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DIGITALNI AKADEMSKI ARHIVI I REPOZITORIJI

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The recent proliferation of grassroots and community-based photographic archives in Eastern Europe poses a challenge to scholarly research. A vast and steadily growing number of photography collections are made available, which hitherto rarely featured in the histories of photography and if they did, it was only under particular conditions. The archives such as Fortepan in Hungary, Karta/Centre of Community Archives in Poland, Azopan in Romania, and Urban Media Archive in Ukraine collect and make available significant assemblages of historical and, to a lesser extent, contemporary photographs from the region. Most of these archives are based on the principles of the digital commons, which means that their collections are broadly accessible not only within their respective countries but also worldwide.[1] This availability of extensive, hitherto unknown photographic material opens up new avenues for historical and social knowledge production, but also, more pertinently here, it allows us to revisit photographic histories of the twentieth century.

The photographs found in these online, community-based archives are very diverse. They are generally regarded as amateur, private, and domestic photographs, although the repositories equally feature collections by professional and semi-professional photographers as well as those previously owned by various institutions.[2] These photographs are either do-

1 This chapter builds on my previous article in which the differences between these archives were analysed more closely. See Ruchel-Stockmans, "Community-Based Photographic Archives and "Potential" Histories of the Cold War in Eastern Europe."

2 A semi-professional photographer is understood here as an amateur who became a salaried or unsalaried photographer at their workplace, producing series of photographs on commission and for public display.

nated by private owners, found on flea markets or contributed by various, usually local, organizations, and as such, they would be discarded by most museums due to their seemingly limited historical, artistic or documentary value. They simply fall outside of the acquisition policies of most of these established institutions. With the emergence of the grassroots and community-based archives, they gradually reveal the full scale of their presence and their potential impact on knowledge production. The contention of this chapter is that these photographic archives can bring important new insights in the understanding of the Eastern European photographic cultures.[3] These archives give a glimpse of the little-known aspects of photography production in the region, especially in the period of the Cold War and the communist regimes installed in Eastern Europe. It will be shown here that in these archives, the line dividing the public and the private in photography is being redrawn. What is operative in the grassroots archives is the *commoning* of photography. Drawing attention to the private and the everyday as it is enmeshed in the public and the state-controlled, the photographic commoning also redresses the imbalance in photography history. The chapter focuses on a set of photographs representing groups of women in public manifestations. The goal is to investigate how the reassembling of grassroots archives yields a new image of a public in which the unruly character of the photographic image allows for small pockets of unpredictability. The photographs of public gatherings are always embedded in the communist ideology, yet they also are sites for small everyday resistances.

EXPANDING THE VERNACULAR

The scholarship on photography history and theory is still limited when it comes to non-artistic and non-professional photography. A few notable exceptions notwithstanding, scholars mostly focused on clearly delineated categories or genres such as family photography and snapshot photography[4] or they zoomed in on larger entities such as family albums allowing them to inscribe individual photographs in a broader context of their making and use.[5] Some resorted to a focus on a singular amateur photographer, especially in cases where a large 'oeuvre' is available.[6] It has been noted repeatedly that this kind of photography does not lend itself easily to scholarly investigation due to its repetitive form and content, seemingly unchangeable conventions and not the least, its abundance.[7] To put it bluntly, until relatively recently it was not clear *how* to deal with such images and, perhaps more perniciously, it was not evident *why* they should be studied at all. The ubiquity and perceived inferiority of these photographs appeared as a barrier to any attempts at ordering or classifying them. The advantage of the focus on the family album, or on one amateur photographer, is that the otherwise unruly mass of images is already divided in manageable entities with the figure of the album 'compiler,' or 'the amateur,' taking the place of the 'artist.' This approach proves less relevant when it comes to the grassroots photographic archives examined here because these archives do not fall neatly into the category of family or snapshot photography. Even if many of their collections stem from the domestic or the private sphere, in the archives they are orphaned, they no longer belong to their original context—for example, a family album—and are no longer subject to what Gillian Rose called the domestic 'doings' of photography.[8] For a large part, the online archives act as what Allan Sekula called a "'clearing house' of meaning."[9] In other words, the photographs they hold are severed from their original contexts and uses. Yet at the same time, it does not mean that "their meanings are up for grabs" as Sekula had it.[10] Rather, they enter new assemblages of photographs stemming from private albums or shoe boxes as well as from small or large institutions, communal archives or chronicles; or from flea markets and garbage bins. Rather than seeing the severing of the original ties as a loss, it can be approached as generative of new meanings. The process in which the new set of meanings is formed will be called here the commoning of photography.[11]

