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# **REMEMBERING CHURCHES**

Russian Orthodox churches and people  
through times of change

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**REMEMBERING CHURCHES**  
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## **Remembering Churches: Russian Orthodox Churches and People through Times of Change**

### **ABSTRACT**

The relationship between Russian Orthodox churches and the Russian people in the times of socio-political transformation of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and later, appears as changing. However, very little is known about how people think and feel about the churches today, and about their memories of these buildings when they are not being used as churches. The thesis aims at exploring and discussing this relationship, and thus deepen our understanding, starting out from nine semi-structured interviews with Russians and the theoretical concepts of social memory, memory places, remembering and forgetting, etc. The thoughts and memories of the nine interviewees are about religion over time and about the relationship between the Orthodox Church and the state power. Furthermore, they are about the interviewees' connection to the various church buildings: these non-functioning and derelict churches during the Soviet times, as well as the functioning churches. The places of the destroyed churches also appear as important in the informants' stories, as well as the new churches, built after the fall of the Soviet Union. Finally, the Orthodox Church's roll in the contemporaneity is examined. The conclusions are that the Orthodox Church and church buildings are an important element in the society's dealing with the past, in light of the changes that have happened in the Russian society over the last 100 years. Now the old church buildings are perceived both as heritage and as sacral buildings with their rituals; people often relate to the buildings in emotional way through their materiality. Even places for the vanished church buildings are significant as reminders of discontinuity. The ethical dimension is important when dealing with the past; and when turning to the past in the society, a new identity is created, not an old one.

**Keywords:** Orthodox church buildings, Russian society, remembering, forgetting, new identity

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# Contents

1	Introduction.....	9
1.1	Background.....	9
1.2	Problem formulating.....	10
1.3	Aim and research questions .....	10
1.4	Theoretical framework .....	10
1.4.1	Memory and its character .....	11
1.4.2	Metamorphosis of memory; memory and modernity.....	12
1.4.3	Memory places and sacred places.....	13
1.4.4	Memory and identity; memory as a creative act.....	14
1.4.5	Remembering and forgetting; “forced forgetting”.....	15
1.5	Methodology and delimitations.....	16
1.5.1	Case study as a strategy and its development.....	16
1.5.2	Interviews.....	18
1.5.3	Other sources.....	19
1.5.4	Sampling and entering the field.....	19
1.5.5	Ethics and limitations.....	19
1.6	Previous research.....	20
2	The Orthodox Church building and services.....	24
2.1	The Divine Liturgy.....	25
2.1.1	Participant observation.....	27
2.2	Other Church services and ritualistic habits.....	27
3	Historical overview since the Revolution of 1917.....	29
3.1	Nizhny Tagil – the historical reference.....	33
3.1.1	The churches.....	34
4	Memories about religion.....	36
4.1	Arbitrariness.....	36
4.2	Rejection and indifference.....	37
4.3	Remaining habits and beliefs.....	40
4.4	Interest in religion and widespread baptism.....	41
4.5	The priests: more and visible.....	43
5	Memories about religious buildings.....	44
5.1	Derelict churches .....	44
5.2	Disappeared churches.....	50
5.2.1	Meaningfulness.....	52
5.3	Churches that have functioned.....	54
5.4	New churches.....	56
6	The Orthodox religion and churches in contemporaneity.....	59
6.1	The ethical dimension.....	59
6.2	Break of traditions and conservatism.....	62
6.3	The habit of going to church and formalism.....	63
6.4	The future.....	67
7	Discussion and conclusions.....	68
7.1	“Forced forgetting”; the sense of interruption.....	68
7.2	The ritual of remembering; churches as sacred places.....	70
7.3	Collective memory as a creative act.....	72
7.4	Conclusions.....	73

8 Sammanfattning på svenska.....	75
9 References.....	79
9.1 Non-printed sources.....	79
9.1.1 Oral sources.....	79
9.1.2 Archive .....	79
9.1.3 Electronic source.....	79
9.2 Printed sources and literature .....	79
9.3 Images.....	83
Appendices.....	I
APPX. I. Interview questions .....	I
APPX. II. Nizhny Tagil and surroundings – churches mentioned in the thesis.....	II
APPX. III. Transformation of the church place.....	III

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

This essay is mainly the result of communication with people, and therefore is much about people. Over the past 100 years, Russian society has gone through significant socio-political transformations, which not least affected the Russian Orthodox Church, its buildings, and the Russian peoples' relationship with them. It is also the result of my interest in how memories are created and how they affect us through heritage. Undoubtedly, there is something special about going back into our own past, and in what way it appears in our consciousness.

I grew up in Nizhny Tagil, Russia, during the late Soviet times. I remember – when I was a schoolchild, my family used to spend around one week of the summer (that was a part of the vacation) at some kind of recreation centre in the countryside, in the forest near the big and oblong city pond which also continued outside the city. The pond was a result of a historical dam blocked Tagil river in the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the Nizhny Tagil iron plant was grounded - and the pond followed the former river's bed. Our family would take ferry, and the quay was in the centre of the city. The journey was highly expected, it was a big adventure for me. I was also interested in boats as such; and watched with interest, during our waiting on the quay, as a little city ferry shuttled to the other side of the pond and peeked towards the pier, visible in the distance (however our distance expected to be much longer than that). I remember it was something dark, as a gangway, where the ferry docked (probably, the opposite side of the pond was shaded). Now I know that there must have been a big church building on top of the hill highly visible, just above the dock place. But I do not remember the church, despite repeated attempts. I know – the church was present there, as well as it is present now. But I do not remember it from the Soviet times – even though I used to see it. It is like it did not exist, or like it was invisible – as a black hole of some kind.

From the time of perestroika, memories about that church are maybe the first that come to my mind. In that time of growing interest in religion, the materiality of the church becomes important and meaningful – it seems like it emerges on the surface of consciousness.

## **1.2 Problem formulating**

Generally speaking, the field of research to which this study belongs concerns relationships between church buildings and people. My study is delimited to the particular case of Russia: a society that has gone through fundamental transformations during the last 100 years. The transformations were, among other things, about the break with and the reconstruction of religion.

Very little is known about how religious practitioners in Russia think and feel about the churches today and about their own memories of these buildings from the period when they were not churches.

My idea, that needs to be more thoroughly delved into, is that in the era of “forced forgetting” church buildings, even the disappeared ones, were perceived/functioned as *vehicles of memory* from another age. They seemed to have worked as memory places.

## **1.3 Aim and research questions**

The aim of this thesis is to deepen our understanding of how today's Russians relate, - and display/explore their relationship to historic church buildings.

So I formulated my research questions as follows:

The main question:

- How do people depict their relationship with historic church buildings today, in terms of remembrance, memory, forgetting?

Sub-questions:

- What are their thoughts about the “re-adoption” of the churches as sacred buildings?
- Finally, what are their memories of the churches from the Soviet era?

## **1.4 Theoretical framework**

In this section, I will set the theoretical frames of the study by referring mainly to five memory theorists, historians and philosophers: Barbara Mizstal, Richard Terdiman, Pierre Nora, Marshall Berman and Bart Verschaffel. I will begin with an introductory summary of the main theoretical concepts, and then, in the theoretical part, go on with more detailed explanations.

The concepts I use when analyzing my empirical data are connected to the *memory* notion. Most important is *collective* or *social memory*, a sum total differing from the simple assembly of the individual memories of the society members. The collective memory often appears as a tool for searching meaningfulness and providing connectivity of times. Such a character of our times memory is said to be a result of *modernity's* experience, which implies a sense of “torn time” as a result of an interruption in the progressive development. A materialized memory, or *memory places*, is now mediator in our times’ remembering (both individual and social). Therefore it has an indirect character. A memory place provides an emotional way in the remembering process, by its materiality, which awakens emotions through our senses. *Sacred* (religious) places are the chain of memory not only by their age, but also by *repetitiveness* of the rituals that take place and that bring us to the other time, before modernity. *Repetitiveness* is also an archaic way to memorize, where the oral memory is the only mode. The modern remembering process, on the other hand, is characterized by *creativity* in building our (individual and social) *identity*, which requires not only remembering, but also *forgetting*. “*Forced forgetting*”, initiated by the less democratic regimes deliberately, includes the destroying of those memory places that interfere with the creation of a desired past.

#### **1.4.1 Memory and its character**

What does it mean to remember and how can we define memory? What role does remembering play in our lives? In this thesis, I have been inspired by sociologist Barbara Misztal and her work *Theories of Social Remembering* (Misztal 2003). She describes memory as an ability to remember but also, in a sociological perspective, as “representations of the past which involve emotions and reconstructions of past experiences in such a way as to make them meaningful in the present” (Schacter 1996, Prager 1998; in: Misztal 2003, p. 160).

According to Misztal, we organize the past through memorizing as a *narrative*. Hence, memorizing is dependent on social limitations (Misztal 2003, p. 10). Memory as a narrative appears as simplified; when the past is transformed into a story, memories are selected, redesigned and repeated both on the social and individual levels. Remembering can also be influenced by dominant discourses and therefore be used politically (ibid., p. 12).

The notion of *collective* or *social* memory is connected to the *narrativity* of memory, and can be defined in the following way: the collective memory of a group is “quite different from the sum

total of the personal recollections of its various individual members, as it includes only those that are *commonly shared* by all of them” (Zerubavel 1997, in: Misztal 2003, p. 11).

Furthermore, collective memory implies not only real memories, as a result of people's own experience, it also includes a constructed past which is essential for its collectivity (ibid., p. 13).

Our need for meaning, or, in other words, for being incorporated into something that transfigures individual existence, grants enormous importance to collective memory since it 'establishes an image of the world so compelling as to render meaningful its deepest perplexities' (Schwartz 2000:17). In this way, collective memory not only reflects the past but also shapes present reality by providing peoples with understandings and symbolic frameworks that enable them to make sense of the world (ibid).

In the quotation above, an essential feature of the collective memory is pointed out: the ability to provide meaningfulness in our lives, to contextualize, and even to explain the past, often in a symbolical way – in the present and for the present.

Here I have discussed the collective, or social, memory and its character: narrativized, simplified, and also constructed, often with a political purpose. The conclusion can be drawn that its character places our lives under its power, whether we want it or not, knowingly or unknowingly – by its narrative character. The collective memory forms not only past but also present, by explaining our world for ourselves and making sense of our existence. In the next theoretical sections, I will develop these notions.

#### ***1.4.2 Metamorphosis of memory; memory and modernity***

According to Misztal, memorizing as such has undergone a transformation from the ancient times to nowadays: from the archaic oral memory, with its importance of repetition (Misztal 2003, p. 33) via successive and increasing dominance of the written memory to the nowadays memory, expressed in “the epidemic of commemoration and a passion for heritage” (ibid., p.46). The last is also characterized by amnesia, as an essential part of it (ibid).

As French historian Pierre Nora defines it, the metamorphosis of memory can be described as a change from what he calls the *real memory* of ancient times to the present day memory, or *history*. The first is “integrated, dictatorial [...] a memory without a past that ceaselessly reinvent tradition”.

The last can be described as selected material remains, traces of the past (Nora 1989, p. 8).

American researcher Richard Terdiman writes about the crisis of memory in the times of modernity - the period of time, which started after, and also was a result of the French Revolution (Terdiman 1993, p. 3). The crisis of memory is often defined by a special sense of time - that the world has changed (ibid., p. 5). Or as he puts it - "the abyss in time was widely perceived" (ibid., p. 4).

American philosopher Marshall Berman describes the experience of modernity in his famous book:

...it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. To be modern is to be a part of the universe in which, as Marx said, 'all that is solid melts into air' (Berman 1983, p. 15).

The modern world is experienced as highly mutable, and there is a request for something stable, where our mind needs to be anchored. Then, since the past seems out of touch, it is a constant object of our thoughts, according to Terdiman (1993, p. 23). The modern crisis of memory means a continuous call for the past, and reference to the past, where an anchor is searched to the present.

### *1.4.3 Memory places and sacred places*

According to Misztal, architectural monuments and landscapes are a part in the interactivity of the social memory process, by involving our senses: remembering "occurs in the world of things" (Misztal 2003, p. 16).

Nora calls *memory places* "the boundary stones of another age, illusions of eternity" - and points out their role as mediators of memory about the past in the present (Nora 1989, p. 12). The material remains can be called the anchors thrown from the past to the present (or conversely).

Besides the understanding of memory places in modernity, it is worth mentioning sacred places as something that is not a product of our times (modernity). Architecture theorist Bart Verschaffel defines a sacred place as something that is a part of our world but separate and isolated (Verschaffel 2012, p. 50). Sacred places are not ordinary places but we must have some relation to them in our world. Furthermore, "the experience of the sacred is not so much about meaning as it is about

behavior” (ibid.): this experience is obtained more through formal actions than a process of comprehension.

The temple is one type of sacred places, its mediation is *centripetal* - all aspirations are towards the one center. Its time mode is *repetition* - the mediation occurs via religious rituals, ”bringing the world of men back to its Beginnings in Another Time” (ibid., p. 52).

According to the author, sacred places are actually all spaces of archaic type, charged with multiple meanings (ibid., p. 51). The places' sacrality is their lasting in time, which fills them with meaning and value. The author recalls Austrian theorist Alois Riegl and his *age value* (according to Vershaffel, “sense for *Altheitswert*”) in relation to his reasoning on sacred places (ibid., p.55). Riegl connected through his *age value* to emotions directly, ”through sensory (visual) perception” (Riegl 1996 [1926], p. 75).

