The institutional agencies promoting this new identity were labour collectives as well as schools and other educational institutions. According to the official Soviet discourse, members of the working class demonstrated their moral values to other social groups through their ‘heroic labour.’ In media narratives, this idea was used as a tool to encourage practices aimed at socio-economic development. Between the 1960s and early 1980s, newspaper publications often used these kinds of narratives with the intention to improve working ethic or reinforce a culture of labour. Their authors generally called upon the working population to revise its attitude towards work. Higher labour productivity was seen as the ultimate goal of the Soviet economic model.

5. Production-based Professional Identities

Public narratives emphasised full employment as one of the major achievements of the Soviet economic system, which thus distinguished itself from capitalist economies. Unemployed people had no official status in the Soviet Union and were considered criminals. In Sortavala as elsewhere in the USSR, full employment was considered more important than other economic goals, but here in a context of an insufficient labour supply. Under the conditions of a planned economy, this led to frequent difficulties of implementing state-funded programmes of socio-economic development in North Ladoga (see section 4-1.).

5-1. The Industrial Sector

Industrial production in Sortavala partly relied on the old technical infrastructure of former Finnish companies, partly on new establishments created in Soviet times, such as the furniture and ski combine (SMLK) at Helylä. Sortavala’s industrial sector also included a sewing factory, a brewery, a meat factory, a printing house, a metallurgical factory, mineral quarries and an establishment producing materials for road construction. In the late 1960s, the town counted eleven establishments of the primary and industrial sectors: in addition to the above mentioned enterprises, there were a dairy, a bakery, a fish-processing factory, the West-Karelian Electricity Company, Leskhoz [forestry], a combine producing construction materials (*Kombinat proizvodstvennykh predpriiatii*) and a state establishment for repair works and other services (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 60/1205, l. 32).[25] The local state enterprises accounted for five per cent of Karelia’s industrial production. Technologically, few had changed since Finnish times. Sortavala’s industrial landscape had therefore remained virtually unchanged.

Public narratives about the sector focussed on efforts to fulfil the objectives defined by yearly or pluriannual plans, a subject treated in close connection with party ef-

25 The four main industrial establishments in the Sortavala district, the SMLK, a metallurgical factory at Värtsilä, a plywood combine at Lahdenpohja and a marble-and lime-processing factory at Ruskeala, together employed about 4,000 people; the sixteen other local factories accounted for 2,600 employees (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 54/1133, l. 25). A significant number of people were also employed at the local railway station and depot. The little-developed construction sector suffered from a lack of labour.

forts to create NSM. In 1948, for example, the town executive committee's department for industrial production analysed local economic indicators in the following terms: 'Enterprises of our town have implemented 102.1 per cent of the annual plan's norms (calculated for the entire municipal economy) as a result of the strenuous efforts made by the Party and the council administration.' Labour collectives at the furniture and sewing factories were positively singled out, even though only half of the production capacities had been used. Underuse of capacities and inefficiencies were noted for other enterprises as well (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 5/197, l. 9).

The important role of public celebrations has already been noted in other contexts. A study of public speeches held during the era of Stagnation under Brezhnev shows that productivity achievements in the planned economy were often accompanied by pompous political celebrations. The following quote from the year 1970 is typical of the phraseology employed to improve work ethic:

> The collectives of the industrial enterprises are working with great enthusiasm to fulfil the socialist pledges and are taking part in the events dedicated to the well-merited celebration of the Centennial Anniversary of Vladimir Il'ich Lenin's birthday. Eight out of nine industrial enterprises have successfully implemented their sales targets. The plans for labour productivity have been achieved at a rate of 100.5 per cent (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 60/1205, l. 4).

