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MANUFACTURING NOSTALGIA: A CASE STUDY OF AN INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM IN NEW ENGLAND

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This paper discusses the functioning of an industrial museum located in New Britain, Connecticut. In the early twentieth century, New Britain was known as the Hardware Capital of the World. The curtailing and shutting down of factories, which began in the 1970s, affected workers' professional trajectories and social ties and also led to an ethnic reconfiguration of the urban realm. Conceived in the early 1990s, the New Britain Industrial Museum collects and exhibits photos and items that used or continue to be produced in the city. Documenting the changing landscape of the industry and, through that, of the city itself, the museum emphasizes the city's and its inhabitants' potential. In doing so, it strives to serve as a bridge between the city's past, present, and future. Attending to the employees' and volunteers' (ex-factory workers') narratives and museum exhibits, this essay asks to what extent the museum facilitates the accommodation of postindustrial changes and to what extent it reinforces nostalgia for old times. How does it respond to the new challenges faced by the city? And how does it address new ethnic and class distinctions?

Keywords: Postindustrial; Museum; Industrial Heritage; "American Dream"; Work Ethic; Immigrants; Nostalgia

During one of my visits to the New Britain Industrial Museum, I found Karen, the director of the museum, and Florence, one of the elderly volunteers, with their eyes glued to a newly arrived object: a pinball machine decorated with images of the wares

of a local factory, Fafnir. The aged machine was a testimony to the marketing skills of Fafnir engineers; they "converted" a regular pinball machine, painting over the original art and outfitting it with Fanfir bearings, to promote their goods at trade shows. Eventually, the machine ended up in Reno, Nevada, a famous gambling town. As Karen explained to me, a man from Nevada called her to say that they had found the machine and were willing to donate it to the museum; the museum only had to cover shipping costs. Given that the shipping costs from the West to the East Coasts were not insignificant, Karen thanked them for the offer and said she would get in touch once she managed to collect the money. But the people from Nevada sent the machine anyway, asking Karen to cover the shipping once she had gathered the funds.

While Karen and I were admiring the donors' trust and trying our luck with the machine, Florence, a thin and short lady who moves with the grace of a young girl, hastened to get her purse and came back with a check for Karen. "You shouldn't have!" Karen objected, "That's a lot of money." "You need it and I want to support the museum," Florence cut her short, putting the checkbook back into her purse. Turning on one heel, she headed back to the table that she had begun to set up for the interview we had agreed to hold that day. She chose the two most comfortable seats, brewed a big pot of coffee, and took out a box of donuts. Once we sat down, Karen poured us coffee and tea and kept thanking Florence for her donation, while Florence began to tell me the story of her family, from time to time pointing to different objects around the museum: an old restaurant menu, a washing machine advertisement, factories' yearbooks.

Established in 1995, the New Britain Industrial Museum can be described as a constantly growing collection of objects, pictures, and documents representing the history of local industry. Yet as the above vignette suggests, the museum is much more than that: it is an outcome of numerous people's efforts, determination, and dedication, as well as an expression of different sorts of sentiments towards the city whose history the museum displays. While there is no doubt that most museums are in fact joint ventures of creators, employees, and visitors alike, the herein described museum (like many other local history museums) is different in that it represents relatively recent history, made and remembered by many of the city's inhabitants. Conceived of as a "bridge" between New Britain's past, present, and future, the museum's aim is not only to recall the past "golden age" but to emphasize the inhabitants' potential. In the words of one of the museum's founders, it is supposed to be "a local museum dedicated to New Britain's history and accomplishments that could generate civic pride and inspiration for education in our youth. It would serve as an economic beacon for future industrial development … and a meaningful attraction for tourism."[1] Situated in the center of New Britain—in the past an area of expensive shops and restaurants and a thriving civic life, in the 1980s and 1990s a rundown neighborhood nobody would wander alone, and presently a slowly reviving cityscape—the museum also represents the wish to revitalize the downtown and bring back its status as the city's center.

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[1] http://nbindustrial.org/about/.

In attending to the employees' and volunteers' (ex-factory workers) narratives, museum exhibits, and special events, I ask the following questions: To what extent does the museum facilitate the accommodation of postindustrial changes, and to what extent does it reinforce nostalgia for old times? How does it respond to the new challenges faced by the city, and how does it address ethnic and class distinctions? What view of labor, community, and success does it promote? In order to answer these questions, I first describe New Britain's history and then present the museum. In the subsequent sections, I discuss the museum's message, situating it within the broader context of postindustrial developments.