Meanwhile, the Christian church as a sacred place differs from other sacred places: “... churches are sanctified through devotional rituals, the performance of the sacraments *and* especially because they connect worship to the presence of relics” (Verschaffel 2012, p. 54). The author refers to Catholic churches. But Orthodox churches also suit this description: the Orthodox Christianity has similar understanding of the church space.

To conclude, I have pointed out how different scholars refer to material places (in particular, architectural monuments) as mediators of memory (in particular, because of their visibility) – and sacred places as an interpretation of memory places, when lasting in time fills them with sacred meaning. Furthermore, religious (especially Christian) places as memory places differ from other sacred places not only because of their time mode - repetitive rituals but - also by the performance of sacraments and presence of relics, which fill them with sacrality of another kind, so to speak, more comprehended.

#### ***1.4.4 Memory and identity; memory as a creative act***

As Misztal points out, memory and identity are closely connected (Misztal 2003, p. 1).

In connection to our times' obsession with memory it is suitable to name this connection, because the notion of identity is a key concept of the contemporary society (ibid., p. 132). Memory is now a



tool for legitimatizing identity. Moreover, memory defines identity: "I am what I remember" (Locke [1690] 1975, in: *ibid.* p. 133).

Furthermore, memory and identity are in reciprocal connection: what one remembers depends on the particular identity of the person. And, the idea about identity, grounded on durability of the subject through time, is the old one (*ibid.*).

As mentioned above, in the collective memory-section (Misztal 2003, p. 11), and as also Benton formulates it, this connection can be explained by the fact that memories always interpret experiences selectively, so their task is to encode experience that partly includes the process of "making sense of the experience" (Benton 2010, p. 10). The phrase "I am what I remember" is actually a self-creating identity-activity – or created of someone/something else.

Heritage objects, according to American historian David Lowenthal, are prepared "icons of identity" e.g. sentimentalized and romanticized interpretations of the past, "closely connected with our need for a sense of the past, belonging and identity, and therefore can also be seen as a *creative act*, one in which we learn from each other's efforts and experiences" (Lowenthal 1994, in: Misztal 2003, p. 135, my emphasis). This *creativity* can also be seen in the narrative character of memory which was mentioned above.

In this section, I have pointed out that the reciprocal connection memory-identity appears as a self-creating identity-activity. To conclude, this *creativity* process (read: creating of myths) is essential for our times.

#### ***1.4.5 Remembering and forgetting; "forced forgetting"***

Misztal also lifts memory processes when they take more official forms in the times of modernity (and heritage is only one of them). As the nation "requires a usable past [...] their memories are created in tandem with forgetting". Since the (social) memory has a narrative nature, certain parts must always be removed – just as a story (Misztal 2003, p. 17).

Misztal also claims (after other authors) - that forgetting can, even better than remembering, characterize how we relate to our national past, and "established nations depend for their continued

existence upon a collective amnesia” (ibid.). In less democratic countries, the process of forgetting can take more deliberate forms. ”Forced forgetting ... was of particular importance in communist countries, where people understood that 'the struggle against power is the struggle against forgetting” (Kundera 1980, in: ibid., p. 18). Moreover, the eradication of memory had material embodiment: places of memory (e.g. churches and other monuments recalling the old regime) were deliberately destroyed (ibid., p. 18).

Misztal also names the roll of education and mass-media: ”Where the state controls the educational and media system, collective memory is fragmented, full of 'black holes', dominated by ideological values and used to produce legitimacy for the ruling élite.” It can be especially characteristic for less democratic countries. An *informal* memory, such as jokes, double-speak, anecdotes etc. - takes place in such black holes (ibid., p. 20).

The effects of “forced forgetting” may be various, but could result in amnesia, indifference to the past and susceptibility to propaganda and utopian constructions. ”The lack of interest *in* the past and the lack of knowledge *of* the past tend to be accompanied by authoritarianism and utopian thinking, and 'the root of oppression is loss of memory' (Gunn Allen 1999:589)” (Misztal 2003, pp. 14-15).

I have discussed the notion of forgetting, as an essential feature of the narrativized memory. Furthermore, “forced forgetting” appears as a deliberate activity, which also expressed in destruction of unwanted material monuments of the past. Black holes in both individual and collective memory can be characterized as a result of state controlling of mass-media, education etc.

## **1.5 Methodology and delimitations**

### ***1.5.1 Case study as a strategy and its development***

This study follows partly the inductive, partly the deductive logic. As an inductive study, it is explorative (explores “the key issues” in the particular case, i.e. issues of importance). As a deductive study, it explains and illustrates the theoretical concepts that are presented in the theoretical part (Denscombe 2010, p. 55).

A case study as a research strategy usually focuses on relations and processes (within one case)

rather than results, and tends therefore to be "*holistic*" (ibid., p. 53). By this, it requires usage of different sources and different methods (ibid., p. 54). In the discovery led, the case study approach is often used "in relation to the discovery of information" when following the inductive logic (ibid., p. 55). By this way, it might to be a beginning for a new bigger research, or possibilities of that, because I suppose that my field of research is rather uncharted.

My initial intention was to take one church building and do interviews with few people about their relations to the church. I also wanted to participate in the church services myself, and to do observations; I wanted to seek archive material about that church, and other available information. The interviewees were intended to be of the (more or less) similar kind: elderly women, who grew up in the Soviet Union, with non-religious parents, and who now are religious, and attend the church services. The idea behind this was to investigate how relationship with religion and religious buildings can change over time of the sociopolitical transformation (which I myself partly observed). This also can be interesting in relation to the present time, when this relationship is still changing, in connection to the social processes in the world, and how the Christian built heritage might affect and be affected.

The homogeneity (of the interviewees) could help, I supposed, to generalize from the small case and draw conclusions about the "relationships" between people and (religious) buildings as such. The case study aim is "to illuminate the general by looking at the particular" (ibid., p. 53).

In fact, my plan was unrealistic: above all, the selection of interviewees was impossible to do – mainly because of lack of time to establish the necessary relations. That kind of relations is not easy to establish, since my questions touch on rather private issues – religious practice in the present, and memories about the not always easy past. So I decided to approach people who, although I do not know them well, are acquainted with me or with my family in Russia, but carry out the interviews according to my interview guide.

It so happened that all the interviewees are women. As I am myself a woman, it may have seemed easier to have a confidential communication with women. The majority of my informants are elderly women who have some relation to the Russian Orthodox Church. Although not all of the informants are actively religious – some of them have that kind of connection to the Church that can

be compared with what in the West is called “cultural Christian” (see e.g. in *Charisma News*).

Furthermore, I realized that to not concentrate on the one particular building but instead analyze connections to different buildings that my informants have, could give more complete and varied answers to the research questions. In such a case, the church buildings are considered so to speak more generally, as a (social) phenomenon.

The data obtained as mentioned above can give unexpected angles and show some ways that were not imagined before. For example, people's connection to places where there *used* to be a church: What meaning do these **places have**, and what meaning did the *disappearance* of the church have in the past? How are these meanings reflected in the contemporary discourse? And the church buildings that were not torn down - in what ways do their meanings appear?

My case consists of the informants' memories and experiences about religion, related to Orthodox church buildings – and is limited by the definite area (Nizhny Tagil and surroundings).

Holme & Solvang (2010, p. 95) write about “prior understanding” as an “objectively' given starting point” (“objektivt' given utgangspunkt”) in a qualitative study process. They also remark that the research process as such, and the results, appear in constant interaction between theory and empiricism, between scientists and investigated people (ibid., p. 98).

This means that even my research question might be corrected even as the research process has been going on for a while. The starting point is the researcher in relation to the object of the study.

To conclude, my study is based on interviews with Russian people, concerning memories of religion and religious buildings. The gathered information becomes a subject of analysis/interpretation using the theoretical concepts.

### **1.5.2 Interviews**

As mentioned above, to do a case study means to do a holistic research, and entails “multiple sources and multiple methods” (Denscombe 2010, p. 54). Interviews are only one of these, but in my research a main source. The others are complementary.

My interview guide has contained approximate questions, sorted by themes. The interviews have been of varying structuring degrees, some almost unstructured, others - more structured. The character of the interview is defined by the interviewee's personality, and I have adapted to the situation. This approach can be explained by the complexity of the subject, when you cannot predict in the beginning what result you can get. The interviews have been recorded (7 of 9), transcribed and coded according to the themes.

### *1.5.3 Other sources*

The other sources in my case study have been complementary, as mentioned above. I have participated in the Sunday mass in the Alexander Nevsky church in order to observe how people relate to and use the church building, and to understand through own interaction. I have taken pictures inside the church during the service, when it has been possible.

I have been in the Nizhny Tagil city archive and searched for information related to particular church buildings, in terms of social relations. The internet resources have been very useful, as well as literature in different languages, both in Sweden and in Russia.

### *1.5.4 Sampling and entering the field*

I did not make any preliminary sampling, but mostly took opportunities. I used my contacts in place, such as my relatives and acquaintances who also gave me new contacts - their acquaintances, few of them unknown earlier for me. Some of my informants are people well known to me, some are little known or unknown. My set of interviewees is not representative for the whole Russian population; below in the empirical parts I give some examples of the statistics concerning peoples' relation to the Orthodox church (pp. 59, 63-64).

I began to communicate with my contacts long before I travelled to Russia, through e-mail. It took some time to explain what I want and why, and reach necessary confidence. In the field, I often used one contact to reach another. I talked to people individually, but also with several at a time.

### *1.5.5 Ethics and limitations*

In order to protect my informants' personal integrity, I have chosen not to mention their names, nor their relationship to each other and to me. I cannot hide their age because it is important to

understand their narratives, but I am aware that some identifiable details are still mentioned in this way.

The main limitation is the limited time of this project, as I also mention above, when writing about impossibilities to make suppositious sampling. Then, the topic of the project is also limited: it is about just the Russian situation, which also may be interpreted more generally, but this is, strictly speaking, beyond the thesis ram (here I mean mainly the research questions I pose, and the conclusions I do). Then, unlike the *traditional* heritage research, this work is not just about heritage, but the relationship between people and heritage objects. In this meaning, attention to the heritage objects themselves (Russian Orthodox churches) is delimited. Though, the interpretation of those as social objects is maybe less traditional. But they are social objects, as created by people *socially* - and perceived in the social way.

The language I have used when taking interviews is Russian, which is my native language. The limitation in this way is also then the language of the thesis. Particularly, I am aware that the translations I have done from Russian into English can be of poor quality. I hope though that I have succeeded to transfer their meaning. However, mainly the meaning of the interview data is important. In some cases, I even specify the intonation with which it was said.

Above in the methodical part, I write about myself (as a researcher) as a “starting point”. Such a position gives some advantages (for instance, more *intrinsic* knowledge about the field in the beginning) , but may also be considered as an unaware limitation: I have realised after a while that I still have to reach some more *view from the outside* in order to draw more objective conclusions about the research issue. The “insider's” position can be overcome in discussions with people who do not have similar experience (for instance, who did not live in the Soviet Union/Russia). It can also be noted that it takes time.

## **1.6 Previous research**

The thesis is about the relationship between people and church buildings, in terms of how memory works and what meanings are created. More specifically, it is about memory working and building meanings during the era of change, represented by the Soviet/Russian development during the last 100 years. Furthermore, my research touches on spheres of memory working as such, material

heritage as an issue of collective memory and heritage as a product of modernity.

Research on memory and remembering constitutes a vast field of research. I have already introduced some examples in the theoretical part: Barbara Misztal, Pierre Nora, Richard Terdiman etc. Some more specific heritage/conservation research can be in close connection with this field, an example in my work is David Lowenthal (in Misztal's book). The heritage and memory research is also connected to the research on built space and architecture as such, one example of this connection is Bart Verschaffel's article, which I also use in the theoretical part.

The particular situation in Russia, and the Russian Orthodox Church as a part of the Russian society, also constitutes a large research field. There is a lot of research literature about Soviet and Russian development in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and nowadays, which deals with different aspects of the issue, e.g. repressions towards the Orthodox clergy, their cooperation with the Soviet authorities, religiosity as such in the Soviet Union, religion and atheism etc. I present here mainly historical, sociological and sociopolitical works, and do not touch on pure heritage research on the Russian Orthodox churches: my research issue is about the relationship of people and churches, which is not precisely about the churches' materiality. Hence, the traditional heritage research about churches is less suitable in this work. It does not mean that it does not exist – rather the opposite. But the works I present here are more about religion as a social phenomenon. I did not find any specific research on relationship between Russian people and Russian Orthodox churches.

Here is a selection of some representative works in different languages.

*A Long Walk to Church: a Contemporary History of Russian Orthodoxy* is written by American historian and well-known career diplomat Nathaniel Davis (1995). He gives the history of the Church since the Revolution of 1917 to his contemporaneity and mainly bases his research on archive documents, even those that have become available in the Russian archives since the 1990s.

*The Russian Revolution* by Richard Pipes (1997), an American scholar, specializing in Russian history, is an extensive monography about the Russian Revolution, where the Church's history is a part. It is a rather short but informative analysis of Russian Orthodoxy during the Revolution.

American sociologist Paul Froese (2004) deals with the issue of atheism and religiosity in the Soviet Union, in terms of the Soviet atheism's nature, in "Forced Secularization in Soviet Russia: Why an Atheistic Monopoly Failed". The author claims, among other things, that the Soviet atheism was a kind of "ersatz-religion" - a fake or false religion - which was a reason why (real?) atheism did not get accustomed.