The Russian geographer Viacheslav Glazychev suggested the concept of 'slobodisation,' introduced to distinguish the urban landscape of Russian mid-sized and small towns from their European counterparts by opposing an imitation of urban space to real urbanisation. In his view, a *sloboda* is a semi-urban, or semi-rural, space in which housing, infrastructure and cultural organisation all serve a central giant industrial enterprise instead of offering services to the residents (Glazychev 1996). The urban landscape of Sortavala's town centre can hardly be compared to a *sloboda*. The furniture and sky combine SMLK, the town's industrial giant and main employer (*gradoobrazuiushchee predpriiatie*), was in fact located at the settlement of Helylä, about five kilometres from the town centre. But for this reservation, Sortavala can well be described as a mono-industrial town, because Helylä resembled many of these kinds of settlements typical of the Soviet Union. Most of the dwellings there were barracks that offered poor living conditions. The combine was even one of the largest enterprises in Karelia and played a central role in the town's economy. In 1970, the town's executive committee admitted, for example, that 'the Committee is taking measures to implement the budget, but fulfilling or not fulfilling this task entirely depends on two enterprises—the Sewing Union and SMLK' (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 60/1205, l. 70).

It is a well-known fact that consumer goods of the late Soviet period were usually of bad quality. The socialist command economy, however, lacked proper mechanisms to solve this problem, its only recourse being propaganda. In the 1970s, officials therefore introduced various medals, banners and other distinctions to award the best workers and thus to encourage higher labour productivity. One of these inventions to improve labour morale was a label called 'A Sign of Quality.' In 1974, a collective at the ski factory in Helylä, for example, reportedly attempted to obtain the state's quality label (*Znak kachestva*) for its ski brand Karelia (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 81/1371, l. 54).

The achievement was used as an example for the moral and ideological education of the population in various forms of celebration, such as a Day of Celebration in Honour of the *Udarniks* [superproductive shock workers; A. I.] of Communist Labour. A similar celebration had been organised by the ski factory, a subdivision of the SMLK combine, on 23 February 1970, on the occasion of the Day of the Soviet Army. During a solemn evening event at the combine's club, exemplary workers from the enterprise along with the best sixth-year students were awarded prizes.

In Soviet times, local enterprises usually organised social activities and ensured certain municipal services, a practice still continued in contemporary Russia. Big establishments were, for example, responsible for supplying water and heat to local residents. In other cases, enterprises took charge of housing, offered health and other services or even ran local restaurants. Labour collectives organised summer activities for children, such as Pioneers' camps, ran nursery schools and, more generally, were responsible for all kinds of institutions for children or adolescents. The local newspaper on several occasions reported on the furniture and ski combine's involvement in improving living conditions at Helylä. Articles mention the combine's decision to build a so-called household-building (*bytovoi korpus lyzhnogo tsekha*) where services to households were being provided for employees of the ski factory and to repair residential buildings, to extend the gas infrastructure of the settlement or to build a nursery school and a dormitory for its employees (*KZ*, 16 and 30 January 1982).

SMLK's paternalist policy clearly identifies the combine as a 'town-forming enterprise,' to use the Soviet terminology. The studied material richly illustrates this local version of Soviet spatial planning. In addition to providing public amenities and social services, the enterprise also took care of the moral education (*vospitanie*) of the young generation, administrating schools and even intervening in family affairs. One of its organisations, the Council for Assisting Families and Schools, organised meetings of schoolchildren with labour veterans and offered career counselling about employment opportunities at the combine (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 58/1180, l. 14).

In 1980, a women's council (*zhensovet*) was established at the combine, which initiated a debate on how to arrange services for families with children and to support them, notably because the combine did not offer facilities for children of non-employees in its nursery school. The council eventually suggested that the combine provide funds so that these families could care for their children at home for a period of three years (*KZ*, 8 March 1989). Until the collapse of the Soviet Union, SMLK thus looked after the social welfare of its employees and, more generally, the settlement's residents.

5-2. The Agricultural Sector

The first state farm established in Sortavala was Sovkhoz No. 1, located at a distance of almost two kilometres (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 1/8, l. 3). It produced bread grains, potatoes, milk and meat for the state (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 2/85, l. 22) but also rye, wheat, barley and various vegetables. Between the 1960s and 1980s, six *sovkhoz*es operated in Sortavala district, employing some 4,000 workers in 1969 (f. R-2203, op; 1, d. 54/1133, l. 25). The same year, each exploited a total of 5 hectares of farmland (*sel'khozugod'ia*), arable land (*pashnia*) and meadows. Pastures accounted for 25 hec-