Before engaging with these questions, I would like to say a few words about the position of my article within the growing field of museum studies. In this essay, I use the case study[2] of the museum as a lens through which to observe ongoing socioeconomic transformations, both in this particular American midsize postindustrial city and in the broader postindustrial context. I am less concerned with the "politics and poetics" of museum representations (Karp and Lavine 1991) and public history (Stanton 2006), nor do I draw heavily on recent developments in museum studies and visual anthropology (see, e.g., Macdonald 2006; Bouquet 2012). Rather than treating other scholarly contributions as the source of my theoretical agenda and analytical concepts, I use them largely as a source of comparative questions and inspiring observations.

The first and the most general of such thought-provoking observations is the conviction, expressed in numerous scholarly publications, regarding the astonishing popularity of history museums and local history museums in particular. Considering these to be a far-reaching phenomenon in recent decades, many authors suggest a relationship between postindustrial changes and nostalgic interest in the past, which again translates mostly into an interest in a local past (e.g., Katriel 1993; Wallace 1996). Yet, while the popularity of local history museums seems unquestionable, there is less agreement as to what extent such museums are independent from the state due to their community-based character (Wallace 1996:26) and to what extent they express certain dominant (state) narratives and values. In what follows I look at the actors involved in local history museums and inquire into the potential competition between different narratives, such as those of local history enthusiasts and the professional historians, who reproach the former group for their allegedly nostalgic, uncritical view of the past and heavily empirical work (cf. Heron 2000). This, in turn, leads to the question of the inevitable selectivity of what museums tell and do not tell; the process behind what kind of histories and what kind of heritage are displayed in the museums is silenced and obscured, as is reflection on how present day concerns affect these processes (e.g., Macdonald 2008). For instance, scholars have observed a continuous marginalization of working-class experiences, even by museums dealing explicitly with the issues of labor or industrial heritage (see Heron 2000; Shackel and Palus 2006). This article weaves these three issues—the question

[2] My research in the museum was a part of my six-month-long fieldwork in New England, carried out between November 2013 and April 2014.

of local histories' "heyday," of the people who cowrite concrete local narratives, and of the selective nature of those narratives—through an analysis of the local New Britain museum, focusing on the story it conveys and the people it includes—and those it leaves out.

NEW BRITAIN'S INDUSTRIAL ERA

In order to make sense of the New Britain Industrial Museum, it is important to understand the sociopolitical history of the city itself. New Britain, a midsize city with 70,000 inhabitants, is located about 10 miles from Hartford, the capital of Connecticut. Built on a hilly terrain and surrounded by forests, it was the largest town in colonial Connecticut. Thanks to rapid growth of industry, New Britain was designated a city in 1871, and starting at the end of the nineteenth century it played a fundamental role in the industrial development of the US East Coast. Not only did the New Britain factories compete with the largest companies in the United States, but they made other companies dependent on their production, providing numerous factories in the United States and beyond with components. As a result, in the early decades of the twentieth century, New Britain became known as the Hardware Capital of the World or Hardware City. Major American manufacturers such as Stanley Works, P&F Corbin, and North & Judd had headquarters in the city.

The rapid development of the manufacturing sector led to an increasing demand for labor and attracted many immigrants, initially Irish, French, Swedish, German, and Italian, and since the 1880s, Eastern Europeans. The demand for employees was so great that major New Britain manufacturers used to send their agents to New York to provide the newly arrived with assistance, lodging, and transportation. Oftentimes, new workers came to New Britain due to the help and information provided by their relatives and countrymen. In the case of the Polish population, which came to dominate in the town, entire parishes resettled to New Britain, and people who used to be neighbors in small Polish villages continued to live side by side, occupying adjacent apartments in tenement buildings. At the same time, due to this ethnic diversity, there were no ethnically homogenous neighborhoods in New Britain. The eldest inhabitants happily recall that each of their neighbors was of a different ethnicity and spoke a different language; the cacophony of different languages is a common trope in the eldest generations' stories. They also recall the outstanding number of ethnic churches. Most ethnic communities had at least two parishes, some of which are still active.

The first decades of the twentieth century, marked by rapid economic growth, are recalled as a time of stability, decent income, and a variety of community-building social practices. As the economist Michael Hiscox notes, the 1910s and 1920s marked an increase in salaries and a decrease in worker mobility, as factory owners would encourage workers to stay at their jobs, get more skilled, and move up the factory hierarchy by offering them better pay and benefits (2002:406–407). As a result, it was common for a man to work in one of the factories while his wife took care of the household. Families living on one income were able to buy a house and send their

children to school. Due to this relatively stable economic situation, the succession of profession within the families was uncommon. Immigrants invested in their children's education and wanted them to pursue different paths: to open their own business and provide components for bigger industries (as a part of the so-called contractor system), to become a professional (e.g., a doctor, a pharmacist, a lawyer), or simply to acquire in-demand skills and occupy a higher position within the factory. This was true for sons as well as for daughters, although the roles assigned for the latter differed; if allowed and encouraged to study they would be trained as nurses, teachers, and typists. Henceforth, there was a continuous demand for a new labor force—newer immigrants who would occupy the lowest positions in the factories.

