested themselves during the construction of capitalism (Buechler 1995: 1), thus producing hybrid social forms. Sztompka (1992) calls this constraint, which the lived history and experience of socialism places on organizations and institutions developed during the socialist period, a "burden of liabilities" that profoundly influences their postsocialist paths of development. This hybridization is apparent at *Browar Kostrova* as ideologies developed under socialism are incorporated into its new structure, particularly in the way workers view the company's role in the community and their roles as a participants within the organization.

At *Browar Kostrova*, institutional identity was renegotiated around the old brewery brand, significantly impacting the social construction of the brewery in the surrounding community as it fulfills a role as a community leader not only by providing a stable place of employment, but also

by bringing prestige and recognition to both its employees and *Kostrova* itself. Every bottle of beer *Browar Kostrova* produces is an enduring artifact, bearing the name of the city and acting as an advertisement for the community. Because of this high profile, the way the brewery chooses to define itself is integral to the identity of the community. The two places are inseparable and each acts reflexively on the other, shaping the future through a complex and dynamic dialog that negotiates new identities based on the common experience of the community.

### Investigating Work Histories

In December 1999, I conducted intensive fieldwork at *Browar Kostrova* and in-depth interviews with fourteen of its employees. These interviews were supplemented by internal documentation (court records, labor agreements, organizational charts, etc.), which helped detail the history and structure of the brewery referenced by participants during the interviews. The sample is comprised of twelve men and two women, a distribution that is typical of *Browar Kostrova's* blue-collar "shop-floor" positions. The "shop-floor" remains an almost exclusively male world. Most women working at the Brewery fill white-collar positions in human resources and accounting or work as support staff (e.g. assistants and secretaries).

Approximately half of the interviews represent relatively low-level workers, while the remainder are members of all levels of management ranging from mid-level supervisors to high-level directors. Middle management is emphasized slightly in the second half of the sample, but since many of these individuals began as entry-level workers at the brewery, I believe they provide an extremely important perspective of change in the brewery over a long period of time. Interviews followed a "work history" format consisting primarily of open-ended "descriptive" questions designed to elicit a narrative of the individual's experience at the brewery, with the goal of understanding how the individual views the brewery's social organization over the history of the institution and the community, particularly during the time since the brewery was sold to a private investor. However, because I was only able to interview workers that remained after the brewery was reorganized, this article focuses primarily on how the brewery's employees are reinventing the company in the present.

### Rethinking the Individual

Central to understanding the implications of Poland's transformation from state-sponsored socialism to market capitalism is the unraveling of how actors in society are forced to redefine their own personal identities and the identities of the social groups to which they belong. These various institutions and organizations act upon one another and on individuals, who in turn contribute to the self-definition of the institutions by participating within their structure. Formed through these interactions, identity is malleable at all levels and derived from the summation of many individual cultural factors, including the dynamics of modernity, age, technology, and history. Kondo explains, "Identity is not a fixed 'thing,' it is negotiated, open, shifting, ambiguous, the result of culturally available meanings and the open-ended, power laden enactments of those meanings in everyday situations" (1990: 24). One of the most powerful examples of this negotiation of identity in contemporary society occurs when an individual participates within the institutionalized microculture, power dynamics, and control structures of a corporation, forming what Giddens calls a "*locale*," or a place "within which systematic aspects of interaction and social relations are concentrated" (1987: 13).

### "The Brewery Older than America"

History weighs heavily in *Kostrova*, a town of approximately eighteen thousand people located in Silesia, a region of southwestern Poland comprised of gently rolling plains bordered on the south by the Sudety Mountains and the Czech Republic. Small shops flank *Kostrova's* town square, while the towers of the two cathedrals and the town hall dominate the skyline. The old town section is surrounded by remnants of the ancient city walls, and *Browar Kostrova* owns and occupies remnants of the town castle. The entire length of the old town, from the city gate to the castle, is a distance of about half a mile. Symbolically, the castle and the brewery represent the community, and the two are inseparable, even to the point that they share one name. *Browar Kostrova* is an ancient fixture in the community, and on a number of occasions employees remarked that it was "older than America" a fact they found amusing given the brewery's new American ownership. Beer has been officially brewed at the site continuously since 1538, but the management of the brewery claims to have traced historic documentation of the brewery's existence to 1321.