tares and short-term and long-term fallow land for up to 15 hectares (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 60/1205, l. 31). Farms constantly experienced difficulties throughout Soviet times. In 1955, for example, the first secretary of the party district committee admitted that agricultural production in the district suffered from neglect. The so-called 'assistance of the city to the countryside' was the main mechanism through which the Soviet authorities hoped to solve socio-economic problems in rural areas. Media narratives frequently referred to these urban-rural ties. In 1955, the local newspaper thus informed readers that 'the Party had sent 28 communists to the countryside for assisting the agricultural economy in order to strengthen the economic position of the state farms and *kolkhoz*es' (*KZ*, 2 March 1955). In the 1950s, the recruitment of educated young people, students and various kinds of professionals for work in rural areas was widely practiced in Sortavala. Volunteers were hard to find because living standards there were very low.

Attracting agricultural labourers from other regions of the Soviet Union, particularly Belorussia, was seen as one solution to improve the agricultural economy of the district. In 1955, a meeting of *kolkhoz* members passed the following resolution:

> Dear *kolkhoz* members of Sortavala district! The state has supplied us with thousands of hectares of land [see numbers quoted above!] but we do not use a considerable part of the arable land. One of the reasons are labour shortages in rural areas. This is why we have decided to ask *kolkhoznik*s from the Belorussian SSR to take up permanent residence here in the KFSSR. We have decided to invite five families this year and another five in 1956 to work in the *kolkhoz* to help us with the agricultural production (*KZ*, 7 August 1955).

The essentialist approach in human geography emphasises the ties between people and their place of residence in the sense of people's sense of local roots. It is difficult to see how this approach could be applied to the migrants who moved to Sortavala in the 1940s and 1950s. The rural, and in particular agricultural, infrastructure left behind by earlier Finnish residents of this rural area must have seemed alien to them, because they were so distant from both the way of life they knew and Soviet-type agriculture. The Finns had exploited tiny fertile plots of land located on the shores of Lake Ladoga on farms run by individuals or families and located at a considerable distance from each other. Early Soviet migrants settling in North Ladoga were unfamiliar with this type of settlement and therefore gradually moved from these isolated farmsteads (*khutor*) into large villages (Hakkarainen 2005: 48–49), significantly transforming the rural landscape and agricultural economy in the process.

Although Sortavala's production-based local identity experienced several changes in line with those of the dominant Soviet discourse, the social and political underpinnings of it largely remained the same, except for the transformation of all local *kolkhoz*es into *sovkhoz*es [state farms]. So did the public narratives about the socio-economic situation of the rural area and agriculture, especially during the 1960s and 1970s. In 1971, the town executive committee discussed, for example, twenty issues related to the agricultural sector, reporting among other things that all state farms worked unprofitable (*nerentabel'no*) (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 58/1186, l. 14–15). The traditional peasant identity had already been destroyed by the Stalinist policy of collectivisation, and the Soviet economic system offered no incentives to increase labour productivity. News-

paper articles and official documents offer evidence that agricultural workers mostly adopted an indifferent attitude towards their work. The little progress made in the agricultural production cycle appears to have depended entirely on resolutions adopted by the Party, such as a decision by the local party committee to improve the conditions for cattle wintering at the *sovkhoz*es.

Since the early 1930s, Soviet discourse had voiced political and ideological suspicions of the peasants as a social class, attributing to them a 'backward psychology.' Nikita Khrushchev was well-known for his radical actions against the 'peasants' consciousness,' a policy that must be understood in the context of his strong belief in technology as a means of escaping backwardness (Autio-Sarasmo 2011: 133–149). The modernised and urbanised part of Soviet society despised villagers, and even those born in the countryside no longer identified themselves with farmers. Agricultural knowledge and willingness to work the land thus disappeared. During his rule, Khrushchev imposed, for instance, strict limitations on the private ownership of domestic animals, such as cattle, sheep and goats, which resulted in rural families' increasing reluctance to keep them—a phenomenon that could also be observed in Sortavala district. Despite the Party's unfavourable policies, local residents continued, however, to privately produce food. Family production thus accounted for a significant share in the milk supplied to the population, although the district's official economic policy was aimed at developing the local dairy industry. In 1971, the local administration passed, for instance, a resolution that directed the dairy to organise the purchase of milk from residents by calculating monthly norms (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 62/1222, l. 9).