In Swedish, professor in Slavic languages and literature, Per-Arne Bodin recently (2016) has published *Från Bysans till Putin: Historier om Ryssland* [From Byzantium to Putin: Stories about Russia]. In his essays, the Church theme is very present. He shows the interaction, through time, between the Orthodox spirituality and the secular power in Russia. Among other things, the comparison of the Church of Sweden and Russian Orthodox Church is interesting, e.g. differences in perception of sacrality and the sacral room in these two Christian traditions.

In post-Soviet Russia, the analysis of the Church's role before and during the Soviet times was (and is) an issue for research. Such example is sociologist Nikolay Mitrokhin's monography *Russkaya pravoslavnaya cerkov'. Sovremennoe sostoyanie i aktual'nye problemy* [Russian Orthodox Church. The current state and current problems](2006). It deals with the modern condition of the Church (as the name implies) but also gives retrospective views – mostly in attempts to find reasons for the current state.

The fate of religious buildings during the Soviet era is highly connected to the politics of the Soviet state against the Russian Orthodox Church. The Church as a religious institution had an exclusive position in the Russian Empire, which can be characterized as integrated with the state power. It has been important for the Bolsheviks to cease it. Such an exclusive position has deep roots. Some authors, as Swedish researcher Maria Engström (2014, "Contemporary Russian Messianism and New Russian Foreign Policy"; in: *Contemporary Security Policy*), deal with Russian exceptionalism, highly grounded on the medieval religious Byzantine idea of *restrainer* ("Katechon", gr. ο' Κατεχων). Paul the Apostle mentions "he who now restrains" from the time of coming "the man of lawlessness", "the son of destruction" (2 Thess. 2:3 – 7). Later<sup>1</sup>, St. John Chrysostom interprets who is the restrainer: it is a reference to the (Roman) Emperor and his power. Hence is the idea of the Roman Empire that restrains the chaos of Antichrist.

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1

In the 4th Century



The Moscow as a Third Rome-idea is based on the view of the Russian Empire as heir to the Roman and Byzantine Empires. By this way, “Moscow as a third Rome” also means the idea of metaphysical *external* enemy (which can be of different kind – but outside the Empire), and not least, a high integration between the secular state and the religious power.

Hence is the Russian Orthodox Church's view of its relationship with the state power. In the light of seeking for identity and memory crisis of the modern times, the Russian traditional exceptionalism and messianism give food to conservative, retrogressive and right ideas in contemporary Russia. Then, Russian conservatism has its roots in the idea “Russia is not Europe” (Eurasianism). French historian and sociologist Marlene Laruelle deals with Russian ideas of Eurasianism, as a possible response to the modernity idea, in her book (Laruelle, Marlène (2008). *Russian Eurasianism: an Ideology of Empire*).

The conservative religious ideas and concepts that the above mentioned authors deal with can be considerable for the contemporary search for identity, where the Russian past and the Russian Orthodox Church play an important role. It is worth to name, in this connection, a broader context (which is maybe does not directly belongs to “Previous research”): the nature of the contemporary conservative ideas, as a way to manipulate a “new-old” identity, with material heritage as a part of this process, is a relevant issue for understanding and research in the contemporary world.

## 2 The Orthodox Church building and services

In order to understand how Orthodox believers relate to church buildings (even in terms of memorizing etc.) it is relevant to consider the question in what way they use their churches, how they feel and understand their sacrality. This perception differs from that in the West. Bodin (2016) notes that in the Orthodox Church practice there is a much stronger feeling of the sacral space than, for example, the Church of Sweden's tradition represents. He even notes that for secularized European in general, it is difficult to understand this whatsoever (Bodin 2016, p. 190). He tries to explain what he calls “andlighetens materiella manifestationer” (“material manifestations of the spirituality”) in Russian Orthodox tradition:

Synen på vattenvälsignelsen visar... på den ofta påtagliga och ibland till och med taktila synen på andlighetens närvaro i den ortodoxa traditionen, särskilt i den ryskortodoxa fromheten: det heliga har en särskild doft, en särskild smak och känns kanske till och med annorlunda att ta på än vanlig materia. Själva naturen förändras (ibid., p. 84).

The view of the water blessing shows ... the often significant and sometimes even tactile perception of spirituality's presence in the Orthodox tradition, especially in the Russian Orthodox piety: the holy has a special aroma, a special taste and feels perhaps even different to take on than ordinary matter. The nature itself is changing (my translation).

According to Bodin's understanding, the Russian spirituality is more concrete and so to speak tangible than in the Church of Sweden.

In general, the Orthodox Church does not allow other uses of the church building than just the sacral. The feeling of the Orthodox space by the believers is largely connected to the Orthodox rituals, and their symbolic. Some ritualistic habits, both the old and the newer ones, as my informants also describe, illustrate that feeling as well. The perception of the church buildings as sacral (and why they are perceived as sacral) may also help to understand the way people related to them during the Soviet times.

The Orthodox Church buildings are designed in a certain order, to provide supposed transcendental connection – as also is the case in many other religions. In the Orthodox tradition, the church building is considered to be holy. The manual for supposed church architects (2004) states that:

Orthodox temple is a holy place devoted to God, God's inheritance, a special place of God's presence on Earth, of His grace, and of all Saints; the gates of Heaven, where the eternity uncovers and the infinity fits; the place of worship, of reverent glorification, of the prayer, and the convergence with God through the sacraments of the Church (*Pravoslavnye hramy* (2004), Vol. 1, p. 6, my translation).

The church's functionality requires symbolic actions, and the use of symbolic forms. People go to church in order to participate in the symbolic actions, and use the building according to the special rules – that is according to the ceremonial practice. The usage of the church space also has restrictions, many of which concern the altar space (sanctuary). The sanctuary space is separated from the congregation by a wall – *iconostasis*. There are three gates in the wall. The so called *Royal doors* in the central part of the iconostasis are only used for the ritual purposes by persons who are allowed to do this (bishops, priests and deacons). The north and south doors in the respective sides of the iconostasis have mostly utility functions.

The sanctuary is the place where the priests are mostly, during the service. According to the Orthodox tradition and rules, the women are in principle not allowed to be in the sanctuary (not only during the service, but at all). The exception can be some nuns during the monastery service (*Azbuka.ru: altar' [sanctuary]*).

The Orthodox church building is constructed according to symbolic canons, and full of symbolic content. A *symbol* is defined as "something used for or regarded as representing something else; a material object representing something, often something immaterial; emblem, token, or sign." (*Dictionary.com: symbol*). One example is the cross-formed plan, that many churches have, which may refer to the crucifix.

Religious rituals can be considered as a basis of religious practice. An example of such rituals is, above all, the Christian liturgy. All that happens during the liturgy is also the basis of above mentioned understanding of the holiness for both the building and the congregation.

## **2.1 The Divine Liturgy**

The Divine Liturgy in the Eastern Orthodox churches is a ritual - namely, "the service of the Eucharist" (*Dictionary.com: liturgy*) - consisting of the particular arrangement of symbolic actions which are designed in order, as the Church believes, to unite God and prayers. The church building

and interior therefore play an important role in this symbolic interaction. Such features are e.g. the architectural composition and the images of God, the Virgin Mary and the Saints, representing those being in Heaven (icons).

The Liturgy as a rite is closely connected to the notion of *anamnesis*<sup>2</sup>, reminiscence, which refers to Jesus' words about remembering Him via Eucharist "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19, 1 Corinthians 11:24-25). So, the bread and wine that the believers eat and drink during the Eucharistic rite (Communion), becomes, as the Church believes, Jesus' body and blood during the especial set of praying. As one of my informants expresses this: "I believe that during the Liturgy not only we are present there (in the church) but also Jesus" (inf. 9).

To be in an Orthodox church during the mass means, specifically, mostly to stand still, face the altar (sanctuary) and follow a certain mode of behavior:

The Orthodox services are performed by the clergy and laity while standing, crossing with the right hand (in some cases, holding in the left hand a lighted candle), with bows, and sometimes kneeling. ... The sitting is allowed only in the rare moments of the service, defined by the Bylaws, and for the certain categories of parishioners (the sick, the disabled). In the narthex, it should be the catechumens (preparing to be baptized) and the penitents; in the middle part of the church - the faithful (baptized Christians), in the altar space - the clergy, on the kliros – the choristers. During the service the attention of the worshipers is drawn mainly towards the altar screen with the icons of the Saints, and towards the priests, in the direction of the motion (*Pravoslavnye hramy* (2004), Vol. 2, p. 7, my translation).

The format of the Orthodox Liturgy is fixed since the Byzantine times (some chants and prayers vary from time to time, during the year), and contains of three parts:

- The liturgy of Preparation - preparation of the Blessed Sacrament behind the closed Royal doors;
- The Liturgy of the Catechumens – in the ancient times, after this part the catechumens left the church;
- The liturgy of the Faithful – when only the faithful, the baptized, may attend (so was mostly in the ancient times). During this part, the communicants receive the Communion (ibid., p. 10).

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<sup>2</sup> Anamnesis, from the Attic Greek word ἀνάμνησις meaning "reminiscence" or "memorial sacrifice" – *Wikipedia*.

### 2.1.1 Participant observation

To participate in the Church service means to follow certain rituals and behave in a certain way. As I have experienced it at the Sunday Mass in the Alexander Nevsky church 2016-10-09, the worshipers who stand in the nave listen to the prayers, which are performing by the priest(s) in the sanctuary. They also listen to the reading of the Gospel by the deacon, and the choir, which sings on the *kliros*<sup>3</sup> from time to time (the prayers, e.g. *the Cherubic Hymn*). The service is in the Church Slavonic language, it is supposed that the worshipers know and understand the text of the liturgy (but not all do this). Basically, the believers stand quietly; during the *ektenia* (Orthodox litany) they cross themselves and bow, after the words of the priest or deacon, "Lord, have mercy". Two prayers — *the Symbol of Faith* and *Our Father* - the worshipers sing along with the deacon who stays on the *ambo*<sup>4</sup>. The priests mostly stay in the sanctuary, but during the *Small* and *Great* entries, the priests come with the Gospel and the Gifts through the northern gate of the iconostasis to the *soleas*<sup>5</sup> and then return into the altar space through the Royal doors. The deacon waves his censer at the certain times, towards the worshipers, in the altar space, towards the iconostasis.

At the end of the liturgy there is Communion of the young children (who are kept by the adults, usually parents) and those who have previously visited the confession. School-age children also have to do this if they want to take communion (observation at the Sunday Mass in the Alexander Nevsky-church, Nizhny Tagil, 2016-10-09).

## 2.2 Other Church services and ritualistic habits

The religious practice does not always mean to attend the Liturgy, but also the other services, e.g. vespers, confession, baptizing. One can also visit the church in order to pray individually. This also involves a set of religious habits, such as to cross oneself when entering the church, light a candle before the icon, read a silent prayer, etc.

According to the Church rules, when you enter the church, you should praise God three times, and cross yourself. To say three times inwardly 'Lord Jesus Christ, save me a sinner', cross yourself, bow down (inf. 9).

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<sup>3</sup> Kliros, or kleros is a place on the soleas (see below) where the choir is placed during the service (*Antiochian Orthodox: Church building and its servers*).

<sup>4</sup> Ambo is an extension of the soleas (see below) into the nave before the Royal doors (ibid.).

<sup>5</sup> Soleas ("elevated place") is the edge of an elevated platform, which comes out from the altar space to the nave, in front of the iconostasis (ibid.).

Such habits can be seen as formal but have to be performed, according to the majority of the believers. For instance, informant 1, who is baptized as a Catholic, to my question how she usually behaves when being in an Orthodox church, answers in the following way: “I usually wear a long skirt, the head is covered. When I come in, I cross myself according to the Orthodox tradition. I always put candles for the dead and for the health” (inf. 1).

To follow the formal rituals seems to be important for the informants when being in contact with an Orthodox building, regardless of their own faith.

### 3 Historical overview since the Revolution of 1917

In this section, I do a review of the historic development, with emphasis on the relationship between the power (the Bolsheviks, the Soviet and post-Soviet authorities) - and the Orthodox Church/the believers. I also bring some examples from Nizhny Tagil in Russia, the city of my case study.

After the Revolution of 1917, the new Bolshevik power proclaimed a new ideology - so called scientific atheism.

Froese (2004) calls, however, the ideology "Church of scientific atheism" and claims that it did not succeed. He points out that the atheist/communist rituals looked like religious ceremonies because the Bolsheviks believed that "religious rituals and holidays were the most difficult outward expression of religion to suppress" (Froese 2004, p. 14). Scientific atheists even thought that their successes in science and technics would clearly refute the validity of religion as the last is obviously in opposition to the first two. "One can think of this as a strong albeit naive version of secularization theory. The naiveté in scientific atheism comes from a completely materialistic or literal understanding of religious concepts" (ibid., p. 18).

The Bolsheviks could however not simply close all the churches and abolish religion. On the one hand, they were perhaps afraid of possible social riots from the broad masses they wanted to get on their side (Pipes 1997, p. 389). On the other hand, among the Bolsheviks there was no consensus from the beginning what to do with religion. There are, however, lots of widely known examples when the manors were burned and the clergy was killed during the Civil War, which is also described in the diverse literature, such as Boris Pasternak's *Doktor Zhivago*. But the systematic closure of churches began somewhat later, and the big wave was as late as in the 1930s.