Thriving factories brought wealth to their owners. According to Karen, the museum's director, the number of wealthy inhabitants is one of many things that made the city special. Although many New England cities were rich at the time, New Britain was producing "all that stuff," with half of the workers living in other cities, and hence New Britain had more millionaires per capita than Boston or Hartford. At the same time, Karen emphasizes that the rich manufacturers were great philanthropists; they were striving to develop the city and strongly promoted an ideology of getting ahead:

> This group of industrialists, they once again got together, they put the money together so they could open a public library, to have a public library … and others run the library, and then they expanded so they had an art room, and they had a children's museum with animals and stuff, and that is the foundation for New Britain Public Library, Hungerford Museum [youth museum] there, and Art Museum actually [all] grew out of the New Britain Institute, the one little room when they bought it, painting … because it was all about trying to improve people's lives, there was a big thing outlining in [the late] 1800s—be a better person, become more educated, because you could change your destiny.

Notwithstanding the overall benefits of such acts, it is worth adding that the activities of "great philanthropists" presumably had a more complex rationale. As Robert Sudgen notes on philanthropy, "[i]n many cases, the most obvious way to explain why a donor feels he ought to contribute to a charity and why others would condemn him for not contributing to it is to point out that the charity produces a public good from which he benefits" (1982:349); we shall add that "one's own benefit" might have been more or less direct and related to the workers' rather than philanthropists' livelihood. A further motivation was the tax incentives for charitable donations, in place since the nineteenth century (even if widely debated; see Diamond 2002).

The socioeconomic situation worsened during the Great Depression, when many businesses closed down and people survived by undertaking several jobs and engaging in illicit activities, such as alcohol production (which was in high demand due to Prohibition). The trend reversed again during the Second World War, when the steel factories produced arms and around 35,000—half of the population of New Britain at the time—worked in shifts day and night. Yet the war brought much more than a

production boom; it was due to the war, and more precisely to mass male enlistment, that women were encouraged to take up traditionally male positions. Moreover, it was as a result of the benefits provided after the war to veterans that numerous men obtained higher educations and, eventually, entered the middle class.

The postwar decades brought further prosperity to the factory owners and the city's populace alike. The city's manufacturers continued to produce equipment for the air force and army while also specializing in the new domestic appliances that modernized households worldwide. New Britain's center was filled with expensive restaurants and clothing shops. The central position of the factories enhanced the vibrant life of the town. As Florence recalls:

> And of course, you know, there was crime, just like there is now, it wasn't a perfect place to live to, but it was a good place to live to, to live in, as I said, we had all kind of stores down there, people came from all over to shop, you could find anything you wanted, and every once in a while our friends and I would remember this … remember, um … they had excellent fish and the bakery department, remember Hoffman's and … all these places…
> **Agnieszka:** And elegant clothing, you mentioned?
> **Florence:** Yes, clothes, hat shops, lingerie shops, shops and so, you know, stockings, lingerie, corsets, [shops] with chocolates … um … furniture stores … everything and anything, um … department stores, whatever you wanted you could find it. You could go downtown and the stores were open, I think Thursday night or Friday night or Saturday night; they weren't open all the time like they are now … and restaurants, places to eat, food … you know the city had everything, alleys, boxing areas… roller-skating rink … everything. There was nothing, you know, to want for.

Stories of this sort, which recall the thriving New Britain center, cannot help but make an impression on a listener who happens to walk through the same streets and finds it hard to imagine that in the recent past these were expensive "alleys," full of pedestrians and customers. Today, most of the shop windows are empty; some were adapted for cheap businesses, such as an inexpensive hairdresser, a beautician, or a sandwich chain, usually run by Hispanic or Latino immigrants. People pass by but do not stop in the center. Most of the inhabitants do their shopping in one of the commercial centers situated on the city's outskirts.