When the political elite finally revised its policies towards private farming and animal ownership in the late Soviet years, it was mostly too late to interest people in agricultural activities. At the time, Sortavala's local authorities paid some attention to the development of private subsidiary plots (*lichnoe podsobnoe khoziaistvo* or LPH). During the years of the Ninth Five-Year Plan (1971–75), vegetable gardens cultivated by residents were reported to have increased. More than a decade later, these garden plots amounted to a total of 365 hectares, 384 of them cultivated with potatoes and 14 with vegetables (*KZ*, 20 May 1986). Private cattle ownership, by contrast, declined, from roughly 1500 heads of cattle in 1976 to less than 800 in 1988 (*KZ*, 31 January 1989).

In the aftermath of this new approach towards private farming, media narratives radically changed in comparison to those of earlier decades. In the late 1980s, it was reported that some agricultural workers had started to rent state-owned plots and agricultural buildings to create individual farms, although the leaseholders were still seen as assistants of the state farms. During the perestroika period, local party leaders also participated in public debates on the future of the local agricultural sector. Viktor E. Bogdanov, a secretary of the town party committee, thus expressed his views on the prospect of individual farms in the district. Interestingly, he referred in this context to specific local factors linked to the history of the area. He argued, for example, that the isolated farms (*khutor*) of the Finnish period had been productive but that the area's present-day residents, who had moved here from Russia, Belorussia and Ukraine, had completely different agricultural traditions. Bogdanov claimed that it was necessary 'to take into account these differences' and concluded that, for these reasons, only those

former Finnish farms should be renovated that were located close to existing settlements and roads (*KZ*, 31 January 1989). Very likely, these ongoing transformations of the rural space, and especially of its built-up environment, also changed the ways in which local residents perceived the countryside around Sortavala.

During the same period, newspaper reporting about the rural population changed significantly, too, focussing more on individual life stories and changes in the mentality of rural inhabitants. In early 1989, an article thus told the story of a family from the state fur farm Kaalamskii, who had been doing contractual work for the farm since November 1987, looking successfully after heifers and bull calves. The family members, who were described as diligent and assiduous, had however ceased its activities, mainly because of the hostile attitude of their neighbours towards the idea of family farms and small businesses, as it is described in the article 'The end of the family farm':

> Some of the rural inhabitants have started to calculate an admittedly modest separate family income. Not all neighbours have approved of such a careful attitude towards the common state property (namely to *sovkhoz* property not their own) and the practice has excited envy (*KZ*, 10 January 1989).

The main barrier to introducing private farming appears to have been mental and may have had historical roots, perhaps not so much in Soviet collectivisation but rather traditional Russian ideas of communal property that ran contrary to the attempts made by the reformists among the political elite.

To sum up, the public narratives designed to shape the identity of the agricultural workforce examined above show the complex and contradictory nature of Soviet identity politics. After years of repression, the traditional peasant identity had to a large extent disappeared. At the same time, rural workers had never fully accepted the official discourse with its ideological focus on a working class identity. Work ethic and labour productivity in the agricultural sector consequently suffered. In practice, the intensive gardening of private plots (*duchnyi uchastok*) even by urban residents remained not only an economic necessity but was also a highly attractive and popular leisure activity.

5-3. Shaping Work Identity

The Soviet economic model was based on the concept of the leadership and directing role of the Communist Party in the society. Documents issued by the Central Committee constituted a sort of master narrative that was later relayed and implemented by party committees at lower levels, with the Party delegating the execution to state institutions, such as for the implementation of the multi-annual plans for the economy. While the official discourse produced by the Party was designed to legitimise the notion of NSM, local authorities in particular had to deal directly with people and organise their everyday practical activities. Soviet discourse oscillated between 'what is' and 'what ought to be,' and those involved in everyday economic practices focussed on the former.

Under the conditions of the planned command economy, the Soviet political elite could not rely on market mechanisms to provide incentives for the labour force. Instead it attempted to create a work identity through its narratives and various actions of economic and socio-cultural mobilisation and thus to increase labour productivity.