By owning and partially occupying the town castle, *Browar Kostrova* controls the ultimate symbol in Kostrova for the town's transition from the "old" to the "new" economy. Nearly as old as the city charter, the castle has acted throughout history as the symbol for the town, signifying the seat of leadership and the place of protection for the surrounding countryside. Because of *Browar Kostrova's* importance to the community's economy and identity, this symbolism is easily enlisted in the brewery's effort to lead Kostrova prosperously into the market economy. In addition to the brewery's offices, fourteen families currently reside within the castle compound, but they will soon be evicted as it is remodeled as the brewery President's personal residence, symbolically representing the loss of communal ideals in the wake of the individual. This literal transformation symbolically underscores the process of collective socialism giving way to individualistic capitalism. While the castle itself represents the birth of the city, its renovation represents the rebirth of the brewery and community into the new economy.

Communities in Silesia identify directly with their local breweries. Nearly all of the local bars, restaurants, and liquor stores in Kostrova display the bright green *Browar Kostrova* sign indicating they sell either draft or bottled *Piwo Kostrova*. All manner of *Browar Kostrova* promotional items, from posters and calendars to beer glasses can be seen throughout the town, keeping the brewery in the forefront of people's minds (Indeed, when returning late one evening on the train from Wroclaw, and somewhat unsure of my location, I knew I was nearing Kostrova when I saw the *Browar Kostrova* signs in the distance). Silesian beers are generally pale lagers, and over the years have varied widely in quality. Traditionally, there has been little interest in other types of beer, but this is gradually beginning to change. I was told that people in the mining regions of Silesia drank "their beer" for generations, even at times when there was dirt film inside the bottles. While I am unable to verify this story, it gives some indication of how strongly the people of the region identify with a particular beer as well as the exceptional importance of brand loyalty and product image recognition in an extremely competitive market.

*Browar Kostrova* produces four main beers, Light, Full, Strong, and Porter (ranging from 5.5 percent to 9.5 percent alcohol respectively), each labeled with a "K" and a crown. A number of specialty and seasonal beers

are also brewed, such as the 1999 Christmas beer, *Gwiazdka Piwo Ciemne* ("Star Beer"), a beer similar to those brewed in Scandinavia. *Piwo Kostrova* is distributed throughout the local region and in lesser quantities nationally, but currently has little international presence. As proof of the national presence of the brewery, one of the brewery accountants recalled an anecdote about her son finding a *Browar Kostrova* bottle cap in the woods around Poznan, a city about 150 kilometers north of Kostrova (171299-12). Any place where a beer bottle is found is an advertisement for the brewery and the city, and for better or worse, even litter can be a form of advertising<sup>3</sup>. The dynamics of a distributed product make anecdotes such as this powerful evidence to brewery employees and Kostrova residents of the status and prestige of *Browar Kostrova* as a national brewery. By distributing thousands of small pieces of itself, the brewery literally puts Kostrova on the map in terms of a broader Polish consciousness and its residents feel that the beer connotes a progressive view of the town through beer's association with a prosperous, young, and modern middle class. Gradually, this young, highly educated and socially mobile middle class is asserting greater influence over Poland's economy, and their consumption habits have driven a 39.0% increase in beer production and 32.4% decrease in spirits (primarily vodka) production between 1995 and 1998 (Główny Urząd Statystyczny 1999: 438), a change that represents a symbolic replacing of old Polish traditions. This trend is expected to continue, with Polish beer consumption eventually reaching a level comparable with Germany, or about three times its level in 1998.

Paradoxically, the history and traditions of the brewery are central to the construction of *Piwo Kostrova* as a progressive and modern brand. In the life of the town, virtually nothing existed before the brewery, imparting on it an almost mythical quality as a point of origin for Kostrova, and making the community's entire history fundamentally tied to the brewery. Because of its age, the brewery is associated with an ancient feudal past. Therefore, the imagery provided by the traditions of the brewery can be enlisted to "create... identities based on rejecting the immediate past" (Verdery 1999: 52), and can be deployed as a marketing device in the market economy without fear of being associated with socialism. This strategy is evidenced by two of *Browar Kostrova's* specialty beers, "Knight Beer" and "Castle Beer".