New Britain's past socioeconomic system can be aptly defined as "welfare capitalism," namely a capitalist model that involved a broad range of welfare policies (Brandes 1976). Karen describes it succinctly in the following words: "You know, capitalistic, it's all about the capitalism, but we wanna mix, improve your welfare, you know, we want you, we wanna create good environment here." For the factory workers, welfare capitalism meant not only good pay and insurance but a variety of community-building practices: singing societies, bridge clubs, bowling leagues, baseball teams, all of which were strongly supported by the factory owners as they were supposed to instill a sense of community "so [that] it didn't feel like it was just all about work." Some volunteers go so far as to say that the factory was like a family: they used to celebrate birthdays, babysit each other's kids, and provide mutual support

when it was needed. For instance, one of the museum volunteers, Paul, supported this claim by accounting how his superior was concerned about Paul's bachelor status at the age of 26. He set up "a date" with a music teacher whom Paul indeed married a year later. While such a story is likely to take place in many (past and present) companies in many different contexts, I contend it can be read as an attempt to contrast the former community-style workplace with its contemporary individualized forms.

The curtailing and shutting down of factories after the 1970s profoundly affected factory workers' professional trajectories and social ties, yet, at the same time, it was not necessarily the long-term factory employees who suffered most from the postindustrial transition. The moment production slowed down, most of the immigrant workers were close to retirement, while their children were pursuing different professions. Over the course of my fieldwork I encountered very few stories about drastic cuts in employment and production. Rather, people described it as a gradual process to which they adapted: the elder ones by securing a pension, and the younger ones by finding a new niche in the market, which often entailed opening small shops and businesses. Small companies would produce specialist components for bigger factories, which survived by scaling down or changing their location (moving to the Southern states or to Asia).

The changes in the city's economy also translated into changes in the urban realm. Not only the traditional working-class districts but also the center of the city emptied as the ex-factory workers began to move to the suburbs, fulfilling the ambitions of the American middle class. This "white" middle class migration to the suburbs corresponded with "black" working class moving downtown: African Americans and newcomers from Puerto Rico. Puerto Ricans, who, according to the 2010 census, today constitute 30 percent of the local population, began to move to New Britain at the same time as local industries were closing down or limiting employment. And it is precisely this population (together with some other small Hispanic communities) that was affected most profoundly by the economic restructuring. The statement that "Puerto Ricans destroyed New Britain" is a leitmotif in narratives of the city's last few decades, espoused by the city's middle class: ex-factory workers and children of earlier immigrants. Puerto Ricans are blamed for the lack of safety, crime, infrastructural decay, and the poor quality of the schools and services—in short, for the decline that a century ago might have been attributed to the lamenting peoples' parents: "Polacks," "Wops," "Bohunks." In many conversations people would describe Puerto Ricans as "those blacks"[3] and define them as lazy, demanding, and abusing social security. Few of the people I interviewed observed that Puerto Ricans arrived in New Britain during a recession or that the urban decline might not have been their fault.

As mentioned earlier, the New Britain Industrial Museum's mission is to disseminate the story of "past glory" in order to counter the story of decline as the inevitable destiny of the city. As the Museum's creators state, the institution aims at

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[3] Around 80 percent of Puerto Ricans define themselves as white (see US Census Bureau 2001).

representing "the ingenuity and creativeness of generations of Hardware City people in a continuing effort both to cultivate awareness of their past productivity and to inspire future industrial accomplishment."[4] The question that arises from the description of the present-day socioeconomic landscape is: Whose memories and whose future does it seek to inspire?

A WALK THROUGH THE MUSEUM

Occupying one floor of the local university building, the museum documents the history and production of all local manufacturers. The exhibition is set in one spacious room, divided in several sections that display a variety of objects illustrating the companies' histories. Alongside metal products of different sizes and functions one can find maps of the factories, pictures of their owners or famous customers, and posters advertising new appliances and inventions. A lot of attention is paid to documenting uniqueness or exceptional achievements of New Britain's factories, as well as the role the city played in the country's and world's industrial history. These features are also emphasized by the museum's guides. Allan, a cheerful and high-spirited volunteer in his eighties, gave me a tour of the museum several times. He would pick an object and test my knowledge:

> **Allan:** Landers, this is what they made, appliances, home appliances, "Universal" trade name, everything was "Universal," can you see that? The Universal? There are all kinds of stuff for the house. You can see the toasters, irons, stoves, pots, pans. You name it and they made it.
> **Agnieszka:** Everything…
> **Allan:** They made a lot of that stuff. And all these food choppers, you know what food chopper is? See that? A lot of people had them and people *still* have them, because they *never* wear out. Skillets, coffee pots, and in later years they started with the vacuum cleaners and…
> **Agnieszka:** Wow, heaters…
> **Allan:** They made a lot of that stuff. Well all this was in old, past times, you know, way back, maybe before World War I or anything. All these little … and things like this … oh this was a mayonnaise maker [Allan shows me how it works] … Mayonnaise maker and cream whipper, yeah, very good. And this all stuff, it was made at Landers.