One of the key elements used for the education of the working masses was the discourse on heroic labour and self-sacrifice introduced during the Stakhanovite movement of the 1930s and the Great Patriotic War, which romanticised labour and used symbolic devices to ensure the individual and collective mobilisation of the workforce. Stakhanovism, for example, was a myth created to increase labour productivity and to demonstrate the superiority of the socialist economic system in the face of a culture of labour one of whose main characteristics was lack of discipline and which was pervasive throughout the Soviet period.

Soviet traditions of mobilisation, typical of the 1930s Stakhanovite and *udarnik* [shock worker] movements, continued to survive in the 1940s and echoes of them can be found in post-war Sortavala. In January 1946, for example, the local newspaper reported on a logging campaign named after Aleksei Stakhanov, the Soviet miner and Hero of Socialist Labour, which was aimed at 'providing socialist assistance in fulfilling plans for logging by using manpower (100 workers) from various enterprises and organisations in town' (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 2/36, l. 2).

Stakhanov's name reappears in a public appeal launched by the commission that was set up in 1948 to prepare the celebration of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the KFSSR:

> The Stakhanovites as our most advanced people involved in the production process should play a decisive role. They should transmit their progressive experience of labour to workers who are lagging behind and help to pull up their work to a high level. It is necessary to intensify work on the eve of the anniversary. Every worker ought to fulfil 160 to 170 per cent of the norms. We call on all Stakhanovites in town to participate in a Stakhanov Watch in honour of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of our Republic. They should mark this glorious occasion in the life of the Karelo-Finnish people by accomplishing a feat of labour (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 5/193, l. 17).

The Soviet authorities distinguished between two categories of advanced workers, the Stakhanovites, considered to be more advanced, and the *udarnik*s [shock workers], with the former being obliged to teach their advanced work methods to the latter. In Sortavala's transportation sector, the Second Railway Division, for example, counted 121 advanced workers in 1948: 91 Stakhanovites and 40 *udarnik*s, and the roundhouse 91 Stakhanovites out of 279 employees (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 5/193, l. 18).

The notion of advanced labour also extended to other aspects of the communist work identity. In a resolution passed in November 1946, the town executive committee commented on shortcomings in the educational work done at two local logging establishments, Gortop and Lestrop, which supplied local households with wood for heating. Among other things, the resolution noted that workers were unwilling to subscribe to newspapers, that labour collectives did not discuss governmental documents and that there were no boards of labour achievements (sometimes also interpreted as 'The Walls of Honour'). In addition, the committee blamed the directorship for not organising socialist competitions and workers' meetings and for not encouraging the work of the trade union (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 2/77, l. 8).

Socialist competition (*Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie*), opposed to capitalist competition (*kapitalisticheskaia konkurentsiia*), was another key element of the Soviet

master narrative concerned with labour productivity. The first was conceived in terms of like-minded people sharing the same goal, whereas the latter was opposing social enemies whose interests fundamentally differed. In practice, socialist competition was said to be targeted at more rational tasks, such as improving the organisation of production, thereby increasing efficiency and the quality of products. In this context, Stakhanovism, trade unions and the Komsomol were held to play a key role. Socialist competition was to be practiced in all branches of the economy as well as in other spheres of social life by defining individual and collective 'socialist duties' (*sotsobiazatel'stva*). A resolution voted for in the late 1940s thus noted the absence of individual and shop 'socialist duties' at the workshops of Raznopromsoiuz[26] (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 1/6, l. 16).

Socialist competition put its stamp on the urban landscape, too. Since the early 1950s a board of honour exhibited in Karelskaia Street, in the town centre, celebrated the achievements of local workers by publishing the names and portraits of winners of socialist competitions. In 1954, the town executive committee decided to add the names of worker-heroes awarded in honour of the election campaign for the Supreme Council of the USSR, mentioning among others three workers who had accomplished their pledges and fulfilled respectively 270, 195 and 122 per cent of their norms (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 16/516, l. 25–26).