Through its reinvention as a private capitalist company, the ancient brewery has been reborn as a youthful business legitimized by the wisdom of its ancient traditions. Like the rising middle class, the brewery is coming into its own, demonstrating its individualism and modernity through new technology and products. Within the dichotomy of age versus youth, the old and new are subtly, yet inseparably, bound together. Without the experience of its past and the efforts of its workers in managing it during socialism, *Browar Kostrova* would have no history from which to produce identity within the present. However, in order to reinvent itself in the present, the brewery must fully reconstruct its past. Likewise, without the rising middle class driving an increase in beer consumption, neither the brewery nor the older generation that saw it through the tumult of privatization could continue to thrive in the new economy. Without one another, neither generation can survive, and the two coexist in an uneasy balance. Although actors in the "new" economy, whether companies or individuals, may rebel against the socialist system, and perhaps, in order to achieve success, they must rebel against that system, it seems virtually impossible to escape its shadow.

### Organizational History

After the end of the socialist system in 1989, all of Poland's breweries remained under the control of the government until 1994, when it began to sell them to private investors. At this time, many breweries, including *Browar Kostrova*, were leased to their employees as workers' companies. The leasing process began with an estimate of the company's value and a detailed description of its assets. Workers were then free to take over control of the brewery and create a limited liability company. Shares in *Browar Kostrova* were distributed amongst the workers, and the appraised value of the company was to be repaid with profits from the brewery over the next ten years at five percent interest. After fifty percent of the debt was paid, these leasing payments changed into equity for the owners (i.e. the workers), at which time the brewery could be sold at the discretion of the shareholders to a new investor.

Unfortunately, in 1994 Poland remained in a severe economic recession and as the workers quickly ran out of funds for capital investment they had no means to secure the amount of money required to modernize and remain competitive. After it was realized that outstanding liabilities

incurred for investments in the Marketing Department and general development could not be met<sup>4</sup>, two options became apparent; either accept an investor or accept more loans. Since the company was already overextended, banks were reluctant to extend the required credit to the brewery, placing the company in a precarious financial position. According to one manager in the Production Department, two primary factions formed, one supporting immediate change through outside investment, meaning the sale of the brewery, and one supporting loans. Finally, the banks refused to make loans available at an interest rate the brewery could afford and the company was quite literally forced to choose between life and death, a choice that produced a crisis point that marked the beginning of organizational transformation for the brewery and the renegotiating of its institutional identity. Before relinquishing their position as controlling shareholders, the workers were forced to choose whom they believed could best lead them in the capitalist economy.

*Browar Kostrova* was courted by a series of investors and two firms were quickly shortlisted, one Polish investment company and the American Illinois-Poland Investment Group. On 10 March 1999, Illinois-Poland Investment Group purchased 100 percent of the shares from the workers. The sale of the brewery gave the banks the guarantee they needed, and capital was again made available to continue the modernization process. The brewery's legal status remained the same, a limited liability company, but Illinois-Poland Investment Group provided the brewery with credibility, the first step in the self-determination process.

### Reorganizing the Workforce

After the sale of *Browar Kostrova*, the overall workforce was decreased by between forty and fifty people to 253 employees organized into a hierarchical system of four divisions; Sales & Marketing, Finance & Economics, Production & Maintenance and General Business. The number of white-collar jobs doubled with the addition of a "western-style" Sales and Marketing Division. The blue-collar workers disproportionately shouldered this "small difference" (141299-2) of a fourteen to seventeen percent reduction in the workforce. Furthermore, a total reduction of about fifty people indicates that more low-level positions were eliminated to make room for the new white-collar positions. Blue-collar workers bore the brunt of the organizational overhaul, as modern

technologies replaced many older workers. The reasons provided for dismissals were that fewer workers were needed since "uneconomical" departments were being closed, while others were "unqualified" to run new machines. Instead of training these workers in the new production processes, management chose to replace them with younger workers either from within the company or newly hired. Thus, in some cases managers explicitly chose who would be unable to make the transition to the new system. The difficulty for workers on the shop floor to understand the reasoning behind these dismissals was explained by a maintenance worker, but even he admitted that not all could be saved.

I observed a rotation in the staff that didn't make much sense to me. Some of the workers were dismissed and new ones were employed in their positions. If there had been a need to reduce the number of workers it would have been understandable, but if you dismiss some workers and employ others in their place you still have to pay...additional money to those workers who were dismissed (i.e. severance pay). So it doesn't make sense. Of course there were some cases where workers--unqualified workers--couldn't accept the new situation. [In this case,] it was somehow understandable. But still, lots of workers were dismissed (151299-1).