Throughout our tour, Allan would draw my attention to his favorite appliances, drawings, and pictures, using a lot of superlatives and quantifiers conveying the high quality and quantity of local factories' outputs. Karen offers a similar view, emphasizing the uniqueness of New Britain among industrial towns:

> You know, there was just something about people who came here, there was just something about the way they established that something. Something, I don't know what it was, but it made us one of the manufacturing leaders of America.

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[4] http://nbindustrial.org/about/.

> And this stuff, the products, the stuff that was made here and processes that were developed here influenced many factories worldwide, and the patterns that were taken out here still influence manufacturing to this day. Stanley in Connecticut is recognized as one of the five most innovative country's companies in the world. Of America, New Britain Connecticut.

Although most of the sections of the museum document the city's heyday, a couple of sections illustrate contemporary production and company owners' capacity to answer new demands through skillful branding and market research. Among the new products, there are a brand of luxury sports cars, "world class" solenoid valves, and bottled beverages featuring American politicians (such as "Barack O'Berry" or "John McCream").

> **Karen:** We have a community of guys who goes around and talks to current manufacturers, so we know we can speak intelligently about what is going on in manufacturing in New Britain today, which also then gets us to the future, and man, we are trying to reincorporate some of it into our collection, current manufacturing by no means represents the manufacture, everything that is going on, it's a reminder to people that *manufacturing in New Britain is not dead, it's just different* [emphasis added].

A story that only some of the collected items may tell is the story of the social aspects of factory work, mentioned earlier in my discussion on welfare capitalism. Soccer diplomas, announcements of sport competitions between different factories, and posters advertising concerts and dances all testify to the vibrant social life that was once a part of the industrial era. So were Friday evenings in the pub, recalled by male workers, and weekend shopping in New Britain's downtown, evoked by women. It is precisely this aspect of the "golden past" that is recalled most willingly by the museum's guides—volunteers who come to the museum to show visitors around and who, in one way or another, were related to one of the factories because either they or their parents worked for one of the companies. All the volunteers are retirees, between 60 and 90 years old, and all of them treat their volunteer work as a tribute to the city. Even those who did not work in factories express their attachment to and gratefulness for the hardware companies, which, in their view, enabled them to succeed: their social mobility was enabled by their grandparents' and/or parents' work in the factories. To borrow Tamar Katriel's formulation, volunteers are thus supposed to "authenticate the museum story" (1993:112).

If you listen to visitors' explanations for why they come to visit, most of the people from the area will claim that they are in one way or another related to one of the factories. According to museum statistics, half of the visitors are local people and half are "real" tourists, yet—perhaps partly because of the season (winter) when I did my research—I happened to meet only members of the first group.[5] "I've always wanted to know something more about my grandfather's work"; "Here in New Britain everyone knows someone working in a factory"; "This is our history"—these were

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[5] It would be hard to call New Britain a thriving tourist destination.

common statements I recorded from visitors. Oftentimes visitors would list all the relatives who worked for different New Britain companies. Also, they would often engage in discussions with one of the volunteers, comparing their relatives' experiences and sharing their stories.

Unsurprisingly, such encounters often translate into the exchange of nostalgic accounts about the past, something Karen is very wary of. She continually emphasizes that things continue to be made in New Britain and that the city has potential. She has sharp words for the elder generation's "poisonous" stories:

> [They] have robbed that younger generation of any sense of place or community because … New Britain stinks because it's not the way it was in 1965. You know, my kids grew up here; they've had a great time. You know … they've had a great time, but I think what happens is that … this one generation … this … it is a generation I guess … um … has poisoned, you know, the city and has poisoned the wealth for the people who're coming behind now. Because no matter what their experience is, it's never gonna be as good as it was in 1965.

As is often the case with the nostalgic accounts, ex-factory workers tend to idealize the past sociability, community, and togetherness that were important elements of factory work (cf. Berdahl 1999). However, numerous people continue to socialize today: retired employees from the factory meet on a weekly basis to play cards, have lunch together, or celebrate someone's birthday. The museum is an important site for such encounters, too. Nonetheless, socializing in the past was simply better, as one ex-factory workers claimed:

> We had birthdays and we could go and take the person out just like we do right now. Exactly the same way, but I believe it was better in those years. *One hundred percent better*.[6]

Karen's and the volunteers' wish is to draw the attention of young people. They encourage schoolteachers to come to the museum with their pupils as well as grandparents to bring their grandchildren and show them what they used to do in the factory. As of my fieldwork in 2014, their attempts had not been very successful, and elderly people made up the majority of visitors. Some hope was brought by a recent exhibition entitled *Nuts and Bolts: Stories from New Britain Manufacturing* (March–September 2014), which the museum organized in a gallery on one of the city's main streets. The exhibition displayed oral histories of ex-factory workers gathered by students from a New Britain university. Attendance of the exhibition went beyond expectations, and both the show and its protagonists drew the attention of public radio. Although important for marketing reasons, the radio program focused primarily on New Britain's "golden age," thereby reiterating ex-factory workers' narratives and reinforcing nostalgia for the old times. It thus seems worth asking: what makes it difficult for the museum to serve as a bridge between the past and the future and why, despite the official aim of the museum and the wishes of its creators, does it

[6] Interview by Emily Oparowski and Kasie Marchini, collected for the *Nuts and Bolts* exhibition.

seem to be cherishing past generations rather than inspiring present-day youth, workers, and residents?