The 1960s were characterised by a new form of strengthening communist social and work ethic. It was during this period that appeared the movement of communist labour brigades. At the time, 90 employees of the local public catering sector were reported to have declared their intention to compete for the title 'communist labour collective.' Sortavaltorg, the town's trade office, was participating in a socialist competition with the *Torg* of the town of Olonets (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 34/896, l. 25). Similarly, the local RSU (short for Repairs and Construction Administration or *Remontno-stroitel'noe Upravlenie*) entered into a competition with a construction administration unit (SU) from Petrozavodsk in 1965. A common meeting defined socialist pledges (*obiazatel'stvo*) for the coming year to gauge the achievements of labour brigades and even smaller groups of workers (*zveno*) and arranged for the publication of quarterly summaries which reported to what extent work allotted by foremen (*masterskie uchastki*) had been accomplished. Trade unions were the preferred organisations for arranging and controlling socialist competitions, whose results were usually summed up during semi-public sessions of the primary trade union committee (*postroikom*). The report of a meeting describes, for instance, the handing over of the Red Banner and mentions cash premiums of 60 Rubles (f. R-2204, op. 1, d. 44/1010, l. 19).

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26 Raznopromsoiuz refers to Soviet co-operatives, a legacy of the New Economic Policy of the early 1920s. By the end of the 1950s, there still existed 114 workshops and small industrial establishments in the Soviet Union, employing some 1.8. Million individuals and accounting for 5.9 per cent of the GDP. They mostly produced furniture (40 per cent) but also toys, clothes, tableware and other consumer goods. After a governmental decree from 14 April 1956, they were gradually reorganised into state enterprises and had almost disappeared by the mid-1960s, except for those operating in the fields of housing-construction and folk-art. As co-operatives were at all times controlled by the state, they could never develop autonomously as in the West (see e.g. Makerova 2007).

Yet another tool employed consisted in attempts to spread best practices across the Soviet Union, particularly during the era of Stagnation. In 1967, the Shchekinskii chemical combine of the Tul'skaia district near Moscow started an experiment that was aimed at 'mobilising the collective to increase the volume of production through higher labour productivity,' a goal to be achieved through a better organisation of the production process, better labour efficiency and a better system of remuneration. The Central Committee approved of the experiment and later held it up as a universal model under the slogan 'Higher Production, Less Employees.' This model also inspired similar but ultimately unsuccessful attempts in Sortavalan enterprises and the town executive committee had to admit that the Shchekinskii combine's labour methods had not been fully implemented by local collectives (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 60/1205, l. 5). Almost the same terms were used almost a decade later, in 1978, to describe shortcomings in imitating an initiative promoted by party organisations in the Rostov Oblast. There, labour collectives had rallied under the slogan 'Work without Laggards' (*rabotat' bez otstaiushchikh*). In Sortavala, the local newspaper conceded that in many cases the imitation had ended in failure (*KZ*, 9 December 1978).

Gorbachev's perestroika finally brought a fresh approach to the management of the Soviet economy under the motto 'perfection of socialism' and appears to have met with more success, perhaps due to its greater emphasis on economic mechanisms to increase labour productivity and industrial output. In Sortavala, newspaper articles from the late 1980s reported that the local SMLK had increased its production and begun to operate cost accounting (*khozraschet*). It was explained that total output had been increased by 13.1 per cent, labour productivity by 20 and profits by 47.7 per cent and that the latter amounted to 1.5 million Rubles. Maer savings had been made through a better use of materials. In 1988, SMLK had produced 21,000 pairs of skies more than indicated in the plan and the quality of its products had been improved. Skis for racing competitions had been awarded with a gold medal at the All-Soviet competition (*KZ*, 10 January 1989). As history has shown, the idea of combining a planned economy with market mechanisms did not have a happy ending. In the 1990s, SMLK went bankrupt and ceased its industrial activities. Only a few local wood-processing shops still existing at the time survived in the 2000s.

Other institutions were involved in Soviet attempts to enforce labour discipline under conditions of full employment. One of them was the so-called comrades' courts, which had been established to examine violations of labour discipline and hand out penalties to those found guilty.[27] During the first half of 1963, 203 such violations were reported for Sortavala's leading enterprise SMLK. The local authorities also tried to involve the public (*obshchestvennost'*) to discourage irresponsible behaviour by employees. The permanent commission on Socialist Law thus asked the combine's collective to enforce public measures against them:

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27 Interestingly, a similar institution, called 'honour court' (*sud chesti*), was created at the Värtsilä customs house in the post-Soviet years to discipline dishonest officials (*Ladoga*, 3 April 1996).