While the Production Department was shrinking in human terms, the Sales and Marketing Department was developing, including the hiring of new sales representatives, district directors, and regional directors. This increase in marketing is typical of the restructuring of a company toward a more "modern" market system and is considered a fundamental element in the "new" economy, especially in the beverage industry.

#### **"Kostrova Will Be Famous"**

Resulting from the privatization process at *Browar Kostrova*, technological change and modernization quickly became one way the brewery defined itself as its own company in relation to its competitors. The brewery now operates what it claims are the most advanced laboratory and bottling facilities in Poland (151299A-1), with what one accountant described as "a disciplined staff which has a firm vision for the direction of the company, and places an emphasis on modernization" (171299-1). December 31, 2000 underscored the scale of the new management's development strategy, with yearly production reaching roughly six hundred thousand hectoliters, doubling 1998's production.

*Browar Kostrova* produces about three percent of Poland's total beer output of 20,926,000 hectoliters (Główny Urząd Statystyczny 1999: 438), making it a mid-sized brewery in a highly fragmented market. Production goals for 2000 increased the brewery's production by about sixty-seven percent to approximately 1 million hectoliters per year. Additionally, at the time the worker's company was created, only about sixty percent of the brewery's product was bottled in-house (141299-1). The amount of in-house bottling gradually increased until recent modernization of the bottling facility finally drove the figure to 100 percent, making the brewery self-contained and therefore self-defined. The new management of the brewery has thus continued the vision for modernization begun by the workers, who laid the foundation for the brewery's current success.

Through its association with success in the market economy, new technology increases the prestige of the brewery in relation to its peers, which in turn increases the prestige of brewery workers and the community. A brewer proudly asserted, "The brewery is [mentioned] more often in magazines devoted to the brewing industry. . . In this way not only the brewery, but also myself, are being recognized" (141299B-1). Another maintenance worker explained, "We used to go to other breweries. . .and we admired them. . .now other people will come here. . .and will admire [us]. *Kostrova* will be famous in the country because of the brewery" (141299A-1).

Incorporating technology is a vitally important contributor to the workers' acceptance of the new investors. Technology is synonymous with prestige and success, and the visibility it brings through media attention enhances prestige for everyone associated with the brewery, from its customers to its employees. Technology is used both to increase the volume and quality of the beer produced and as an important marketing tool. At *Browar Kostrova*, the workers appear to be satisfied with the brewery's current level of modernization, finally realized both through new investments and personal sacrifice by the workers as a group. Of course, because technology is constantly progressing, it is unlikely that the brewery will remain on the cutting edge indefinitely, and the desire for prestige must be balanced against pragmatic concerns of cost efficiency. It is unclear how the workers will react if the prestige they currently enjoy gradually fades away, especially when viewed in terms of how much the implementation of new technology has actually cost.

## Technology's Catch-22

Although one accountant asserted that the "brewery is more prestigious now, because it employs people with high qualifications, and demands these qualifications" (171299-1), the cost in human terms of redefining the workforce is high. Adopting cutting edge technology precipitates the loss of jobs, especially for many older workers, making the realization of their desire for prestige also their downfall. Ironically, the position of the older workers is being subverted by the very technological innovations and social changes they worked so hard to make a reality. Under the new management, the modernization of the brewery is no longer created by the workers collectively, but rather, it is applied to them individually. New technology destroys positions for older, less highly trained workers, while opening positions for young, technically educated workers. Because this process occurs at the level of the individual worker, there is little opportunity for a worker to change his perceived skill set and social position within the company. Unfortunately, there is no viable way around this issue, and those that remain have little choice but to go forward and enjoy the benefits even at the cost of their former coworkers. Most workers seem to accept some dismissals as an inevitable side effect of the choice of private ownership, and in the long run will benefit both the brewery and its employees. One warehouse worker summed up his opinion saying, "It's a good way that has been chosen, but it simply must go forward" (131299-2). In the case of *Browar Kastrova*, when it comes down to the choice between the collective of one's fellow workers and the individual rewards of enhanced prestige, it appears that prestige, as achieved by innovation through technological modernization, usually wins.

## Asserting the Individual

The workers at *Browar Kastrova* fiercely assert their individualism and personal contribution to the whole of the brewery's organization, especially in response to the perceived threat of modernization. One maintenance worker said that while he was once indispensable, now he sometimes feels useless. He recalled, "Ten years ago, before going to bed I asked God that no one would come at night to ask me to come to the brewery because something was broken. Now, sometimes I ask that someone would come and ask me to do some work." He counterbalanced this statement with the assertion that "[his] knowledge is quite vast" and he is still

valuable to the brewery because he can make things work even in poor conditions. He argued that he helped build the company, saying, "Nothing would exist without me" (141299A-1). The brewery workers seem to share the perception that only through individualistic action can a person prove his or her worth in the market system, causing them to defend their individual part in the past construction of the brewery as a socialist company.