WHAT THE MUSEUM DOES AND DOES NOT TELL

As the description of the museum shows, notions of pride, exceptionality, and uniqueness are prominent in the museum's narrative. What is not that prominent is a reflection on the ways in which the conviction of New Britain's "exceptionality" contributed to the city's crisis. Karen observes that the community could have anticipated some changes and facilitated the transformation, but "nobody thought the goose would ever stop laying the golden eggs."

The museum hardly speaks about these difficulties. Colorful posters, advertisements, and shelves filled with objects may easily overshadow the amount of physical labor, danger, and hard conditions in which many employers worked. The idealized image of factory work often goes along with the conviction that the next generation is supposed to "do better," to find jobs outside the factory. The museum does not mention accidents or illnesses caused by contact with chemicals, as if these were not also a part of the city's industrial history. Moreover, it glosses over the gender and ethnic discrimination that lasted for a long time despite the ideology of meritocracy and interethnic conviviality on the factory floor. Not only were there limits to upward mobility, but those limits seem to be perceived as a part of the "functionalist" factory system in which the discrimination of women and/or people of certain ethnic backgrounds was "justified" by the emphasis on efficiency and performance.

During one of our conversations Karen told me the story of a Polish woman who in the 1950s applied for a job in an office and heard that "Poles do not work in the office." So she dyed her hair, applied under a different name, got the job, and performed it for years. Karen was stunned that the family who told her the story was not upset at all about the discrimination; that's how things were and how they worked, they claimed. Ethnic tensions were also reflected in some jokes and recollections of the volunteers, told in passing. For instance, Allan and Florence told me jokes about "damn Polacks," too stupid to do certain jobs, which were later retold by Poles as jokes about Italians. Today, Poles are praised as the ones who are keeping New Britain alive[7] and are considered exemplary employees. And although today the different ethnic communities that built up New Britain occupy equal positions within the museum, it is at the same time essentially a "white" history and a "white" museum inadvertently reproducing ethno-racial distinctions, even though different ethnicities may have changed their position on the scale.

In making these observations, I do not wish to claim that the museum should transform into an institution that only tells a story of oppression and maltreatment. Likewise, I do not mean to question that factory work had a profound value for employees. A leitmotif in ex-workers' stories is the expression "I know I made a difference. My work mattered." People highly value the skills they acquired while working

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[7] Since 2008, a part of New Britain (Broad Street) has been officially designated "Little Poland" due to the large number of Polish businesses and shops.

in the factories, both individual achievements and the successes of entire teams. For example, a female volunteer working in the museum is proud of her knowledge of hardware and ability to fix things at home on her own, while one of her male colleagues emphasizes a production record scored by his team. Such stories are no doubt essential elements of the museum's narrative. However, it is due to this particular blend of postindustrial nostalgia and views of what is a "proper" professional trajectory that the museum's narrative does not always manage to engage with contemporary experiences of labor.

The vision of "working men" promoted within the museum is basically the vision of people pursuing the American dream. Hard work, inventiveness, perseverance, and resourcefulness are the key qualities of the good worker and model citizen. Despite the growing lack of work and the decrease in secure, full-time employment, the old ontology of work still prevails: public discourses promote the idea of work as a means of self-fulfillment and a civic duty (Roberman 2013:3). As E. Paul Durrenberger and Dimitra Doukas (2008) note in their study of workers from New Jersey and Pennsylvania, the "gospel of work" persists against the ideology of the "gospel of wealth." Such findings contrast with the observations of Ulrich Beck, Richard Sennett, and other advocates of the "end of work thesis," accounting for the continuous importance of work as an axis around which people build their identity (see Doherty 2009).