> The management of the combine should consider measures of public control (*obshchestvennoe vozdeistvie*) for its attempts to strengthen labour discipline. Despite a low labour morale at the enterprise, the comrades' court pronounced guilty only five employees who had shown disrespect for discipline. The management believes that administrative measures are enough to solve the problem. We disagree with this; these measures are not enough (f. R-2203, op. 1. d. 41/967, l. 77).

Numerous other examples offer ample evidence of the gap between everyday reality and the Soviet project of reprogramming human nature and creating NSM. 1965, the comrades' court at the Construction and Assembly Directorate (*Stroitel'no-montazhnoe upravlenie* or SMU) reported 22 cases of petty hooliganism and 697 of labour absenteeism (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 44/1005, l. 4). In January 1970, the town executive committee remarked on the very slow decline of the numbers for labour absenteeism at the local enterprises. In 1968, these had amounted to 406 employees responsible for 955 man-days (*cheloveko-den'*), 216 employees and 455 man-days at SMLK alone (f. R-2203, op. 1, d. 60/1205, l. 75). Official data on the violation of labour discipline are available for the whole period, until the very end of the Soviet era. In 1987, for instance, 898 cases of absenteeism were recorded and the following year 1038 cases. Every fifth employee had failed to report for work at least once a year (*KZ*, 25 January 1989).

Another institution widely used to enforce labour discipline in the 1960s and 1970s were the committees of people's control, part of a semi-governmental organisation established to prevent such acts as theft at the work place. In accordance with the Programme of CPSU In April 1978, for instance, a supernumerary inspector of the town committee of people's control reported thefts at the meat factory and the state enterprise Selkhoztekhnika and a representative of the organisation noted that the management did not pay attention to these acts (*KZ*, 27 April 1978).

The Gorbachev period brought several democratic reforms to the economic sector. In the late 1980s, the local newspaper thus informed about the new phenomenon of electing managers. However, the worsening economic situation after 1987 revealed some of the negative consequences of these reforms, notably the squandering of investments provided by the central state and inefficient management. After further directives from the Central Committee, local enterprises therefore began to experiment with self-financing and electing directors of labour collectives. In the local media, these experiments, particularly at the local electricity company The Electric Network, were the subject of extensive interpretations and comments. In March 1989, the collective of the enterprise, in a move that reminds the early revolutionary years, had decided to organise a general assembly to elect its director on a competitive basis. The election was won by an outsider against the former director, the chief engineer and other candidates. A participant of the meeting was quoted to have said: 'The collective decided that in these new times these leaders are not suitable for leadership at the enterprise, because they talk to employees in the language of orders' (*KZ*, 7 March 1989).

Public reaction to the perestroika was complex and differed widely. Many of the town's—and beyond—the region's citizens perceived it as just another political campaign launched by the central elite, probably because the official discourse used its

catchwords—such as 'acceleration' (*uskorenie*) and 'intensification' (*intensifikatsiia*)—in a similar way. Their constant use in public speeches and debates seemed to have had hardly any impact on the real social and economic situation, as witnessed by the statement quoted hereafter. In June 1986, secretaries of primary party organisations from several Karelian districts met for a seminar-discussion in Sortavala, during which the second secretary of the regional party committee commented on shortcomings in the implementation of the decisions taken by the 27th Congress of the CPSU, particularly in the field of economic reforms:

> The primary party organisations have asked for the increased responsibility of communist administrators in intensifying production. Meanwhile neither Mekhleskhoz [a forestry establishment; A. I.] from Sortavala nor the Department for Public Services and Amenities (*Gorbytupravlenie*) aspire to move forward. Their plans predict too small growth for the production and labour productivity' (*KZ*, 17 June 1986).