The ways in which individuals experience the change in management at *Browar Kastrova* varies widely by the location of a particular worker in the company, and it appears the often cited "human understanding" of the management has been unevenly applied. Middle-age workers whose retirement is still distant and workers in positions ranking low in the company hierarchy see themselves as particularly vulnerable. Because those who fail to prove their individual worth in the modernized brewery are often dismissed, a sense of fear is pervasive among older workers, who feel their jobs are constantly in danger. A transportation worker remarked on his lack of security, "I have three children. I am 45, but the age limit is 35. Everyone asks your age and younger is better" (131299-2). Age is an overt aspect of nearly every social interaction, and one key to how an individual is defined in the social system. Even a member of management remarked, "I'm over fifty years old and I cannot say that I feel very secure because I know that in the present situation highly educated people are more valuable--people who know foreign languages. . .so no, [I don't feel secure]. I don't have high education" (141299A-2). Because the young middle class has made beer an emerging market in Poland, the success of *Browar Kastrova* is fundamentally tied to the success of this group. Therefore, the social group that drives the growth of their industry simultaneously erodes the older generation's power in the "new" economy, a destruction that is directly linked to the characteristics of self-determination and individualism the younger generation is perceived to possess.

## "We are Partners"

Many workers at *Browar Kastrova* individually see themselves as participating in a partnership with management rather than with their fellow workers. The idea of partnership acts as a powerful force in defining a cooperative mentality for the company and creates a place where workers can assert their individual

contribution to the success of the brewery. One maintenance worker spoke of a partnership between the management and the union, noting that the president listened to the union's opinions and even his own personal opinions. The two are no longer adversaries, but share a common self-definition. He continued, saying of the union, "before if a manager did not agree with a proposal from the union, [the workers] would take up the flags (union banners) and go out into the streets, so that the manager was forced to agree if he wanted them to go on with their work. Now I think I can put my flags in a museum. . .the flags are relics now" (141299A-1). The shared history and knowledge of the workers that once gave them a common bond and a group identity is now gone. Flags are only needed to identify groups, not individual persons, and should be put away as relics of the old system. He concludes, "[I am] glad someone treats this brewery seriously. . .and I can say we are partners"(141299A-1).

A shipping and warehouse worker outlined the importance of partnership when reorganizing *Browar Kostrova* as a capitalist company. He explained, "It's a very important thing for a worker to feel that he is part of a company, that somehow he not only works for the company, but also builds it with the management. [Such a] relationship is very positive, and it is so here" (131299-2). Curiously, although they retain no shares in the company, the brewery workers still see themselves as owners through this partnership mentality. The self is viewed as part of the brewery as a collective entity--a unique hybridization of socialism and capitalism. One manager explained, "When working for the brewery, one identifies with what the company achieves and works for the success of the company" (131299-1). These assertions of the self within the company's achievements indicate the intersection of personal identity with commitment to collective goals. A brewer also demonstrated the binding of personal success to the success of the brewery saying, "I see a [successful] future for this brewery, and somehow I hope the company and I will have success together" (141299B-2).

At *Browar Kostrova*, the workers view themselves as collectively building the company while also acting as a host for the company in the community. This atmosphere is extremely important to the community. One worker observed that as the transformation from socialism progressed, "People look after the town now, people feel the town belongs to them" (141299A-2). This feeling appears to be counterintuitive to

one's expectation of socialism. Although socialism promoted public ownership, it appears that at *Browar Kostrova* an individual's personal assertion and self-direction is a more powerful force. Because *Browar Kostrova*'s workers identify themselves as participating in an enterprise that is larger than they are capable of alone, the goals of socialism are finally completed through the capitalist system--a situation that appears to be a unique creation within their company, as old and new ideologies are renegotiated and combined to produce a hybrid social reality.