More importantly, work continues to be a source of moral judgments. The museum's narrative admits that the time when half of the city *could* find work in the factory is gone and that the socioeconomic landscape has changed; yet the model of the ideal worker persists. Ex-factory employees contrast their own beginnings with those of the present-day immigrants, especially Puerto Ricans, who, in their view, abuse Social Security and do not try hard enough. An elderly woman of Cuban descent says:

> And believe it or not, I'm proud of myself. I never had welfare, I never had food stamps, and I didn't know English. And this is the best country in the world. And this is my country.... Like I said a young girl in her twenties who doesn't know English, a strange country, my goal was making money. And I tell you guys I am proud of myself. Never had the government give me a penny.[8]

The narrative on state welfare is constantly contrasted with the heroic "self-made man" model and is prevalent in the attempts to understand New Britain's present-day "bad-being." This narrative does not acknowledge market-driven upward mobility: the complex relationship between the overall state of the economy, individual accomplishment, and its moral underpinnings (see Dudley 1997). State-run programs, such as the GI Bill for war veterans, are also interpreted as individual accomplishments rather than as state interventions. As such, these views widely correspond with a widespread, mass media–driven belief that class status depends on individual merit and efforts (cf. Linkon and Russo 2001). Kathryn Dudley aptly ob-

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[8] Quote from the interview transcription by Mary Ellen Murray, prepared for the purpose of the *Nuts and Bolts* exhibition.

serves that "the American dream is more than a statement about limitless opportunity in the land of free enterprise. It is also a story about moral order—about what we owe our families, friends, and communities" (1997:xix–xx). It is for this reason that lack of (proper) employment is perceived as a failure and incapacity to be a good, respected, and equal citizen. And it is for this reason that the museum finds it hard to embrace contemporary experiences of workers or, in the words of the museum's creators, serve as a bridge: the presence of new *unemployed* and *unproductive* immigrants unsettles the story of New Britain's success.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

When I recall my talks with Florence—whether in the museum, in her snug apartment in suburban New Britain, or in one of the Polish-American restaurants in Little Poland—several images come to mind: her mother sitting in the living room on Saturday afternoon and listening to the Metropolitan Opera; her father refusing to produce alcohol during Prohibition as he could not face his children if caught; Florence and her friends running to the library on the weekends to enjoy newly acquired books in the children's section; groups of elegantly dressed female workers, clattering with their high-heel pumps on the way to the factory. In Florence's words, industrial-era New Britain was a secure, cozy, and, at the same time, affluent place; a place that belongs to the past yet continues to serve as a model of the "good life."

No doubt incomplete, such a picture of the good past can be easily refuted as nostalgic or even naïve. Yet an approach of this sort would be as wrong as the reductionist explanations for New Britain's "failures" and "wrongdoers." Florence's and other volunteers' stories convey much more than idyllic depictions of past domestic and professional lives. They recount the pride of generations of immigrants, who worked hard and learned to enjoy and take advantage of abundant social, political, and cultural opportunities, and for whom any life improvement, their own or their families', constituted a source of joy. Consequently then, it may seem that what such stories—and the story that the museum conveys—lack is not necessarily, or not only, a more nuanced view of the past but an ability to more tightly connect those stories to the present-day struggles of workers and people who, as a matter of fact, may only aspire to be workers. This observation, in turn, provokes the question of whether a different museum narrative would be capable of educating a critical audience, an audience that would call for a corrective to today's welfare regime, speak on behalf of poor people, and "pose a serious challenge to a national belonging long predicated on differentiated citizenship, racism, and neglect" (Fennell 2012:660). As in Catherine Fennell's case study of the National Public Housing Museum in Chicago that ends up glorifying the "culture of resilience" against the "culture of poverty" (659), the New Britain museum fails to draw out the revolutionary implications of the stories it tells.

Wendy Lem notes that the postindustrial era has altered the ways in which people constitute themselves as collective subjects (2002:288). The example of New Britain shows that the loss of identity as workers/factory employees is closely related the loss of the city's identity. The museum volunteers' accounts intertwine with

stories of the stable and satisfying factory work, vivid social life, and beautiful downtown. As in most nostalgic narratives, their desire to restore New Britain's excellence brings about many contradictions. Would the people who live in comfortable suburban neighborhoods, pay their taxes, and support local schools change their approach to a "revitalized" New Britain? Would they accept a lively downtown filled with Puerto Rican stores and ethnic food? Or would they gentrify the center and push them out into poorer suburbs? Theoreticians of nostalgia have long pointed to the tensions that nostalgia entails—to the fact that "attempts to recuperate, validate and anchor a collective memory of a shared past" tell us more about the present than the past (Berdahl 1999:203, 206) and that they often serve to obscure certain uncomfortable aspects of the present.