Pipes notes in his book *The Russian Revolution* that there were two strategies towards religion that the new power had used. The first claimed that the religious belief is a primitive need that must be satisfied but by channeling the secular beliefs. The second preferred a direct attack in the form of persecution and mockery. The last strategy was the most dominant after a while (ibid., p. 385). As a result, it had a devastating effect on the Russian society in the long term, because the traditional folk culture had, before the Revolution, its centre of gravity in religious beliefs, rituals and holidays (ibid., p. 384). The devastating effect was expressed in the obvious artificiality of scientific atheism as a *new religion*, a new culture that could not replace the old one, which was oppressed, could not

express itself openly, gradually disappeared and left behind a void.

Shortly after the Revolution, in February 1918, the Soviet government adopted *Decree on the separation of church and state and school from church*, which determined the secular character of the state power. According to the Decree, the citizens could profess any religion or no religion. All religious organizations were deprived their property, the religious teaching was not allowed in the schools (Decree of 1918). The Constitution of 1925 declared “freedom of religious and anti-religious propaganda for all citizens” (Constitution of 1925, chapter 1, article 4). In 1929, the freedom to carry on religious propaganda was replaced by the freedom of religious beliefs, while the freedom of ”anti-religious propaganda” is left (Regulation of 1929). The 1936 Soviet Constitution widened the gap between the rights of the believers and the atheists: 124 article declares, "Freedom of religious worship and freedom of antireligious propaganda are recognized for all citizens", i.e. the right to practice of religion (which includes the testimony of their faith) has been replaced by the right to perform religious rites (Constitution of 1936, article 124).

The above-mentioned laws do not fully reflect the true situation of religion in the Soviet state. In theory, people were allowed to practice any religion, but in practice religious believers were oppressed: this is evidenced by the fact that the churches have been closed despite the believers' disagreement (see below). The laws clearly illustrate the hypocrisy of the Soviet authority vis-à-vis religion. This situation can explain the confusion that believers experienced: the state acted with arbitrariness towards the church. It resulted in an atmosphere of fear and high uncertainty.

The communities of believers tried to keep their churches and their religious life, there are some examples of documents about it in the Nizhny Tagil City archive. One is the letter to the city authorities where the St. Nicholas church congregation quotes existing laws on freedom of religion, and means that the authorities go against the laws by closing the church (In: Koverda 1993, letter from the parish council of St. Nicholas church in Nizhny Tagil, 1929).

This assertion was ignored though and the church was closed (Koverda 1993). Later on, the building was reused, then gradually ruined, and finally demolished in 1963 (St. Nicholas church).

But the authorities still wanted to justify the decisions to close churches, in different ways. For



example, that it was a "meeting of the workers" that decided to close the church in a *democratic* way (by unanimous vote). Such case was the church of Alexander Nevsky, which was closed as a result of a vote that happened 1939, when 350 workers of Nizhny Tagil metallurgic plant decided to close the church, "after the church council's application... due to failure of its maintenance, because of an insignificant number of believers, and of them almost no one attending the church" (NTGIA, "Extract from the meeting protocol", my translation).

Of course, the motivation seems dubious. Did the believers themselves want to close the church? After that closing, there was only one church functioning in Nizhny Tagil – the little Kazanskaya church. Some smaller villages and settlements around the city were left without any church at all: for example, in the large factory settlement of Baranchinsky the church disappeared in the late 1930s (I write below about this).

During the second half of the Soviet times, the Orthodox Church became more and more invisible (as also can be seen in the statistical data mentioned below in this section). Many churches were gone; the big closing wave was in the 1930s, but also in the 1960s: the number of functioning churches decreased during the 1960s more than twice, and became approximately 6000 in the whole Soviet Union (Davis 1995, p. 126). The number of registered Orthodox communities in Sverdlovsk (Yekaterinburg) diocese was 30 in 1966 (*ibid.*, p. 44) (Nizhny Tagil is the second largest city in the Sverdlovsk region). According to Froese (2004), the Soviet authorities left no data concerning church attendance during the Soviet times, or what impact the church closures had on it. Though, according to retrospective data of Iannacone (2002), compiled from the 1990 International Social Survey Program, while 40-50 per cent (of parents and children) attended Church between 1920-1930 and about 10-20 per cent between 1930-1940, only 4 to 2 per cent attended Church in the 1970-1980s. "One sees that church attendance drops dramatically in the late 1920s and continues to slowly decline until 1985" (Froese 2004, p. 12).

Despite the closures, there still existed a religious life during the later Soviet era, though rather insignificant. For example, according to Mitrokhin (2006, p. 108), there were 16 monasteries on the Soviet Union territory in the 1980s – 6 for men, 12 for women, where in 2 of them, there were both male and female communities. All these monasteries were in the West of the USSR, e.g. Ukraine, Moldavia, Baltic republics. The most easterly was located near Moscow - Trinity-Sergius Lavra,

with 123 inhabitants. It means that there was no monastic life at all on the huge territories as the middle part of Russia, Ural, and Siberia.

The author mentioned above also brings up some examples, of how young people could become religious during the late Soviet times. Generally, there were some traditions in the family - religious parents or grandparents, even priests as ancestors - often combined with other factors. For instance, young people could, from the beginning, work at a former church's restoration: many church buildings, that survived demolition in the 1930s and the 1960s, became museums (or something else), especially these old, in the central parts of Russia, like Moscow, Suzdal, Yaroslavl etc. (Mitrokhin 2006, p. 97). He notes that it was, among believers, often the distrust of the bishops and other Church officials, many of whom had cooperated with the Soviet authorities. Instead, there were more informal so called *starsy*, kind of spiritual fathers, who enjoyed the confidence of the believers (ibid., p. 96).

In 1985, the CC CPSU General Secretary M. S. Gorbachev announced at the XXVII Congress the policy of *perestroika* (“restructuring”) and *glasnost* (“publicity”). At the perestroika time, interest in religion and churches increased drastically. In the late 1980s, the former church buildings, often in poor condition, began to be *transferred to the believers* (as it was usually called).

”In 1988, Russia celebrated the Baptism of Rus' 1000th anniversary. The politics towards the Church in the country had changed.” (Lapina 2015, p. 19, my translation). The first church, which the Orthodox community had received in Nizhny Tagil, was the church of Alexander Nevsky in 1988 (ibid.). The Holy Trinity church was transferred in 1991 (ibid., p. 30).

The former monastery churches – the church of the Ascension and the church of All Sorrows – were transferred to the jurisdiction of the Ekaterinburg eparchy in 1992, and the monastery reconstruction began in 1998 (ibid., p. 15). The churches opened and service took place, even though the buildings were in a very bad condition. Today the big church (of the Ascension) is closed again, because of the continued interior restoration.

### 3.1 Nizhny Tagil – the historical reference



Fig. 1. Nizhny Tagil 1879, a black-white colored photography. With the Vhodo-Ierusalimsky cathedral (a white building with bell tower) and the Vvedensky church (a big pinky building further away) visible.

Nizhny Tagil is a big industrial city (around 360 000 citizens in 2011, according to the Russian Federal State Statistics Service) on the eastern slopes of the Ural Mountains in Russia. It is the second largest city in the Sverdlovsk region.

The Nizhny Tagil iron plant was founded by the Demidov merchants by order of Tsar Peter I in 1722 near the Vysokogorsky iron ore quarry, The Ural Mountains (Nizhny Tagil: the official site). Before the Revolution of 1917, it was a big urban-type settlement, with the population of 34,7 thousands in 1909 (ibid.). The settlement got the town status during the early Soviet times. The city developed a lot and expanded during the Soviet era, few new districts were built. The iron plant mentioned above was the oldest industry, but there were some more already before the Revolution of 1917. After that, several industrial giants were built, where a larger part of the population was employed. Not only Nizhny Tagil, but also other towns and villages in the Ural region have similar industrial history. Such example is the Baranchinsky settlement (which I mention below in this work), which has also been founded around an iron plant in the 1700<sup>th</sup>.

Not all the churches mentioned in this work are placed in Nizhny Tagil, but all the people I talked with (except one – informant 1) have strong ties to the city as a big urban settlement, and to its churches.

### 3.1.1 The churches

- Vhodo-Jerusalimsky Cathedral
- Vvedenskaya Church
- St. Nicholas Church
- Kazanskaya Church
- Holy Trinity Church
- A. Nevsky Church
- Ascension Church
- All Sorrows Church

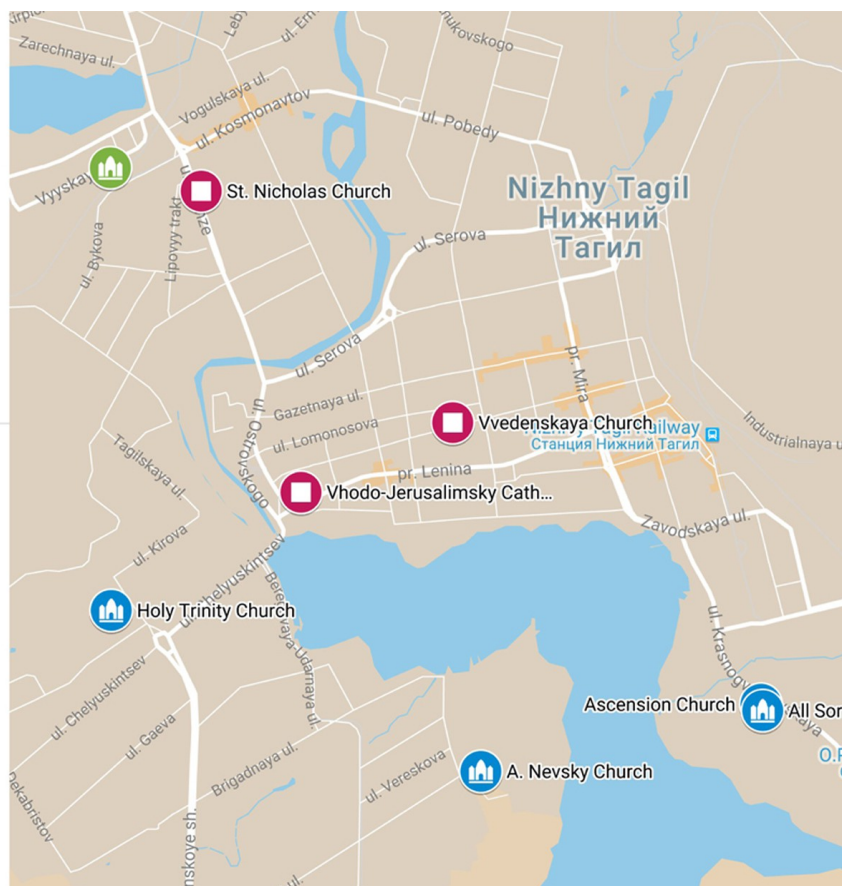


Fig. 2. Nizhny Tagil, the central parts. Churches in the Soviet times: demolished (red), closed (blue), functioning (green)

There were eight churches in the town before the Revolution of 1917 (see the map above, fig. 2), and also eleven chapels that belonged to the Orthodox congregations of different kind (Lapina 2015, p. 43). The position of the churches was remarkable: the churches in the settlement were dominating other one- or two-storied buildings and almost all the churches were built on the hills (see fig. on the cover, fig. 1). Lotareva (2011) notes that it was usual for the urban development of that time: a church united the space of a settlement and dominated it (Lotareva 2011, p. 85). Glavatsky et al. (2003) even claim that a so-called "temple cross" in the town plan of Nizhny Tagil existed and had gone after the three churches was demolished (Glavatsky et al. 2003, p. 191. See also fig. 2, where the supposed cross can possibly be seen in the city plan).

This visibility of the churches was maybe an important argument for the Bolsheviks to take away or mutilate (some of) them. After the Revolution, almost all the churches and chapels were closed gradually. Three churches were demolished, among them two in the central part of the town. The

biggest and oldest was the Cathedral of the Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem, or the Vhodo-Ierusalimsky cathedral, built in the second half of the 1700<sup>th</sup>, closed in the late 1920s, demolished in 1936 (Lapina 2015, p. 7). The second was the Church of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary, or the Vvedenskaya church, built in the 1830s, closed in 1931, demolished in 1936 (ibid., p. 21). The third church was the St. Nicholas Church, or the Vyisko-Nikolskaya church, in the district of Vyia, built in the 1830s, closed in 1930, after that gradually destroyed and finally demolished in 1963 (ibid., p. 8). Almost all the chapels vanished too. Only one church remained in function from the end of the 1930s – the Church of the Icon of Our Lady of Kazan, or the Kazanskaya church, as it was usually called. Two of the four church buildings that were still remaining but not functioning, were mutilated (of some parts, especially domes) – these were the two monastery churches, closed in 1923 - the Ascension church and the Joy of All Who Sorrow Icon Church, or the All Sorrows church (ibid., p. 15). The third church (the Holy Trinity church) was closed in 1935 though not mutilated but used as a storage and garage (ibid., p. 30). The fourth non-functioning church was closed in 1939 (ibid., p. 18), used as a storage of pesticides but mainly left to its fate. It was the church dedicated to Alexander Nevsky.

In the city surroundings, there was a similar situation. Few churches survived in religious use, more buildings were reused, mutilated or left to their fate, or demolished. As a rule, the large churches in the central parts of the towns and settlements vanished, the small churches in the remote parts had maybe more chances to survive, as well as on the countryside. In my work, the examples are the fate of the churches in the Nizhny Tagil city, in the Baranchinsky settlement, and the still existing church buildings outside the city which my informants name (see below in the thesis).