3 The term 'Eastern Europe' is used here in its historical context and refers to the countries which, post-1945, found themselves East from the Iron Curtain. See Schenk, "Eastern Europe."

4 Kuhn, Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination; Rose, *Doing Family Photography. The Domestic, the Public and the Politics of Sentiment*; Batchen, "Snapshots. Art History and the Ethnographic Turn"; Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*; Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*.

5 Sandbye, "Looking at the Family Photo Album: A Resumed Theoretical Discussion of why and how"; Sandbye, "In 1973: Family Photography as Material, Affective History"; Langford, *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums*; Chambers, "Family as Place: Family Photograph Albums and the Domestication of Public and Private Space."

6 Berendt and Barbaruk, *Augustyn Czyżowicz. Taka Była Rzeczywistość...*; Bogumił, "Chłopska Pamięć Wojny Na Przykładzie Fotografii Feliksa Łukowskiego"; Zborowska, "Fotoamator: Piotr Śpiewla (1905-1978)."

7 As Batchen poignantly noted, snapshot photography does not fit into the categories of historical style and development which structure the scholarship in art history Batchen, "Snapshots. Art History and the Ethnographic Turn," 133. On the repetitive and conventional character of snapshot photography see also Bourdieu, Boltanski, and Chamboredon, *Un Art Moyen. Essai Sur Les Usages Sociaux De La Photographie*; Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*.

8 Rose, *Doing Family Photography. The Domestic, the Public and the Politics of Sentiment*, 18-23.

9 Sekula, "Reading an Archive: Photography between Labour and Capital," 445.

10 Ibid., 444.

11 When using the term 'commons' and 'commoning' I build on the scholarship by the economists Elinor Ostrom and Johannes Euler as well as the theorists of visual culture Niclas Mirzoeff, Julian Stallabrass and Ariella Azoulay. The commons refers to shared goods, resources and practices "beyond the enclosed spaces of private and public property." (Quilligan, James B., "Why Distinguish Common

The diverse contexts and genealogies of photography housed in the grassroots archives require a distinct approach. The notion of 'vernacular' photography, although recently criticized as self-contradictory and outdated, might help clarify important aspects of these photographic archives. The vernacular is a term used in different domains, such as linguistics, architecture, literature, or culture in general and if there is anything that connects all those contexts it is the relationality of the concept. Phenomena or forms of cultural production are vernacular in relation to the mainstream or the dominant forms of culture.[12]

The term was introduced in photography scholarship in 2000 by Geoffrey Batchen, who defined it as that which art history rejected from its field of study.[13] Batchen recently argued that the term vernacular should be abandoned since it was not meant to become a "new collecting category."[14] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett concurred that if vernacular photography designated that which was excluded from art historical discourse, it has achieved its goal.[15] There have been numerous exhibitions of domestic and snapshot photography since 2000, and some of its collections entered major art institutions while collectors such as Thomas Walther gave it unprecedented visibility.[16] However, both Batchen and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett implicitly follow an understanding of vernacular photography which is narrowly tied to their own field of operations. Firstly, they see the vernacular as more or less synonymous with family or domestic photography; and secondly, they base their conclusions on the premise that it has been the authority of curators and art historians to bring the private, family and domestic photography into the mainstream and that this process has already taken place. However, this conflation of vernacular photography with family and snapshot photography, as well as the emphasis on the authority of the expert, precludes a broader and expanded notion of the vernacular.