The industrial museum is made of such practices of recuperation, providing employees with a sense of community (and simultaneously delineating its borders). The efforts, devotion, and passion put into the museum's functioning and through that also the town of New Britain account for their wish to both recreate the past and share it with others. The museum's success—and, more generally, the success of any reflection on the industrial past that the museum no doubt exemplifies—will lie, let me emphasize once again, in the ability to recognize similarities and not only discontinuities between the industrial and the present postindustrial eras.

What is interesting about New Britain's museum is that by telling a "unique" story of local manufacturing (indeed unique due to the amount and variety of manufactured products) it also tells a common story of a midsize American industrial city's development and decline. It is a story of several generations of immigrants, experiences of work and accomplishments, but also about the reproduction of hierarchies and inequalities and the means of explaining and justifying them. Workers' stories feature the idea of work as a locus of social relations; as strongly linked with community, solidarity, and a common identity; as a means of one's self-fulfillment, a way of assessing others, and an element of moral order. The most troublesome aspects of the postindustrial era might be not new rules and values, but the persistence—and inadaptability—of the old ones.

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ПРОИЗВОДСТВЕННАЯ НОСТАЛЬГИЯ: СИТУАТИВНОЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ ПРОМЫШЛЕННОГО МУЗЕЯ В НОВОЙ АНГЛИИ

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Исследование было поддержано грантом Польского национального научного центра DEC-2012/04/S/HS3/00370. Я хотела бы поблагодарить участников круглого стола «Постиндустриальная революция? Изменения и преемственность в рамках городских ландшафтов», состоявшегося в 2014 году в

Таллинне в рамках конференции Европейской ассоциации социальных антропологов. Особую благодарность я приношу своей коллеге по организации круглого стола Гражине Кубице, а также Дэйву Петручелли за его помощь и поддержку. Я благодарна также директору и волонтерам Промышленного музея Новой Британии за гостеприимство и профессору Мэри Коллинс за то, что она поделилась со мной материалами интервью, собранными ею и ее студентами для музейной выставки «Гайки и болты: рассказы о новобританском промышленном производстве».

В эссе обсуждается работа промышленного музея, находящегося в городе Новая Британия (штат Коннектикут). В начале XX века Новая Британия была известна как мировой центр по производству скобяных изделий. Сокращение производства и закрытие скобяных фабрик, начавшееся в 1970-х годах, сказалось на профессиональном развитии рабочих и их социальных связях, а также повлекло за собой этническую перепланировку городского пространства. Основанный здесь в начале 1990-х годов Промышленный музей занимается собиранием и экспонированием коллекции и предметов (и их фотографий), сделанных на производствах этого региона ранее и в настоящее время. Документируя изменения в профиле городской промышленности и, соответственно, самого города, музей демонстрирует коллекцию, которая дает представление о потенциале города и его жителей. Таким образом, музей выступает в роли связующего звена между прошлым, настоящим и будущим города. Анализируя рассказы сотрудников и волонтеров музея (обычно – бывших фабричных рабочих), автор задается вопросом о том, как музей способствует приспособлению города к постиндустриальным изменениям и усилению ностальгии по прежним временам. Как музей отвечает на вызовы, с которыми сталкивается город в настоящий период своего развития? Как реагирует на новые этнические и классовые различия?

Ключевые слова: постиндустриальный музей; промышленное прошлое; «американская мечта»; трудовая дисциплина; иммигранты; ностальгия

Manufacturing in high-income countries is on the decline and Denmark is no exception. Manufacturing employment and the number of firms have been shrinking as a share of the total and in absolute levels. This paper uses a rich linked employeremployee dataset to examine this decline from 1994 to 2007. We propose a different approach to analyze deindustrialization and generate a series of novel stylized facts about the evolution. This preview shows page 4 - 5 out of 5 pages. Manufacturing nostalgia, personality, â€œfunkinessâ€ EX: Applebeeâ€™s putting a bunch of stuff on the walls to make it feel like there is community and history there. o Clothes: Distressed o Theme parking and â€œskinningâ€ life: EX: Texas Roadhouse, Outback, Olive Garden â€œitâ€™s better than Italy! Weâ€™re family here!â€ o Housing developments: â€œBrickleberryâ€ as the name of a neighbor. â€œA Brickleberry isnâ€™t a real thing, but people like bricks and berries, so theyâ€™d probably like Fittingly, The QuÃ©bÃ©cois city of MontrÃ©al served as a filmic backdrop for Wednesday eveningâ€™s program entitled â€œUrban Manufacturing: Nostalgia or Necessity?â€ which took place at the Koret Auditorium within San Francisco Public Libraryâ€™s Main Library. The crowd, a mÃ©lange of Bay Area residents, took their seats and sparked conversations that, although disparate, seemed to be stitched together by a common theme: â€œitâ€™s so hard to raise a family/pay rent/run a business in San Francisco right now.â€