## 4 Memories about religion

In this chapter, the emphasis is done on memories the informants have about religion during the Soviet era and the perestroika time. The whole thesis is about relationship between people and religious buildings, and memories about religion as such are an important explanation and background to this relationship. During the interviews, the informants often wanted to talk just about religion, not only religions buildings separately. The churches are mentioned in this chapter, but in a more general context.

### 4.1 Arbitrariness

During the first period of the Soviet authority, many priests as well as ordinary believers were killed and arrested. One of the women I have interviewed remembers how her mother described the terror that religious people were subjected to (see p. 28 in the thesis, about the terror during the Civil War). The woman's grandfather, who was the altar server in the church of his village before the Revolution, fled with his family, when the Bolsheviks came, because he feared for his and his family's life: "even if one had a big family - still could be arrested... executed...". Everything had to be left behind. The grandfather had got typhus and died while they had been on the run, and when the rest of the family came back to the village in 1921, the children did not attend church anymore. Here it is necessary to add that their mother was not a Christian, though. That did not stop the father from taking all the children to church every Sunday. But that pluralism had been before the Bolsheviks (inf. 5).

The Soviet authorities' attitude against believers, especially during the first half of the Soviet era, had been highly marked by arbitrariness, and had done their existence very uncertain (see about the inconsistency of the laws with regard to the real actions of the authorities, p. 29 in the thesis). The atmosphere of intimidation and fear was though highly present in the late 1930s. Another of my informant's father has been an Orthodox priest, and she remembers how people from the NKVD (the Law Enforcement Agency in the Soviet Union before 1946) have come to her family to arrest her father, who is not at home at that moment:

In 1937 he has been invited to Moscow to the Patriarch and assigned a curacy. Meanwhile, three men in black leather jackets, in creaky boots have come to us - 'where is the priest?' The mother has been left with three children; we have lived in a rented flat... She says: 'he has gone to Moscow'. - 'You are lying!

Say where (he is)!' It begins a search... I am maybe 6 years old... We, all three (children) are hiding under the board and trembling there... They interrogate her; direct a gun toward her - 'tell us where you hide him!' She says: 'you are searching – but I have nothing except the hungry children'. We have lived badly at the time... The father has been called to Moscow. 'How is it – called'? They have come to arrest him. They threaten her with execution, they are searching in the cellar - 'you hide him there'. The hut is small and poor... They are checking with their bayonets – nothing. They come out - 'say or we shoot you!' She says: 'Shoot! Who will then raise the children?' They have sworn – and left (inf. 6).

They have gone but promised to come back. “But something over there has changed”. When the father has come back, the entire family moves to a new location because he has received “a new employment”, and thus he escapes the fate of being arrested, as the woman explains it (inf. 6).

As mentioned earlier, many churches have been closed. In Nizhny Tagil, the only church that is open and functioning is the little Kazanskaya church in a district called Vyia, outside the city centre (fig. 2, 9). My informant's father was a priest there between 1940 and 1960. She remembers how crowded it has been during the Sunday Mass. Her father tries to keep the church open but – the town authorities want to close it “all the time”, but he writes letters to the different higher authorities in order to explain that there are many believers that need the church. The power authorities still threaten, from time to time, to arrest the priest himself, they call him in for the questioning and want him to be an informer, but he does not want to do this. “Dad has had a very hard life” (inf. 6).

The arbitrariness of the Soviet authorities toward the clergy and the believers can be seen in the above examples: one day the priest can be arrested and the church closed – another day it is fully possible to keep the church open and to conduct the service, which the priest has managed to do throughout his life. This situation of lawlessness, high uncertainty and fear has made the believers' lives very difficult, as I even mention above in the thesis.

The arbitrariness that the Soviet authorities have conducted toward the believers evokes various reactions and strategies, which can be seen in the informants' stories below.

## **4.2 Rejection and indifference**

Some stories reflect how religion and religious people have been the subjects of rejection in the

Soviet everyday life. For example, informant 2 talks about her father, who was a communist, and her mother. The father ordered to throw out the religious icons from their home, the mother obeyed. Religion was not mentioned at home. Much later, the mother as very old says: “we are the *Old Believers*”<sup>6</sup> (inf. 2). The latter is said possibly at the perestroika times – before this, common people as a rule do not talk about religion, it is not existing in their life (I myself do not remember anything about religion from my childhood in the Soviet Union – it is possibly an illustration how invisible it has been).

Informant 6 remembers how she and her sister, as schoolchildren, try to persuade their father to stop being a priest. She now conveys her own words to the father: “...They (other children) tease us in the school and on the street, the girls do not want to be friends with us (because of the father) - you should change the profession, it will be easier life” (inf. 6). The father answers, that he cannot to do something else, because his priesthood is actually not a profession but “a grace given by God” (inf. 6).

This story shows how much the rejection of religion was common at that time, especially among the younger generation, probably due to the anti-religious propaganda in the school. Simultaneously, the whole picture is rather complex: the priest is still in the church, can earn money on his priesthood and provide for the family, even if it seems to be a hard life.

When the informant became older, she was forced to hide the fact that her father is a priest. She stops to go to church as an adult, when she moves from her parents' home: it is too dangerous for her future. The episode involving her university friend illustrates well the mores of that time, as well as the common attitude towards religion. The informant describes how she was condemned by the girl she was earlier a friend with. The girl finds out that the informant is a priest's daughter, and says (in the retelling of the informant): “- Why did you not tell me this? I have wanted to introduce you to the Komsomol bureau... You have to be expelled (from the university) instead!”

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<sup>6</sup> *The Old Believers* are the name of the schismatic church that appeared in Russia in the 1660<sup>th</sup>, after the ecclesiastical reforms of Nikon, patriarch of Russian Orthodox Church, who initiated rectifications, concerning some Orthodox rites and usage (Russian Old Believers). The Old Believers were quite common in Nizhny Tagil before the Revolution of 1917, they had few chapels, and the Holy Trinity church belonged to that branch of the Old Believers that was under jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church – so called *edinovertsy*. Now, this church belongs to the regular Orthodox congregation (Lapina 2015, pp. 24-35).



She now suspects that the girl was the author of the anonymous letter, after which the informant was not given the highest university grade (so called “red diploma”). In the anonymous letter, addressed to the rector of the university, her low morale was described - which of course was not true; and among other things it was mentioned that she is a priest daughter and goes to church (inf. 6).

Other informants talk about what they call a *neutral attitude* towards believers and churches (or the lack of them). Informant 9 remembers her mother talking about the demolished church in the Baranchinsky settlement “neutrally”: “here there has been a church before” - when they pass the place (inf. 9). Informant 2 remarks during the conversation that the *neutrality* can simply be caused by fear: the children are able to blurt out where it is not necessary. As she formulates that: “...you know: those pioneers... activists...”. We cannot know how the mother really thought about the church and religion at that time, but informant 9 perceived her neutral position as “natural”.

She also describes her own neutrality towards believers in her school (1950s):

- I remember - in our school class there was one believer, his family were believers. For some reason, he was very badly dressed, and he was strange. He did not join the Pioneers because he was a believer (inf. 9).
- How did you feel about the fact that he was not a pioneer?
- No matter, indifferently (inf. 9).

Informant 7 says about the indifference of the late Soviet era: “people did not care” about churches at that time, generally (inf. 7).

Informant 4 has been a communist under the late Soviet times. We talk about her attitude towards the Orthodox Church:

- What did you think about the believers, about the Church?
- Neutrally, I did not seek to go there, but at the same time did not fight against (inf. 4).
- They probably were not seen during the Soviet times?
- No... (inf. 4).

The neutrality towards religion and churches that the informants describe above is actually the behavior of the people that have been young in the middle of the Soviet period. The behavior they

perceived in the older generation as natural, was probably a positioning towards the Soviet authorities (in order to get less harm). But the younger generation has become genuinely indifferent, and has got other priorities in their life: usually the education and work, but also the Pioneers, later the Komsomol and the Communist Party-membership. The old way of life seemed to disappear.

### **4.3 Remaining habits and beliefs**

Although several interviewees express this indifferent attitude, to go to church could result in different repressions, e.g. young believers have not been allowed to join the Pioneers, the Komsomol (Soviet youth organizations) (inf. 4). The adults could be expelled from work - or university. One university student attended church and was even baptized during the summer vacation, somewhere in the 1970s. In the autumn, she was expelled from the university, and the university administration “talked seriously” with all the students about the dangers of religion (inf. 8).

According to the informants, during the late Soviet times some families have *religious life* at home, such as to celebrate Easter (especially paint eggs – but not to sanctify them in church as it has been used before the Revolution). They baptize their children (often grandchildren). One of my informants, born in 1954, remembers herself as a little child (probably 3 years old) in the church with her believing grandmother, during the communion. The grandmother raises her in her arms, the informant remembers a bearded priest and a lot of people. Another memory is about herself as a little bit older, also in the church with her family: “the mother was in a beautiful dress, the older brother crossed himself – but it was an imitation, he was a copycat”. But she remarks that otherwise, they never have visited any church. However, she wants to baptize her own children, the first in 1979 – but she is not present at the ceremony herself (probably, she does not want to be seen). The second case is in 1988, during the perestroika time, she is there but is standing in the church so that none of her acquaintances is able to see, especially people that use to visit the library where she works. She explains why she has baptized the children -”I had a feeling that it was necessary” (inf. 8).

Religiosity can also take different forms, some of which look like superstitions, or mythological beliefs. For example, informant 8 tells me how she made the entrance exams to the university in the 1970s. Someone advised her to take Psalm 90 to the exam (that would help to pass), and even gave

her a piece of paper with the text. She put that piece of paper somewhere into her clothes. She passed the exam, fortunately. When talking me about it, she sounds ironic (inf. 8). It seems like such *irregular* beliefs and habits remain more tenaciously than the *traditional* religious practice. They are possibly originated from the old times, as existing besides the traditional belief. When the traditional, well visible religion has troubles to survive, such hidden, controversial expressions of religiosity are remaining.

As can be seen in the informants' memories about religion from the Soviet times, the terror and arbitrariness they describe was rather effective, though it evoked different reactions. Some people accepted atheism and ejected religion and all its attributes - or still could be neutral and distance themselves. Others retained religiosity and showed resistance even in generations through visiting the church services against all odds – but in various degrees (often very guardedly). Some others expressed their religiosity through *controversial* beliefs and habits, which not directly belong to traditional Orthodox practice.

#### **4.4 Interest in religion and widespread baptism**

During the second half of the 1980s, the situation with religion changed, as I also show above, in the historical overview. One informant reasons about the changes that she remembers so well: “Nobody has been interested in the churches (during the late Soviet time), well, they are standing, ok. People did not care, they began to be interested only when the authorities allowed this” (inf. 7).

As informant 3 notes, the perestroika and glasnost-era brought more information about the Church, and most people have become interested in religion (inf. 3).

People initially joined Christianity through baptism. I think most of the Soviet people at the beginning of perestroika were unbaptized. Informant 3 describes the widespread desire to become Christian through baptism in church during the late 1980s – 1990s: “People just crowded” (actually, she says this even more aptly, but her slang is impossible to translate into English in this case). Of the nine informants, five have baptized as Orthodox, one as Catholic, during the perestroika times - only three have been already baptized (as children). Some of them describe the baptism, and their stories vary.

Informant 3 was a schoolchild and went to the Kazanskaya church for baptism together with some relatives "just to keep them company" as she says. She does not remember too much, just that it was crowded and all the baptized stood in a circle. Perhaps, the baptism was quick - because there were so many people that wanted to be baptized (inf. 3).

Informant 4 was a communist in the Soviet times. But during the perestroika, she rejected the membership (at that time, the Communist party has lost the majority of members). Some time before the baptism, she had the same dream several times. In the dream an old man kept saying to her, "you must be prepared." This was around 1991. She went to an acquainted old woman to tell her about this dream, and the woman advised her to baptize. She went to the Kazanskaya church and was christened there. She also told me how she was looking for the church - she did not know its location exactly. As she describes this, it was intuitively:

I think: if God wants it, I find the church. And I walk where my eyes look. I walk, and walk, and walk – nothing. Just buildings; but suddenly there are no buildings anymore – and there is the church (visible). I walked in, asked somebody about baptizing - "here, come in" (inf. 4).

Informant 5 was baptized because she "for some reason believed in God". Her older relatives told her about religion when she was younger, and her mother believed – so she has wanted to be baptized long before she did it.

Informant 1 was baptized as a Catholic. She explains this, as "I feel comfortable in Catholic churches". Her parents were atheists, her grandparents Orthodox. She also explains that she has come to the religion through the (religious) art, and through the (religious) architecture. She also thinks that, since the Catholic tradition, unlike the Russian Orthodox, has not been interrupted, the Catholic clergy can be seen as an ideal of a "spiritual shepherd". She met Catholic priests from Germany and from Poland at that time, perhaps it affected that she adopted Catholicism (inf. 1).

To conclude, when the situation in the country changed, the religion became allowed and the *information* available, many people turned to religion (and to spirituality in general). It looks like the new generation *has to remember* something that their fathers have had once forgotten.

#### **4.5 The priests: more and visible**

At the perestroika time, the old churches were reopened, even new churches were built, and the Orthodox Church needed many more priests than before. The statistic that Mitrokhin exemplifies shows this: while in 1988 there were 6800 parishes in Russian Orthodox Church, in 2003 there were – 16350 (Mitrokhin 2006, p. 70).