Various other conceptualizations of the vernacular, formulated within photography theory as well as outside of it, might be useful here. In his book *Vernacularies* Clément Chéroux proposed that vernacular photography encompasses all sorts of non-artistic photography, such as industrial, commercial, scientific, military, or police photography.[17] The domestic or family photography is just one articulation of the vernacular, other being diverse utilitarian, functional or instrumental applications of the medium. Obviously, this heterogeneous amalgam of photographic uses makes it challenging for scholars to write any coherent history or theory of vernacular photography. Some characteristics of the vernacular as such, however, can help bring together this diverse assembly of genres and applications. Recent scholarship on the vernacular in other areas of culture such as architecture or popular knowledge production points to the local and peripheral aspects of these phenomena. Vernacular is non-professional out of necessity or choice and relies on what is available and indigenous. It is a culture of make-do in the face of insufficient resources, knowledge, or power.[18] While there are many articulations of that concept which might differ substantially from each other due precisely to the relationality of the term—it depends on what mainstream or dominant form the vernacular is opposed to—in most of these there is a constant trait of bottom-up, emergent and everyday 'solutions.'

The impact of the digital cultures is significant here. In the online grassroots archives, the vernacular no longer designates the collections of photographs which were allowed into the mainstream by the grace of curators and art historians who hand-picked the 'better' and accidentally artistic examples of family photography. Rather, in these archives, photographs are chosen or selected by their users—the non-professional owners or collectors of photographs. The acquisition policies of most of these archives have very few restrictions and it is no longer the verdict of the specialist which endows certain items with the quality of the vernacular.[19] This

Goods from Public Goods?," 80.) See Ostrom, *Governing the Commons. The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action;* Euler, "Conceptualizing the Commons: Moving Beyond the Goods-Based Definition by Introducing the Social Practices of Commoning as Vital Determinant;" Mirzoeff, "The Visual Commons: Counter-Power in Photography from Slavery to Occupy Wall Street;" Stallabrass, "Digital Commons;" Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism.*

12 Ballesta and de Larminat, "Manières De Faire Vernaculaires. Une Introduction"; Chéroux, *Vernaculaires. Essais d'histoire de la photographie,* 13-14; Napiórkowski, Szarecki, Dobrosielski, Filipkowski, and Kaczmarek, "Vernacular Culture: An Anthropology of Failed Endeavours," 14-16.

13 Batchen, "Vernacular Photographies," 262-263. The field of non-professional, amateur and domestic photography has been explored earlier by Bourdieu, Boltanski, and Chamboredon, *Un Art Moyen. Essai Sur Les Usages Sociaux De La Photographie*; Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life,* Mary, *La Photo Sur La Cheminée. Naissance D'un Culte Moderne.*

14 Batchen, "Whither the Vernacular?," 39.

15 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "The Extraordinary Ordinary: Reflections on Vernacular Photography," 304-305.

16 The contributions of Batchen and Kirschenblatt originated from an event organized at the occasion of the exhibition of Thomas Walther's collection of vernacular photographs and were published in the book edited by Campt, Hirsch, Hochberg, and Wallis, *Imagining Everyday Life: Engagements with Vernacular Photography.*

17 Chéroux, *Vernaculaires. Essais D'histoire De La Photographie,* 10-14. See also Chéroux, "Introducing Werner Kühler."

18 Ballesta and de Larminat, "Manières De Faire Vernaculaires. Une Introduction"; Napiórkowski, Szarecki, Dobrosielski, Filipkowski, and Kaczmarek, "Vernacular Culture: An Anthropology of Failed Endeavours,"16.