This speech can be seen as a typical instance of Soviet methods, here of the Party's management, of socio-economic development by making use of the 'newspeak' of the perestroika. It indicates the continuity of a hierarchical model of decision-making in people's minds. A similar top-down approach was adopted for the introduction of a 'certification of workplaces' (*attestatsiia rabochikh mest*), designed to improve working conditions and labour organisation in enterprises, during the early years of the perestroika.[28] Consequently, many enterprises only reluctantly participated in the scheme. The perestroika's rhetoric of economic reforms frequently had recourse to catchphrases such as 'introducing progressive technologies' and 'advanced forms of labour organisation,' which were used by CPSU regional and local party officials to recommend certain measures for Sortavala's enterprises. In reality, few orthodox communist leaders were interested in radically changing the society or transforming the socio-economic system and few other actors considered these changes to be essential in the local context.

Another catchword of the late 1980s was the 'integrated development programme' (*kompleksnye programmy razvitiia*). Such programmes were elaborated for all administrative levels, from the All-Union to the regional and local. In Sortavala, an integrated development programme for the production of consumer goods and services, the principal local economic sector, for the years 1986–2000 noted the importance of increasing the production of high-quality goods that would be in demand from consumers and of introducing progressive forms and methods for their sale and for services, with the aim of better serving the local population. Better regulation of the business contacts between the trade organisations and the producers were also on the agenda. Finally, it was strongly recommended that a study of the population's demand for consumer goods be carried out (*KZ*, 10 June 1986).

28 Post-Soviet Russia has set up a similar system of certification, carried out through specialised auditing firms. Their services include compliance checks, inspections and monitoring to create indicators for working conditions, ratings of employees and their qualifications, compliance with health and ecological standards, etc.

In fact, articles of general consumption continued to remain scarce in the local as well as the national market, a situation that lasted until the end of the Soviet Union. In retrospect, Gorbachev's economic reforms of replacing traditional forms of labour mobilisation with market mechanisms have not been successful, contrary to his policy of glasnost, which has led to liberalisation and democratisation. Freedom of speech in particular has paved the way for the emergence of a new dominant discourse in the late 1980s.

Gorbachev's perestroika also gave birth to the co-operative movement. In manufacturing and the services sector, thousands of small co-operatives appeared across the country, despite numerous initial bureaucratic hurdles. Initially, their legal status was uncertain, many lacked experience and funds or faced problems with the supply of raw materials. Moreover, the rest of the population often misunderstood the movement and adopted a hostile attitude towards it, although the media drew a rather positive picture of these initiatives. In Sortavala, the local newspaper closely observed the activity of the first co-operatives during this period. On 1 January 1989, thirty co-operatives were registered in the town. Four of them were engaged in various kinds of repair work, three each in fishing, transportation and musical services, and five in mixed activities. Most of them were either involved in repair work and construction (Signal, Azimouth, and Mir) or in transport and production (Agroservice, Tekhnik-2). Seven people had registered as being self-employed. In some case, co-operatives worked together with state enterprises. The local co-operative Vympel, for instance, helped an experimental shop at the sewing factory with trimmings of shirts, kepis and other articles (*KZ*, 10 January 1989). The members of these early co-operatives can well be seen as prototypes of future entrepreneurs.[29]

The hostile attitude of parts of the population towards those who no longer worked for the state is attested for Sortavala, too. It was seen as the main problem by the chairman of the co-operative Tekhnik-2, which had been founded in August 1988 and consisted of five former employees of the town's signal office (GUS — *gorodskoi uzel sviazi*) who specialised in the design, construction, repair of and services for technical objects, such as communication, heating and ventilation equipment:

> The housing administration (*domoupravlenie*) cancelled our rental agreement for the premises we use. We are faced with a completely hostile attitude to our co-operative from local residents, including officials (*KZ*, 14 March 1989).

During the late 1980s, Soviet identity-building was thus in a state of flux, with many ready for changes and many others holding on to the past.

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29 Gorbachev's perestroika had legitimised a new national project that was as much a consequence of Soviet urbanisation and modernisation. In contrast to initial expectations of a socialist society based on a collective consciousness, history created a society of autonomous individuals when a policy of liberalisation and the relatively high level of education increasingly came into conflict with communist rhetoric. Gorbachev's policy of new thinking favoured these new identifications.