Informant 1 notes that random people often have become priests during the perestroika times, because the need has been enormous. She thinks that not all the seminarists (students of religious schools) have been deeply religious, and it is a reason why now some priests do not meet her expectations (inf. 1). I write below (in chapter “Church in contemporaneity”) more about this.

In this chapter, I have described memories about religion both during the Soviet era and the perestroika time. The suppression of religion has evoked various strategies among common people. Those can be described as the rejection of religion, indifference (maybe from the beginning demonstrative, which becomes genuine of the next generations), the secret defense and keeping of religious traditions in different, often altered forms. The suppression became less harsh during the later Soviet era, when the common political atmosphere softened (after Stalin's death in 1953) – as can also be seen in my informants' stories, if comparing them. Simultaneously, religion has taken much less place in people's lives with time. In the glasnost-era, more information about religion becomes known, the social climate is different. The Church is no longer oppressed; this was perceived positively and evoked an enormous wave of baptisms. The Church itself becomes bigger, with much more priests employed than before. But after a while, there were claims to the morality of the Orthodox clergy.

## 5 Memories about religious buildings

In this chapter, I focus more specifically on memories about religious buildings.

### 5.1 Derelict churches

In the introduction I described my childhood memories (or their absence) about the Alexander Nevsky-church. In the interviews, I initially wanted to explore memories about church buildings that were not used for their intended purpose during the Soviet times. I asked about the churches of Alexander Nevsky and of the Ascension, as I myself had memories about them, and they had been in my way.

I have no own memories about the other above-mentioned churches in Nizhny Tagil. After the perestroika times, I have not been living in the city, but have only visited it from time to time.

I remember the Alexander Nevsky church as damaged by fire, visible at a distance, somewhere in the late 1980s. After that, it has been slowly restored. I have been interested in the church, both as a religious building and as a part of the landscape (I have painted it). I have even been inside in the mid-1990s, but do not remember much. The church of the Ascension exists in my memory as a strange structure, also at a distance – as visible for me when I have been passing by tram. In those late 1980s – early 1990s, I wondered what it was – later I found out that it was a church without domes. Now, the church's exterior is fully restored.

During the interviews, the conversation was often free and unstructured, but I wondered, on some occasions, about the interviewees' memories about those two churches. There were associations not similar to mine. Some interviewees had few memories connected to these buildings - "just ruins". Others had more to say. Additionally, the other derelict churches that had importance for the informants came into account.

The church of the Ascension was deprived of the domes and the narthex during the Soviet era, and was in bad condition in the late Soviet times (fig. 3). It is not so far from the Pedagogical University where two of my respondents have studied: informant 8 was a student in the early 1970s, informant 3 – in the second half of the 1990s. This means that they have often passed the church building on their way to university.



Fig. 3. The church of the Ascension, 1980s (approximately). The church was built in 1913 as a new monastery church (there is one more, an older and smaller church, on the right side, not visible in the picture). Somewhere in the Soviet times, the church was deprived of all the domes and even the narthex, on the left. Now the church is restored outside.

Informant 8 says that for her, the church has had no special significance during the years she studied at the university, and she does not have any special memories about it. "Well, it has been there, ok" (inf. 8).

Informant 3 says:

There was an orphanage next to (the former church), there were always the ruins (about the church). Then they started to rebuild... (she remembers just about the domes). I was never there (inside). We passed, but we were not especially interested... To be honest, I do not remember (inf. 3).

Informant 3 does not define herself as active religious, while inf. 8 does it. But their perception of the church seems very similar, as they describe it to me: rather indifferent.

Informant 2 worked as a volunteer on the restoration of the churches in the monastery (the Our Lady of Sorrows Convent, after the name of the little church: the Joy of All Who Sorrow Icon Church). She says:

In the large church (of the Ascension) it has been service, maybe 10 years ago. ...Initially, when I began to work, the plaster was repulsed inside; there was a lot of garbage... We have taken out a lot of trash, even few times... Now there is plastering inside. Firstly, they have covered the roof (above the hole of the former dome) – in order to protect (interiorly) from further destruction. The old roof (from the Soviet times) has become old and holey (inf.2).

My understanding is that her memories about the restoration work are rather positive – because the ruins of the churches were gradually restored. The small church works now, but the second floor that was set in the Soviet times remains. "Maybe it will be restored later, after the restoration of the big church" (inf. 2). Important is that the restoration process means to *return to the original state*, not simply to rebuild the ruins.

I have learned from informant 2 that she used to fly a glider as a schoolchild. The airfield where she was engaged in gliding was not far from the church of Alexander Nevsky (fig. 4):

When I was probably 12 years old, I started to go to the airfield. No - earlier... We (her family) had there (near the airfield) a potato field ... It was probably in 1942 or 1943, as Stalin allowed people to use land parcels in order to feed themselves somehow... We had 10 ares. So, when I flew, I took a hiller to the airfield. First flying – then spudding potatoes...



Fig. 4. The church of Alexander Nevsky, 1959. At that time, it was used as a storage of pesticides. The church is built atop the hill; there are one-storied houses around it beneath (see even the cover picture).

Concerning the Alexander Nevsky church, informant 2 tries to describe that feeling of devastation that she remembers, when thinking about the church's state during the Soviet times:



There have been no window frames – only openings... There have been no paintings on the walls... nothing. It (the church) is itself rather small. And it has been open... to all four winds. There it has blown through, (with) dust of pesticides, impact of precipitation – yes, everything... Perhaps, therefore nothing is left (from the old times inside).

...I remember the smell of pesticides... There have been lying the pesticides... (she explains that they have been actually in sacks – I understand that some sacks have been torn, and the dust has been everywhere). That was (for) agriculture (inf. 2).

Informant 7 says that the former church was "befouled" and "dirtied" in the Soviet times - but that it also was a place of adventure for some teenagers who liked to be there and climb to the top, into the domes, - if someone could put a ladder. Some city teenagers in the 1970s took ferry to the opposite side of the city pond and strolled near the church. The grandfather who was a believer warned inf. 7 about abandoned churches - "do not go there" - he probably referred to their significance as sacred places in the past, as I understand it (inf. 7).

Informant 3 remembers the excursion with her summer camp in the Alexander Nevsky church, that was being rebuilt at that time but already had the service inside (late 1980s - early 1990s). This means that the schoolchildren could already have a tour in a church. In the Soviet time, it was hard even to imagine that. She remembers paintings on the walls interiorly. She becomes very surprised on my comment that now the walls are just white inside. Later, I checked on the internet about that time and – yes, it was painted in the 1990s, - possibly some quick, half-professional restoration, in order to restore the church as quickly as possible, *as it should be* (with paintings inside). Now, all that is removed.

To sum up, the informants' memories about the two derelict churches from the Soviet era are rather negative: ruins, the feeling of devastation and bad smell. But, for some teenagers, the abandoned church could evoke curiosity, as a milieu different from the ordinary, as an interesting place. In the perestroika times, the restoration of derelict churches could give positive feelings, generally. The kind of restoration should be to *return to the former state*.

The derelict and abandoned churches can also evoke a feel of sadness and pity in some persons. Informant 1 says that she feels sorry for those beautiful, but ruined buildings. She admits that it has been important for her choice of profession (inspector for the protection of monuments).

I have always felt sorry for these churches, because, as a rule, they have aesthetic values ... I have been very sorry ... that they have broken ... that they do not have crosses, no domes, no floors - namely, that they are in such derelict state, that the very beautiful buildings are in a very derelict state (inf. 1).



Fig. 5. The Vvedenskaya Church in the village of Travianskoe, 1984. The village is in the south of Ekaterinburg. The church is in similar condition still today, according to the informant (inf. 1).

She describes her memory of an abandoned church from the late Soviet era, from her childhood. It was the church in the village of Travianskoe (fig. 5), near the town she comes from, also in the Ural region. She says:

When I was 12, I was deeply impressed by the church in the Travianskoe village, 8 km from [her town]. This church was built in the style of classicism (a name of an architectural style in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Russia), and it was abandoned and it grazed sheep and cows inside. And I was so shocked and overturned by that impression - that there is the livestock grazing and shitting in a church ... I even have asked my dad if it is possible to collect money, at least a ruble each, from residents [of her town], to restore it, this church ... But he has told me – ok, let it be restored, and how then it will be used? (inf. 1).

In those late Soviet times, the father could not even think that the church can be used for its intended purpose. The church is still a ruin; but the informant contributed to the fact that the church has got the status of architectural monument. She says that there have been attempts to restore it, but they were not fulfilled (inf. 1).

Another memory is from the mid-nineties, when the informant already worked as an inspector in the

state organization “on the protection of monuments”. In the village of Rybnikovskoe, there is also a still ruined church (fig. 6).

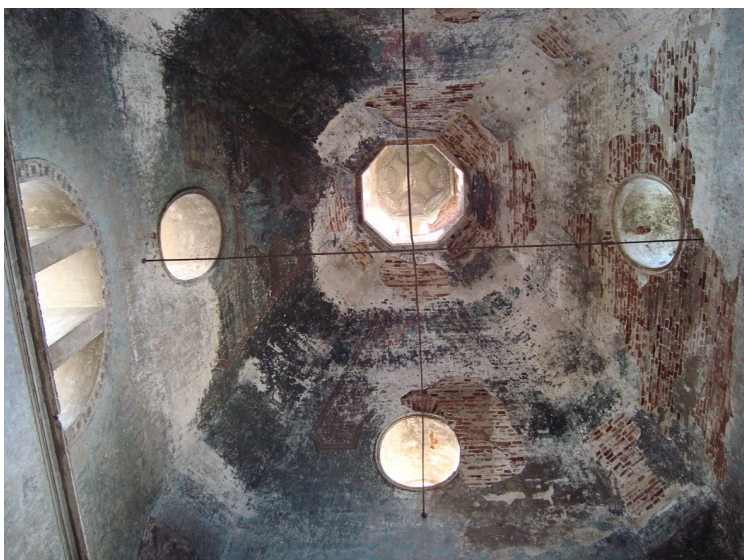


Fig. 6. Inside the dome of the Tihvinskaya church in the Rybnikovskoye village, 2009. I think the picture speaks for itself.

That is also a rural church ... Rybnikovskoe. Also a church in the style of classicism ... the oldest in [her] district ... (its construction) started in 1809 ... It is a similar ruin, too (she refers to the Travianskoe church) - but very robust, it is real to restore it. ... In 1997 ... I have worked in the NPC, and we have had a tour over all the abandoned churches of the district. When I came inside this church and I stood under the dome ... I heard there – voices of a choir singing. And then a phrase: Lord, glorify you, hear you, or something ... so that's ... well ... something I was very much shocked over... and then, some believers explained to me that, in general, very few people hear it ... it is given to very few people... (inf. 1).

Her memories about these derelict churches are different from those described above. Sorrow, even the sense of revelation are the feelings that these buildings evoke. That they are still ruined feels very negative, and evokes a desire to help.

Today, there are still a lot of ruined churches in the countryside. The reason is that many villages are abandoned, or have too few inhabitants, and the Orthodox Church cannot - or has no desire - to take responsibility for the restorations. As I understand this, most people perceive the fact that the churches stay ruined, in a negative way. Judging from the most common internet discussions, the contemporary Orthodox Church is blamed for the decay. I have found some communities in the Russian social network *Vkontakte* where pictures of the abandoned churches of the Ural region are

collected, and such discussions take place (*Vkontakte*: Abandoned churches of the Ural Region). I will develop the discussion on the attitude towards the Russian Orthodox Church and its clergy in the section about the Church in contemporaneity.

To conclude, in the interview data about the derelict churches, I have met different attitudes towards derelict churches, in different times. Indifference over, sorrow for, or rejection of those ruined buildings can be the description of the feelings from the Soviet era. All the interviewees have expressed positive feelings about the church reconstructions, or a desire to reconstruct those still ruined. Some of them even thought that the restoration must be close to the former state (as before the ruination).

## 5.2 Disappeared churches

When performing the interviews, I have realized that some informants are interested in churches that no longer exist. I did not know about these places in the beginning, but I soon realized that they may be of importance for my work; I chose to take them into account, and give them an important place in the analysis.



Fig. 7. The cross near the place for the demolished Vhodo-Ierusalimsky cathedral

Informant 2 talks about the places in Nizhny Tagil where there used to be churches that were demolished during the Soviet times (the Vvedensky church, or the Church of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the St. Nicholas church, the Vhodo-Ierusalimsky cathedral). She remarks: "so little remains from the old times".

As mentioned previously, she used to fly glider as a schoolchild. The theoretical lessons at the flying club (“glider station”) took place in a building very close to the place of the demolished church – the Vhodo-Ierusalimsky cathedral (fig. 1 and 7). The church was demolished in the 1930s.

They (the Soviet authorities) have destroyed everything... only that building remains... and when I began to fly... the windows were very low, near the ground level - they piled debris, shards of bricks there... There (on the church place) was a hill of rubble and stones (inf. 2).

In the 1950s - 60s, when she has attended the club, she did not know that there used to be a church there before. I assume she got to know about it during the perestroika times. In the late 1960s, the Economic College was built on the church's ground. The cross (fig. 7) was erected presumably somewhere in the 1990s.

The woman notes: ”one can say that I found my wings at the Vhodo-Ierusalimsky cathedral” (inf. 2). I think, with *my wings* she means first of all her flying – and an assumption that the (sacred) place has contributed to it, although she did not know about the history of the place at the time. Later, she became a flight engineer. I think she draws parallels to her religious belief, and sees some sort of symbolism in the fact that she was in a such a place already in her childhood.