19 Each of the archives under discussion in this chapter has specific policies of acquisition, but in general they are more inclusive and open to the non-artistic, non-professional and anonymous photography. For example, Fortepan has a small group of editors while KARTA/CAS organizes trainings for local archivists who can then upload photographs to the online repositories independently.

emergent character of the online grassroots archives brings them closer to the cultural phenomena such as those described by Marcin Napiórkowski et al. in that they circumvent—to some extent—the controlling operations of the expert and offset the remoteness of the traditional archive as a place and a building. Napiórkowski et al. describe make-shift and amateurish news channels run by private persons in the virtual space—a phenomenon they interpret as an attempt to deal with the complexity and opacity of contemporary world by means of simple, often simplistic, set of explanations (conspiracy theories, alternative open-source news). In such practices, there is a conscious attempt to circumvent and counter the mainstream television and news media, eschewing the scientific rigor or even the basic rules of common sense. Lumping these practices with the grassroots archives under one category of the vernacular is not always adequate.[20] Yet it has the advantage of emphasizing the bottom-up and relational character of the vernacular. In the grassroots archives, the selection procedures and the rules of access are revised. To a certain extent it can be claimed that the users become archivists—especially when 'ordinary' people can add items to the archive, tag or describe them. All (or almost all) entries in the archives are available to be viewed online and large parts are also free to reuse under a Creative Commons license. In this sense these archives can be aligned with what Ariella Azoulay described as archives that are a "modality of access to the common," which escape what she termed two imperial principles of the archive.[21] First, the archive seems to always already have been established—this is the temporal principle—and, second, it is housed in a separate and secluded place—this is the spatial principle.[22] In the online and grassroots archives, these principles are sidestepped. There are still rules for acquisition and expert knowledge that is utilized, and as a result, the archives inevitably are a site of—newly constituted—power.[23] But the vectors of these knowledge and power relationships are redrawn and as a result, are vigorously more open-ended.

20 For example, Napiorkowski et al. insist on the amateurism of the vernacular practices and stress that the makers are in denial of their amateurism, often superficially imitating the format and appearance of the expert or mainstream news media. The authors are interested in popular practices of alternative knowledge systems which often are obviously wrong, but which have the advantage of simplicity—they purport to explain everything, even incommensurable things, with one theory. Napiórkowski, Szarecki, Dobrosielski, Filipkowski, and Kaczmarek, "Vernacular Culture: An Anthropology of Failed Endeavours," 18-19. The online grass-roots archives have as their goal not so much to counter the operations of the established archives as to salvage privately owned, orphaned, and discarded photographs. The archives are also based on not so much the old and make-shift forms of knowledge, but on the contrary, on the practices and knowledge of digital humanities and digital commons.

21 Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism,* 229-231.

22 Ibid., 230.

23 As Jusi Parikka noted, "the power still resides" in the digital archives." Parikka, *What Is Media Archeology?*, 115.

The contention of this chapter is that the online grassroots archives are not only "free and common"[24] but also, as a result of their bottom-up character, reveal a panorama of photography that is more unruly and that escapes the categories such as family or public photography. While the domestic and the familial is abundantly present in the archives, it is reassembled within a larger panorama of vernacular visual culture. This larger assemblage of photography from the period allows to note the shift in the line dividing the private and the public in photography. Focusing on a selection of photographs pertaining to the May Day celebrations, which was a public and hyper-visible event, will allow to investigate the ways some of the photographs blurred the boundaries between the private and the public. The selected examples are from the 1950s—a decade which, in terms of visual culture, falls somewhat in between the more distinct periods of the post-war and the turbulent 1960s. In the communist era, The First of May or Labour Day was a prominent feast and an emblematic moment of the socialist coercion. Participation in the marches and parades was obligatory, with school children, workers, farmers, and representatives of professions manifestly displaying their support for the party members and the communist system. The event was propagated as an opportunity to demonstrate one's adherence to the communist ideology. It was also a rehearsal in the endless disciplining of the body politic as a perfectly monolithic unity in which individual traits of its members are levelled or made insignificant.