Part of the feeling of partnership requires that *Browar Kostrova* give something back to its community, a tradition that began during socialism when companies were overtly public institutions. Dunn explains the repositioning of the public Alima Fruit and Vegetable Processing Company in Rzeszow after it was purchased and privatized by the Gerber baby food company (renaming it Alima-Gerber S.A.):

People had a livelihood because of Alima, -- it gave them life. It fulfilled multifunctional roles in meeting social needs, not only consumer needs, but also employee and supplier needs. However, as Alima-Gerber fired managers, laid off shop floor workers, outsourced jobs, and cut back agricultural contractors, it was clear that the firm existed only to fulfill one function; to make a profit (1998: 122).

The workers at *Browar Kostrova* worry that the brewery will end its support of the community in social terms. One transportation worker remarked that in order to prosper the brewery must be integrated with the community. He suggests the brewery must continue to take a proactive attitude toward the community, providing more jobs and more job security (151299-2). A brewer, who had recently been hired by the company spoke of the brewery's place in the community; "a lot of people living in this region come here because they want to work for the brewery. [This] means that the company is respected. . . because it provides jobs, and people want to work for the brewery" (141299B-2). Similarly, another young filtration worker asserted that he "knew where he was going to work since he was fifteen" and that the *Browar Kostrova* sponsored his study at a brewing school "with great traditions in brewing" (141299C-2).

Since most employees are from Kostrova, the brewery provides stability for the area, but many workers believe its responsibility goes further. One accountant reflected, "I have a vision.



. . . that finally the castle will serve the people who live here.” In one statement she summed up not only the history of the city, but also the idea of individualism combined with socialism. As a symbol of community leadership, the castle and whomever controls the resources it represents, whether noble lords, the socialist government, workers in common, or finally American businessmen, is responsible as a community advocate, at least in the eyes of the population. Furthermore, because of the brewery's unique ability to export the community's image to the rest of Poland, this responsibility weighs especially heavy as it acts as the voice of a social group much larger than its own employees. Within this community, responsibility and idealism from the socialist era lives on, and its employees judge the brewery socially and morally against this model, even though the workers' participation in a capitalist system provides the new definition of the company. Gurr remarks of this process, “Workers [use] the past to critique the present, by which I do not mean that they [recur] to an idealized past—they [have] lived through and in communism and [are] astute critics of communist practice. . .” (1998: 240). Thus, in every aspect of evaluating the new economy, the past is integral to the construction and evaluation of the quality of the present. This is one legacy of socialism.

### Conclusion

As *Browar Kostrova* continues to adapt to the realities of the “new” Polish economy, the definition of individual and institutional identities are driven by the interplay between tensions and dynamics unique to the present state of Polish society and to the history of its individual communities and institutions. At *Browar Kostrova*, social dynamics, technology, prestige and organizational structure interact with tensions produced by the juxtaposition of age with youth, history with modernity and collective action with individualism, to produce an institutional identity delicately balanced between seemingly contradictory social positions and formed through the reinvention of the individual identities of its workers.

Defining identity is not necessarily a conscious process. It is created and negotiated by the relationships between individuals and institutions within the social order of a society, and the power exchanges involved in these relationships. New capital investment has brought technology and considerable prestige to the brewery, subsequently producing a new feeling of

partnership amongst workers and management and making social pressure, modernization and self definition the only control processes necessary. The worker's desire for both personal and community success in the “new” economy makes producing change its own justification. As a symbol of the community, the identity of *Browar Kostrova* as an institution is fundamentally caught up in the community's history. Because of the intense identification of the community with the brewery, it is viewed as both a community leader and advocate, and is expected to fulfill expectations of social responsibility developed during socialism. As the brewery's financial success in the market economy grows, so does the expectation of its responsibility to its workers and to the community. Ultimately, the identity of *Browar Kostrova* is neither entirely socialist nor entirely capitalist. Instead, it is a hybridization of both ideologies. In the “new” Polish economy the brewery must act as a capitalist enterprise, but within its community it is judged by the standards of socialism.

As the *Browar Kostrova* progresses through the construction of its new identity, workers meet the future with hope and apprehension. One worker spoke wistfully, “It's going to be alright--It's the only attitude you can have. This is what I am doing” (131299-2). One *Kostrova* resident (not a brewery employee) to whom I spoke, summed up his view of the position of Polish workers by quoting the proverb, “Hope is the mother of fools, but it is better to have such a mother than none at all.” At the intersection between socialism and capitalism, the fate of the workers at *Browar Kostrova* is unknown, but in the end this fate lies in the construction of new individuals and new identities, negotiated by the workers' interaction with the complex social realities of the brewery and its community.

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