### 5.2.1 Meaningfulness



Fig. 8. The half-destroyed Pokrovskaya church in the settlement of Baranchinsky near Nizhny Tagil. The newly built school on the left. The late 1930s.

The history of the vanished Pokrovskaya church illustrates how people in Russia have searched for meaningfulness and connection through all the changes that have happened during the Soviet times – and even after that.

The Pokrovskaya church, or the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary's cover (fig. 8) in the settlement of Baranchinsky, north on Nizhny Tagil (see map, appx. II), was destroyed in the end of the 1930s, and two monuments were erected instead, in a park planted on the place (appx. III). The informants (who have told me about the church) were not born at the time the church was demolished, but "everyone knew" about it, years after the demolition:

- Did you know where the church was (in the settlement)?
- All the people knew *because* on this place there were two monuments (then) (inf. 9, my emphasis).
- Lenin and Stalin (inf. 4)
- ...
- And all that was disappeared... (I mean the church)
- My school was built (instead) (inf. 9)

It was important for the informants that the church materials (bricks) were used for the school

building near the place and, - according to them everyone in the village knows about the re-used material. That a such succession was perceived as important can perhaps be explained by the desire to find meaning in everything, even in negative things (that this is not in vain).

Strangely enough, according to the old photo that I later have found, the school already exists, when the church is still in the place (fig. 8). Perhaps, or as I have supposed during the (later) communication, some materials from the church were used to build the school – e.g. material from the bell tower, which is already gone in the picture. But the school is apparently not built *of* the church bricks: the fact, on which the informants were surprised.

Informant 9 feels even sorrow for the school's demolition in 2013: “And now even the school is gone. But, for some reason, I feel sorry for this school (too)” (inf. 9). It is remarkable that the negativity is not only in the destruction of the religious building – but in the vanishing of the significant built environment at all. The religious building, though, has in some meaning different importance as sacred place, as I have understood this.

Today, the monuments are also vanished: Stalin disappeared in the late 1950s and Lenin – some time during the perestroika. Now there is a new church in the place, not so large and in a whole different style (wooden and covered with steel siding). But, as informant 4 puts it: “... and here this church is built... Wooden – but that (former) church was of stone, big and beautiful” (inf. 4) (see appx. III).

The churches that vanished during the Soviet times are in some meaning still kept in mind - even if the new generations have not always known about their existence. When the time of change has come, the sites have been marked by crosses (I think, mainly by initiative of the communities of believers that became more active at that time). In one case (of the mentioned), a new church has been built on the place – even though it is judged to be worse in comparison with the old church, and evokes some dissatisfaction in the Baranchinsky settlement.

In Nizhny Tagil, such projects do not seem to be as relevant: on the places of the former churches, there are buildings built during the Soviet era. Ideas – about rebuilding the churches - come up from time to time. The sense of discontinuity and impermanence, sorrow for this, has been present during the whole interviews. The sense of discontinuity is not limited to the Soviet times: the

disappearance of buildings, important for the informants, also takes place today.

### 5.3 Churches that have functioned

As I mention above, the Kazanskaya church remained the only functioning church in Nizhny Tagil, when the others were closed. It is a rather small church that has been crowded at the Sunday service. Informant 6, a daughter to the church's priest, was a schoolchild during the Second World War, and remembers how she was allowed to stand in the choir to make it easier to breathe. Still, she could faint! The Soviet authorities threatened to close the church too, but this did not happen. The father of informant 6 was a priest there during the long period of time (1940-1960). She says that, from the beginning, her father was the only priest in the church. It means that there was only one working priest in the whole city at that time! The informant also says that the father arranged a church renovation because it was in poor condition (inf. 6).(inf. 6, see also in the chapter “Memories about religion”).

I myself have no memories about this church; I visited it for the first time when I began this work – but I have known about its existence before.



Fig. 9. The Kazanskaya Church, the only functioning church in Nizhny Tagil in 1940s – 1980s. Photo 1966.

All the informants (except inf. 1 because she does not know about this church) have mentioned the church in their memories, as being open during the whole Soviet period. It seems to be important for them.

Informant 8 says that already in the late Soviet times, after the birth and baptism of her first child, she began from time to time to visit Kazanskaya church with a friend (inf. 8). When the baptism in Nizhny Tagil during the perestroika times became widespread, many people were baptized there, among others informants 2, 3, 4, 5, 9.



In Nizhny Tagil's surroundings, there have been a few more churches, open through the whole Soviet period. Informant 2 mentions those churches during the interview – the churches that have remained “untouched” since the pre-Soviet time: in the Verhny Tagil town, in the Nikolo-Pavlovskoe village, in the Byngi village, in the Laya village (inf. 2, see also the map, appx. II).



Fig. 10. Inside the St. Nicholas church in the Nikolo-Pavlovskoe village near Nizhny Tagil.

The church dedicated to St. Nicholas in the Nikolo-Pavlovskoe village was built in the 1890s. It was closed only during the short period of time in 1938-1943, and not destroyed either inside or outside. Everything is preserved since before the Revolution of 1917. The church has opened again and has functioned all the time since (the St Nicholas church in the Nikolo-Pavlovskoye village). One of the interviewees has memories about visiting the church in the Soviet era, when she was a teenager, 15-16 years old. Their school was doing agricultural work in the village. She, and some girls, go to the church “out of curiosity”. There is no service at the moment, but there are two women – parishioners. One of them is “good” and shows the church interior for the girls. She explains to them, talks them about the icons, about the sanctuary (that women are not allowed to go there), etc. Another woman is “bad” - she scares the girls by “doom and hell because of unbelief” (inf. 8).

Another church that was not closed during the Soviet era and that one of the informants has memories about is the church of Archangel Michael, in the town of Kushva north of the Baranchinsky settlement where the informant has grown up (appx. II).

Informant 9 remembers how she once has been in the church when being a schoolchild. In her settlement, there was no church. She was not baptized, and her mother did not want to do this. But an acquaintance took her, and even her older sister, to the church in the town near the village. The acquaintance wanted to baptize her small children, and because of curiosity, informant 9 and her sister were part of the company. I try to translate a part of our conversation about it:

- How old were you?
- School-age (inf. 9).
- How did you feel about it - that she baptized her children?
- We were simply curious (inf. 9).
- Did you think about – why you are not baptized yourselves?
- No – baptized, not baptized... (no matter) (inf. 9).
- Were you simply curious?
- Yes... I remember that font – about so high (shows this), the bearded priest, and how he took a child and dipped right there. I remember a lot of people (inf. 9).
- Why there were so many people?
- (Perhaps) they were interested; they just came (inf. 4).
- Perhaps it just seemed to me that there was a lot of people. Because we were small, and people (tried to come closer)... Nothing is visible – (hence) it means a lot of people (inf. 9).

For her, it was the only time during the Soviet times she visited a church, but she remembers it, and it seems to be a nice memory. Not all my informants have memories about functioning churches from the Soviet era. It depends on their age (the younger persons as inf. 1 and 3 have not), but not only this. It depends rather on their environment: family etc. If they have memories, the functioning church takes a more or less important place in their lives.

## **5.4 New churches**

As mentioned above, in Nizhny Tagil there was only one functioning church when the policy of perestroika and glasnost was proclaimed in 1985. Since then, few new churches have been built, above all in the districts grounded in the Soviet times. In the whole city, three rather big churches have appeared. Also, a few smaller churches and chapels were built, when often buildings from the Soviet era have been adapted (e.g. a former kindergarten, or as a part of a hospital) (Lapina 2015, p. 42).

In the interviews, I did not ask about new churches specifically. But during one conversation, this issue has been raised, because the informant has memories about religious buildings which have emerged in the post-Soviet time. This seems important: the fact that the mentioned churches are new, highlights new angles of the research issue, such as e.g. relevance of new churches in the contemporaneity against the past-related background (as I even described in the section “previous research” concerning the retrospectivity of the contemporary Russian society).

During the perestroika time, informant 3 lived in a remote district of the city, where there were no churches (the district was founded in the 1930s). In the late 1980s, a little prayer house was built not far from the place where she lived, and it has become a part of her childhood memories:

- Do you remember anything about churches, from your childhood?
- No, nothing... Our family has not been religious; we have never been in a church. Well, when that prayer house has been build [in her district]... I think it is already in the perestroika times... (inf. 3).
- No matter, perestroika – ok...
- Well... it has been built... (inf. 3).
- Have you been there?
- It has happened... you know – in, and quickly away... (inf. 3)

It seems the interviewee talks about her church visits a bit unwillingly (I also write about this below, in the next section). A prayer house built in the perestroika time (the first religious building in her district ever) aroused curiosity, especially among young people, who have not faced religion before. The prayer house looked very simple but there was a small *onion dome* on the roof, which distinguished the building from the others at that time. Perhaps, the onion dome during the perestroika was a reference to both the old Russian times and to the Orthodoxy, in a positive way – and became widely accepted since that.



Fig. 11. The Dmitry Donskoy church in Nizhny Tagil, built 2003.

Informant 3 also has memories about one of the above mentioned three new churches in the city: it was built in 2003 (fig. 11). She works at the company that was responsible for the project, and has participated in it herself. She remarks that she has never visited the church (unlike the prayer house in her childhood). She could, but she explains: “I have no need”. Actually, here she apparently means any church at all (inf. 3).

The new churches are built in a very archaic style, which can be described as *old Russian* - with the *onion domes* and other typical details. The church at fig. 11 resembles very much the famous old Russian church, having an iconic status in Russia, built near the Vladimir town in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (called “Pokrova na Nerli”<sup>7</sup>). The new wooden church in the Baranchinsky settlement is also built in a somewhere “Russian” style, with an *obligatory* onion dome on the roof (here, there is also the question of how to build as cheaply as possible – this church can be seen in the picture sequence, appx. III). The archaic style seems to be widely accepted among people in common. Whether they are perceived as slightly fake, in terms of their sacrality, is difficult to tell. The use of an archaic style may be considered a kind of legitimation for the contemporary Orthodox Church that has experienced the interruption of traditions during the last 100 years. One can assume that an old style is an attempt to re-establish link/connection of times – in the collective consciousness.

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7 The church of the intercession on the Nerl, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church\\_of\\_the\\_Intercession\\_on\\_the\\_Nerl](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_the_Intercession_on_the_Nerl)

## 6 The Orthodox religion and churches in contemporaneity

None of the women I have spoken with define themselves as atheists. The selection of interviewees may not be called representative - but in 2008, according to statistics, 81% of all adult women in Russia called themselves "Orthodox Christians" (the other 19% does not mean they are atheists but maybe other religions as well, such as the muslims). Eleven percent of the Russians aged 70 or more (both men and women) "attended religious services at least once a month". For adults of all ages, those attending church there were five percent for men and nine percent for women (Pew Research Center). Judging from the statistics, the belonging to the Orthodox christianity does not seem to be understood as "active religious". This can be defined rather as a belonging to the particular culture (see e.g. about "cultural Christian", *Charisma News*). See also the statistics below in the chapter, about religious habits.

In those parts of the interviews, which concern the contemporary conditions of the Orthodox religion, certain issues have often recurred. Some informants have spoken a lot about ethics as regard to the Orthodox clergy. The issue of traditions' break during the Soviet era and the contemporary conservatism, which is in some way a result of the break, has also been discussed. Moreover, they have talked about how *common people* attend church as a habit; actually, how much they are *Orthodox* - and what it means to be Orthodox. Furthermore, some women have talked about the future in the Church. All above-mentioned topics are related to each other. The entire section can be said to deal with only one side of the contemporary conditions, the problems - but from different angles.

### 6.1 The ethical dimension

The younger interviewees express general dissatisfaction with the Orthodox clergy. Some of the older informants are unhappy with some priests, but express this in milder terms, or it is a particular situation that does not directly concern belonging to the clergy.

Below is a part of the conversation with informant 3, at the interview's moment 37 years old:

- In my circle of acquaintances, the issue of religion is never mentioned... (inf. 3)
- And I now pester you with questions... but it's between us... (I am referring here to the anonymity)
- Well, it's not difficult for me, I can answer... but somehow, to speak about this it not widely accepted. ...

Especially now: there is so much negative publicity - not about the faithful people (as a whole), but about the Orthodox Church itself... (inf. 3)

– About the priests....

– About the priests, yes... As in that joke: “Now I have become almost hit by bearded men in a black jeep! - Fathers! - Exactly, they are...” (here is an untranslatable play on words: 'fathers' ['батьюшки'] in Russian means both 'father' in plural and exclamation of type 'God gracious!'). Even now - on the internet, in *Vkontakte* (the Russian social network) there are discussions about, for example, that the Church stands for the ban on abortion, which starts mud flows (in the discussions)... It is clear that not everybody there (in the Church) are in such black cars, there are selfless people too, and there are examples of this (in the Church)... But against this background... I don't know – have no (desire to go to church)... (inf. 3).

The informant seems reluctant to talk about religion in the beginning. But when the issue of the Orthodox clergy comes up, the conversation becomes more lively. There is some joking, but the tone is also serious – the issue seems to touch on emotions. The Orthodox clergy appear as selfish people who are concerned mostly with money and who behave contemptuously towards common people; actually serving God is only a cover for enrichment. The priests are often seen as being in some way affiliated with authorities. They are in power position themselves - which can be seen as informal but quite often real. The issue of corruption is often present in the above-mentioned internet discussions. Taking all this into account, it seems to cause irritation when the Church tries to act as a main moral authority in the society.