The communist iconosphere[25]—the official repertoire of images from this period—contains countless examples of photographs showing large masses of people forming highly organized parades, featuring numerous symbols on flags, banners and various props. The cover photographs of illustrated magazines from the beginning of May in any year throughout the communist period showed inalterably similar scenes of large and enthusiastic masses marching through the cities or villages of the Eastern Bloc. Some of such photographs are also present in the grassroots archives, although their makers largely remain anonymous, and their particular aim can only be presumed. An example of this is an image from Fortepan stemming from the Jesuit Archives (*Jezsuita Levéltár*) and dating from 1951 showing a parade led by identically dressed young pioneers holding a flag, followed by a row of drum players in dark uniforms and bigger formations of pioneers with large-scale portraits of Stalin, Lenin and the

24 Virágvölgyi, *Every Past Is My Past*, 12.

25 The term 'communist iconosphere' is paraphrased here from Jerzy Turowski who coined the phrase "socrealist iconosphere" to refer to the visual realm of the period. In his view, it is not so much an illusion of reality as an omnipresent element of that reality. Also relevant here are the theory of iconosphere by Mieczysław Porębski as well as the photographic exhibitions under that title organized by Zbigniew Dłubak in the late 1960s in Poland. See Turowski, "Nielinearna mapa uczuć logicznych;" Porębski, *Ikonosfera*.

Hungarian Communist party chief Mátyás Rákosi (Fig. 1). Yet another photograph, donated by Miklós Horváth and dated from 1954, shows a parade consisting of orderly youth formations followed by adults with flags and placards, as seen from a balcony on the Kossuth Lajos Street in Budapest (Fig. 2). These photographs achieve the desired effect of an orchestrated collective body politic known from the top-down iconography and circulated intensively in all official media. Granted, to qualify for a magazine cover, the photographs would need to be cleared of accidental details 'spoiling' the spotless arrangement of the marching crowds. The photograph from 1954 (F. 2), for example, shows a woman standing on the pavement in the lower part of the image and pointing towards the group of school children holding flags in the middle of the street. Clearly, she is talking to one of the children at the moment of a temporary halt. At the bottom of the image, a group of two people are seen standing even closer to the children, apparently uninvolved in the parade. These intrusions in the highly choreographed collective body of the marchers, would probably make these particular photographs less suitable for a magazine cover. Yet their deficiencies are still minor. The overall impression of the photographs remains that of a well-organized arrangement, which was in line with the intended goal of the mass parades.

However, the archives reveal other kinds of photographs from the same celebrations, some of them veering away from the officially propagated visual codes. A number of photographs from 1954 and 1955 show women employees of a soap and oil factory carrying the sign of Noveny Olaj, which in Hungarian means "vegetable oil" (Fig. 3). Conforming to the conventions of the 1st of May parade, they wear uniformly white aprons and form an orderly row. Each woman carries a large cut-out letter, which, when shown from appropriate distance, form the name "Noveny Olaj." Not much is known about the context of this image or the identity of the photographer, but considering the standpoint from the distance and the moment photographed during the festive parade, it can be assumed he or she took on the role of a chronicler rather than a family member photographing a relative.[26] There are more similar photographs, of which it is known they were made by the factory photographer János Keveházi.[27] Fitting into the prescribed practice of factory chronicles, this soap and oil factory documented its own history by means of photographs from significant moments and collective achievements and festivities. Most of the photographs taken during the 1st of May parades conformed to the prescribed and accepted visual conventions, that is, they showed well-orchestrated collective body of the factory employees. On a smaller scale of the factory, they repeat the desired, top-down image of one, uniform body

26 In the Fortepan archival record, this photograph has no donor—it means it has been found or salvaged by Fortepan editors and the prior owners are unknown.

27 Kolozsi, "Soap Factory Compositions. Amateur Photography Relating the Life of an Industrial Plant in the Fifties."

collective.[28] Yet there is one photograph which complicates that typology: the image from 1955 (Fig. 4) shows a portrait-like close up of two women, made probably after the official part of the parade. One of the women is still carrying the letter O, yet she holds it somewhat higher than she would normally do during the parade. As a result, the oval shape of the letter forms a frame for her face, her gaze directed intently at the camera. When the women are shown all together, each holding one letter, they collectively form the sign of the factory. A single letter becomes meaningless. Instead, it transforms in a frame and the photograph becomes a more personal portrait. In the collective photographs, the forcibly installed unity of the body politic requires an erasure of the individual. Through the gesture of holding the "O" letter as a frame for her face, the woman in the double portrait steps out of the collective and prescribed image and claims a space and a visibility for her individual being.

The photographs from the Fortepan archive find their counterparts in the other grassroots archives from the region. The Urban Media Archive, housed in the Lviv Urban History Center in Ukraine, preserves a number of photographs from the 1950s showing groups of people during the May 1st parade, although the context of these celebrations is not always apparent in the image itself. The photograph from 1954 entitled "1st May Festival" (Fig. 5) shows a group of five young people posing arm in arm on a busy square. The man in the middle stands on one leg and holds his hands in front of him, perhaps in a gesture of clapping. The two pairs of women on his sides smile towards the camera. Notably, two women on the left wear quasi-identical dark coats and berets, which might indicate that they are sisters or close friends. The booth on the right in the back with the signboard "Fruits" (фрукти) seems closed and it is likely that the photograph is taken during a holiday. Little is known about the people shown here, the photographer or the context of the image, and it would be difficult to recognize this image as made during the 1st of May without the title. However, some clues can be found in other photographs belonging to the same collection by Volodymyr Rumyantsev, a collector who found them in flea markets.[29] Another photograph from 1954 entitled "1st May Demonstration" (Fig. 6) shows a larger crowd on the main square of Lviv. In the background, the typical décor of the May 1st celebrations is visible, such as banners and large portraits of leaders. But the main focus of the photograph is again a group of people in the forefront. These are the same five people as on the previous photograph, with two more men joining the group. They again stand in a row, their arms interlocked and

28 Unlike the "living photographs" of the collective body made in America (as analyzed by Kaplan, *American Exposures. Photography and Community in the Twentieth Century*, 1-26) these choreographed images meant not so much a willing participation in a political idea, but rather, were based on coercion and indoctrination.

29 Anastasiya Kholyavka, archivist of the Urban Media Archive, personal communication, 07/10/2022.

cheerfully gazing towards the camera. The figure in the center—who is the same man as in the previous photograph—claps his hands even more vigorously than in the first photograph and two women on his both sides, the ones who are identically dressed, extend their right foot forward in a synchronized manner. The exact knowledge of people and the relationships between them is lost, but it can be presumed they knew each other well. The inscription on the back of the first photograph states: "III course LPC" (III курс лпц). It could be speculated that they were students and/or instructors in a course who attended the celebrations of May 1st together. It is possible that also these photographs were initially made for a chronicle, like in the case of the Fortepan photographs, but this time not so much for a factory as for a school or a course, even if the naturalness and intimacy felt between the people shown here would rather indicate that the purpose was more private. They were probably taken after the official celebrations ended and people lingered around the central city square. There is a sense of conviviality and gaiety in these snapshots which belies the rigid conventions of the official May 1st photography. While the participation in the celebrations was compulsory and usually entailed being submitted to pre-designed and ideologically laden mass choreographies, it transpires from these photographs that people found their way to adapt that occasion for their own, small-scale moments of sociability and amusement. Another photograph from the archive entitled "Group of Women on a Street" and located in Kyiv in 1956, shows five women posing in front of a building (Fig. 7). The woman on the left holds a balloon. They all similarly smile and gaze into the camera, apart from the second woman on the left, who directs her gaze somewhere outside of the frame. This photograph was contributed by Konstiantyn Doroshenko, who also provided a commentary and identified most of the women by name. According to his account, Maiia Smirnova, who is second on the left, was a clothes designer who designed the outfits of her sister and her mother (in the center and second on the right). In the period marked by dull uniforms and mass-produced clothes, these women in tailored clothes were considered the most elegantly dressed in Kyiv. The photograph is also tagged with three terms: woman, fashion and dress. Distinctly, the context of the May 1st celebrations, mentioned in the description by Konstiantyn Doroshenko, did not surface in the tags. It might have created the opportunity to make this group photograph, but the only trace of it is the balloon held by Maiia Smirnova and the festive clothes worn by the women. The official celebration became an occasion to meet and show off one's best, tailor-made clothes. This minor interference in the intended goal of the May 1st manifestations opened a small space of resistance to the imposed and ideologically determined codes and conventions.

The Karta Centre in Poland, recently extended with the establishment of the Centre of Community Archives (CAS, Centrum Archiwistyki Społecznej) assembles many local archiving projects including village and town libraries. One such local initiative which features in the online archive is located in Lower Silesia, southwest of Poland, in the town called Szczytna. The photograph from this locality shows a group of women, again during the celebrations of the May 1st in the 1950s (Fig. 8). There is a snapshot quality to this photograph, with the woman on the right having her head severed by the picture frame. Yet the five women in the middle are clearly posing for the photograph, four of them gazing into the camera. They stand on what seems to be an open field while a parade of marchers with flags and banners is seen marching down a street in the distance. The women, however, turn away from the crowd visible behind them in order to have the photograph taken, although soon after they will probably join the rest of the people gathered in the field to assist the parade. This group of women use this opportunity to pose for one of the sporadic photographs they could have. As the owner of the photograph and contributor to the grassroots archive Janina Artemiak explains, the photograph could have been taken by the local photographer Mr. Glebiec.[30] Hardly anybody owned a camera at that time and photographs were usually taken during a larger event, when people gathered in public spaces. The celebration of the May 1st clearly was one of such occasions, next to religious celebrations such as the 1st Communion or the procession of Corpus Christi. Other photographs contributed by Janina Artemiak show just such events. These photographs were kept in a family album, but they also belong to the history of the larger community. The local photographer could have sold prints of this photograph to several of the women, which would result in their family albums partly containing identical photographs.[31] At this stage, only the woman on the right could have been identified. She is Wanda Artemiak, the mother-in-low of the photograph's current owner Janina Artemiak. Wanda Artemiak was a schoolteacher and a prominent figure in the town.

Although the names of the other women remain unknown, one could imagine some of them were members of the Women's League, recorded on another photograph from Szczytna (Fig. 9). This photograph is not related to the May Day celebration, but it allows to build a broader context for the group portrait. The photograph is taken indoors and shows a group of women seated at a long table. They look in the direction of the camera and raise a glass in a gesture of celebration. The table is filled with bottles and glasses of varied sizes. Unlike another image from the Szczytna town chronicle documenting an indoor Women's Day celebrations, which shows mostly men and only a few women,[32] this photograph displays an

30 Interview with Janina Artemiak.

31 A similar phenomenon has been observed by Tamara West with respect to photography made in the camps for displaced people in the period after the Second World War up to the 1950s in Germany. Photography was produced by designated photographers who would sell prints to the inhabitants. As a result, their family albums partly contained identical photographs. West, "Remembering Displacement: Photography and the Interactive Spaces of Memory,"179.

32 This photograph does not feature in the online archives of CAS.

apparently women-only event. The Women's League was established at the glass factory, which was the most important employer in the region. It was a socially oriented organization aimed at mutual support and convivial gatherings. Women constituted a significant part of the factory' employees, even if the profession of the glassworker might seem an unlikely choice for them.[33] Another photograph from the city chronicle shows a classroom in the glasswork school in Szczytna which is populated by women only,[34] The large presence of women in the factory must have been the reason for the establishment of the Women's League. In the account of the former factory workers Janina Artemiak and Feliks Tobiasz it functioned as a sounding board and a solidarity platform for its members.[35] Manifestly, the organization was part of the concerted effort on the side of the communist authorities to organize and control the complete lives of its country's citizens, including their free time.[36] It was part of the policy aimed at the wide-ranging formation of people, which would assure their acceptance of the imposed communist system and the internalization of its rules.[37] The factory or work-place organizations such as a Women's League, theatre workshops, a choir, an orchestra—all of which existed in Szczytna's glass factory and in many other workplaces—were primarily aimed at achieving this ideological and formative goal. The employees also saw these initiatives as such and comprehended the ideological effects and implications of their operations.[38] The interviewee and former glassworker Feliks Tobiasz jokingly recalled that a prominent factory official—who was a man—was also made member of the Women's League, rendering the organization's rationale somewhat less consistent. Yet both Tobiasz and Janina Artemiak agreed that these organizations were experienced as relevant for the workers, allowing them to get together, provide mutual support and build social bonds beyond the family. The photograph of the Women's League gathering not only attests to the moment of conviviality in a public space, but is also formative in the creation of that conviviality. Seen together with the group portrait of women during the May 1st parade, it enacts the sociability of women on the margins of the official, orchestrated events in the public sphere.

Kronika miasta i gminy Szczytna (handwritten chronicle of the city and county of Szczytna), unpaginated.

33 According to my interviewees Janina Artemiak and Feliks Tobiasz the work in the glass factory was physically demanding and required processing harmful materials. Interview with Janina Artemiak and Feliks Tobiasz.

34 *Kronika miasta i gminy Szczytna* (handwritten chronicle of the city and county of Szczytna), unpaginated.

35 Interview with Janina Artemiak and Feliks Tobiasz.

36 Leszczyński, *Ludowa Historia Polski,* 517; Salwiński, *Mój Drugi Dom? Huta Im. Lenina,* 12-13.

37 Leszczyński, *Ludowa Historia Polski,* 517.

38 Interview with Feliks Tobiasz.

As this small sample of photographs from the grassroots archives demonstrates, comparable snapshots taken during the May 1st celebrations could belong to a family album, a factory chronicle, a school or other state-managed institution. Many of the photographs collected in these archives are severed from their original context and their genealogy leads only to a flea market or a garbage bin, yet they too 'find' another context by entering the larger assemblage of photographs from the same period and place. This is the first aspect of what has been called here the commoning of photography. The second aspect pertains to what the assembling of the vernacular photographs brings about. The photographs discussed here emerged from the spaces of the workplace and the state-organized public manifestation, yet they also easily cross the boundaries between the public and the private sphere. A photograph which was taken by a local or a factory photographer at the occasion of the official May 1st parade could have been included in the family albums of people featuring in the pictures. At some instances, private people could salvage photography collections which belonged to a factory but were destined for the garbage after its closing and dismantling. This was the case with a photograph of the local orchestra in Szczytna, which was found by Janina Artemiak. After recognizing a family member in the photograph, she kept it and included it in her family album. She also offered it to be entered in the online grassroots archive. As a result, photography made in what Chéroux called the utilitarian context,[39]—which in this case is the chronicling of the factory life and documenting the state-orchestrated public manifestations of ideological commitment—traveled to the domestic sphere and from there to the public forum of the grassroots archives.

It has been noted that domestic photography, although seemingly incontrollable because remaining in the hands of amateurs or local studio photographers, generally keeps to rigid conventions and inalterable codes. Showing only happy moments, it expresses the collective idea of a home and a family. While there was no space in this chapter to investigate family photography from the period of the 1950s extensively, some of the examples mentioned here belong to that category. The conventionality of family photography ties in with the idea that the home reproduces the power structures from the outside, notably those imposed by the state.[40] The state-sanctioned photography of public events, on the other hand—whether it be professional magazine illustration or its imitation by local factory photographers—was highly codified as it aimed at enacting the sanctioned ideological commitments and repeating the existing power structures. In its localized version—such as a factory or a town chronicle—it repeated

39 Chéroux, *Vernaculaires. Essais D'histoire De La Photographie*, 13.

40 West, "The 3rd May, a Photograph: Identities of and Beyond Displacement," 365; Blunt and Dowling, *Home*, 142.

the imposed visual discourse, in keeping with the idea of a factory as a transmitter of the ideological positions propagated by the state.

As the photographs in the grassroots archives roam free in the space of the archive, they no longer directly speak of their original contexts—whether the public representation, factory history or family memory. Instead, they form new assemblages in which group portraits or occasional gatherings fall outside of the rigid rules governing photographic practices tied to the home, the factory and the state. Instead, they generate minor spaces of resistance to these rules. The archives thus open a new and unexplored arena of photographic histories which cannot be enclosed in the categories of the domestic or the public—but which instead forge a new photographic commons.

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2. Budapest, Kossuth Lajos street looking towards Ferenciek Square (Liberation Square). 1954, Fortepan/Horváth Miklós dr.
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