Informant 1 reasons about the *new priests* who have got a theological education during the perestroika times:

(They) have rushed into the theological seminaries (in quantities) when religion has become widespread again. [...] There have been (in some cases) people who really do not want to work, for example, as a tractor driver. In [her town], for example, one priest is a former tractor driver... (inf. 1).

She means that to be a tractor driver is a hard and low-paid job; some people become priests to avoid such employment. She also alludes to the fact that the tractor drivers are poorly educated people. The fact that a former tractor driver has become a priest is according to her a characteristic of the priest she describes.

She talks further about her own vision: “The priest, as a mediator between people and God, must have high moral virtues. Instead, there can be selfish, uneducated (priests), who are also attracted by

power over people“ (inf. 1).

She introduces an example from her professional life. One priest has driven her out of the church in front of the congregation when she has come there for her work as an inspector for the oversight of monuments. A probable reason was that the priest was not satisfied with the involvement of a non-Church person. The woman did not like the rough conduct, and thinks that this is because of his lack of education. “I have not come there myself, but on the instructions of my superiors” - so such a treatment is obviously unfair. This happened around 1995, but she still remembers it and distrusts the Orthodox Church ever since. The reason why Orthodox priests are not good now is the “interruption of traditions”, she says. For instance, the institution of Catholicism has not been broken - the Catholic priests whom she has met correspond to her views about what a priest should be as a person.

To my question “Are there good Orthodox priests?”, she replies – Yes, she knows [in her town] a good priest, the abbot of the Monastery. She has liked to communicate with him, an important thing for the priests is “the love for people” (inf. 1).

With this informant, I have a professional talk about the rebuilding of old churches, and problems that come with that. I wonder whether old churches risk being poorly restored due to the lack of education in architecture /conservation of those who order the works that is of the Orthodox clergy and congregations. She agrees, and says that the state must help the religious communities to rebuild the old dilapidated churches: “To blame the private owner that he is doing something wrong with the building – it is not good. If the building is an architectural monument, the state must be involved in the restauration process” (inf. 1).

She also agrees with some Orthodox priests, who reason about the churches that have been returned to the Orthodox communities in poor condition during the perestroika:

If the (Soviet) state has destroyed them – it is the state, too, that have to rebuild them. The state should help financially and provide the professional expertise – the buildings should be rebuilt without disturbing aesthetically (inf. 1).

I have previously mentioned that people in common seem to dislike the Orthodox Church for caring

so little about abandoned church buildings on the countryside. The reasons why the Church does not care may vary, but a lack of economic resources is often referred to. At the same time, the Church authorities want to take possession of, for instance, the rich and pompous St. Isaac's Cathedral in the center of St. Petersburg, which is now a state museum. This expression of a desire of wealth is often put as a moral argument in the social discussion. The Church authorities and often the Church as a whole are blamed and described as greedy, “greedy priests” etc.

To conclude, the ethical dimension seems to be an important component in the contemporary relations between the Orthodox Church, with the church buildings, and the Russian people. On the one side, the Church tries to regain its traditional position in the society as a moral authority (as it has been during the centuries, before the interruption of the religious tradition); on the other side, the secularized society questions the Church's own morality, even in relation to the church buildings.

The category of “good-bad” is also about the understanding and interpretation of traditions, e.g. what a restoration process should look like and result in, in the above mentioned ethical terms, and about the supposed established connection between the past and the present as *good*, against the background of the Russian history during the last 100 years.

## **6.2 Break of traditions and conservatism**

As one of the informants mentions, the traditions in the Russian society have been broken during the 70 Soviet years, and it concerns not only the clergy but also the society in common (inf. 1). Even informants 2, 4, 7, 9 talk about it.

Informant 9 talks about her mother: “She was 7 years old when the Soviet power was established. Then, the upbringing became different” (inf. 9). Informant 2 says: “My father was a communist; all the (religious) icons were thrown out” (in “Memories about religion”).

Informant 2 describes her lack of knowledge about the destroyed church (the Vhodo-Ierusalimsky Cathedral) during the Soviet times – although she has often been in the place. Apparently she has been busy trying to fulfill other objectives. Informant 7 argues that many people in the beginning of the Soviet era could not understand why the churches were closed, but they were forced to obey – “how can you go against the authorities?” (inf. 7). The new reality became an unavoidable fact,



and people accepted it, more or less willingly.

Today, when religion is re-established, one can find a kind of conservatism, a retrogressive perception of reality which could be a way to reconsider the past where the old traditions were destroyed so resolutely. When I ask about "how it was before..." or "talk about what you remember from (the past/the Soviet) times" – my respondents find, as a rule, so much to talk about. The thought that it has been better before than it is now is not uncommon (even if not all of the interviewees talk about it directly). "Before" in this case means *before the Soviet times* – that is long before the informants were born. For instance, informant 2 talks about the Solovetsky monastery's "engineering structure, so perfect that the contemporary engineers cannot dream up" (The structure was probably built in the 1500<sup>th</sup>, in the times when Metropolitan Philip was the abbot of the monastery. He was later killed by order of Tsar Ivan the terrible. At the same time, we talk about the Solovetsky monastery as associated with martyrdom in the Soviet past (prisoners of the Gulag – the monastery became a prison in the 1920-30s) (inf. 2). Informant 4 talks about the former church as better, bigger and more beautiful than the new church (in "Meaningfulness").

The religion appears as a new-old (newfound) identity. The old churches are perceived as beautiful, from the good old days (from a kind of the *golden age*, before the destruction of religion). Informant 2 recalls the old churches around Nizhny Tagil that have remained "untouched throughout the Soviet times", and remarks regretfully that there are too few leftovers from the old days. As an example, she talks about the old church in Verhny Tagil (a little town in the Nizhny Tagil's surroundings, appx. II), and some others, where, for example, wall paintings are preserved. It is important with "untouched" churches: they appear as keepers of the uninterrupted religious tradition from the old time until today.

### **6.3 The habit of going to church and formalism**

Nikolay Mitrokhin notes that "to estimate accurately the number of (Russian Orthodox) believers is not possible". The Russian Orthodox Church itself says in the Bylaws that all the persons of "Orthodox faith" are the congregation, which the author means is "quite vague" (Mitrokhin 2006, p. 35, my translation). He also claims that "in the post-Soviet space" there is now a very undeveloped religious culture that he calls "blurred religiosity" - when people that define themselves as Orthodox, do not go to church over the years, and some of them are even not baptized. He introduces a poll conducted by the ROMIR-service in 2003: 71% of the respondents say that they

are Orthodox, but only 62% (of the respondents) confirm that they believe in God. Of the considered Orthodox, 36% do not visit the church at all, or visit more seldom than once a year; 6% - once a week, 13% - once a month, 34% - a few times a year, 11% - at the Christmas and Easter (ibid., p. 37-38).

According to informant 7, young people today generally do not go to church regularly. Their religiosity can be seen as *formal*, e.g. the custom to take young children to the Communion. Some might think that the children will be healthier of that, but they themselves do not visit (inf. 7).

Informant 3 feels "no strong desire" to go to church, due to distrust to the clergy described above. Generally, she does not have such a habit, because she "has grown up in a non-religious family". She says: "When do people usually go to church? When everything is bad. People are looking for consolation and explanation of what is happening...". She also notes that one can pray at home if necessary (inf. 3).

Informant 9 talks about how it feels to participate in the Orthodox Liturgy, in the real situation: it is important to focus the mind on the service, not to think about something else (worldly):

When you go (to the church) often, you even know the service's sequence. Even if the priest prays in the sanctuary, and the (Royal) doors are closed and you do not hear what he says – you should yourself pray inwardly (in order to keep your mind in the service).

Not all the people understand this; many are coming only with the aim "to light the candle" sometimes:

Some people think... they have to come... when something has happened (bad in their life)... They are coming and do not pay attention to what is happening in the church (during the church service). They distract certainly... And also the children, about 7-8 years old – they are coming with their grandmothers (who want to teach children the church service) – but they do not understand, this is difficult for them... And they are running around during the Mass sometimes... [...]

...I think it is not widely known what you actually need to do in the church during the service.

Some (people) go from time to time... anyone can attend, it is not forbidden (to come to the church). For instance, during the Easter - during the night service – people have crowded in the beginning, some even have been tipsy – only to light the candle, because of the Easter (inf. 9).

During the Sunday service that I visited in the Alexander Nevsky church 2016.10.09, there were quite a lot of people, both old and young, even a few school-age children. From my perspective the liturgy proceeds the following way:

During the first part (*Proskomedia*), when the Royal doors are closed, some believers stay still, others go around, put candles and venerate the icons (cross themselves and kiss the icons). Some believers just enter the church. What happens behind the closed Royal doors, in the altar, is not visible and is hard to hear (the prayers are read).

During the second part of the liturgy which begins with the opening of the Royal doors and the deacon coming to the ambo, all the people (or most of them) in the church start to concentrate on the service.



Fig. 12. Inside the Alexander Nevsky church at the time of Sunday Mass 2016.10.09 (the church is being renovated, but the service goes on).

The pictures above (fig. 12) are from the end of the third part but before the Communion. At this time, the priests have their communion in the altar, the Royal doors are closed, I am near the entrance door, now there are many younger believers here, even with small children. These pictures illustrate how it can look like in a contemporary Orthodox church during the service. The people in the pictures are dressed according to the accepted practice of being in the Orthodox Church: the men must be bareheaded – the women conversely; the women should be dressed decently, desirable in a skirt. In the left image, the woman to the right has tied a big scarf around the hips in order to

hide the pants. However, before the Revolution of 1917 women did not wear pants at all, as known. For instance, informant 5 retells her mother's words, how she described her family going to church before the Revolution: “we all (children) go to church on Sunday, with the father... The mother dresses us smartly and cleanly, prepares the dinner” (inf. 5). There was no particular dress-code at that time. The requirements for certain garments appear as a way for tradition's *recovery*, not *keeping*. A certain form of clothing is a new behavior, actually - which has appeared during the time of the large changes.

The believers that want to take Communion during the liturgy must confess to a priest the day before. Usually, there is a kind of queue to the priest in the church; one can see how the confessants are talking to the priest, but not hear what they say. Informant 9 describes her experiences while she is waiting for her turn:

Today there was a confession in the Kazanskaya church. There were about 80 persons, at the confession there were many men, almost as many as there were women. The men were allowed to go before in the queue, so I could watch them confess. I always thought that women are more verbose, but it was not really so, some (men) talked with the priest for a long time, and one even gesticulated strongly when telling something. ...Age of the men from 20 to 40-60 years (inf. 9).

The informant wants to say that the society tries to return to the Church: the habit of confession and then receiving communion characterizes those who go to church often. She tries to show the dynamic: e.g. more men than before – now almost equally (that has not been the case before), various ages (before, there have been mostly the older persons).

In the late Soviet times, there were mostly elderly women that went to church. Perhaps their way to keep the religious habit has become formalized (e.g. accepted “dress-code”) in the contemporary society? Based on the above described, the contemporary religiosity can perhaps be called more formal, than before the Revolution, and be expressed more via formal actions and things.

In the modern society, the keeping of traditions through material expressions and things/buildings is widespread (e.g. the phenomenon of heritage). The conservative, retrogressive ideas can also put their roots in such soil.

## 6.4 The future

Informants 1 and 3 reason about their future connection to the Church.

Inf. 3 does not go to church today, but supposes that it might be in the future. She explains: since people usually go to church “when everything is bad” (see above) – possibly such a time might come. She does not want such time, of course, but nobody knows.

Informant 1 has baptized her son as Catholic, but in the future “he decides himself – the people say it is not difficult to change to the Orthodoxy” (inf. 1).

Generally, I do not talk so much about the future with my informants; it is much more about the past and present. There are reasons for this; a larger half of my informants are elderly women; my communication with all of the informants began with the questions about the past, or the memories about old churches. But it is also possible that the respondents have more to say about the past and present, than about the future (perhaps, it is not much to say about it?). And, the future usually appears as indefinite – since it still has to happen, it is more difficult to talk about it.

When society turns towards the past, it is difficult to tell even about a supposed future. The future, by nature, is much more abstract than the past - we do not know. But in the Soviet society, it has been common only to talk about the future – as it has to be (that, for instance, communism has to come). The past has been rejected and re-interpreted; only the present and the future have been legitimized. Hence, the collective memory has been fretted by amnesia, the society has been busy with illusions. This mode of behavior (creating of illusions) today has become turned towards the past, which is out of reach.

This complexity of expressions about and around the Orthodox Church in Russian contemporary society uncovers different aspects in the condition of contemporary society itself, as one can see above. The common search for roots and untouched remainings appears clearly - but a formal approach in this is often present, when, for instance, secularized young people try to accept the Church – or reject it.

## 7 Discussion and conclusions

The material that I have collected and put together in this work has not been easy to interpret, or to distance myself enough from (as mentioned in the methodological part). It was also generally difficult for my informants to talk about issues connected to the religious practice (both in the past and present) and the religious buildings (remained or disappeared) – a fact that could be regarded as part of the results.

There were so many other issues that appeared around my research questions, and also around the questions I asked in the interviews.

### 7.1 “Forced forgetting”; the sense of interruption

Some of the interviewees' stories concern the practice of terror and arbitrariness that the Soviet authorities conducted against the Orthodox clergy and the believers (inf. 5,6). Some of the historical documents presented in the section “Historical overview” confirm this as well. The conditions under which religious practitioners were living could also be described as unreliable, arbitrary and deceptive. The actual terror, in combination with atheistic propaganda and the closing/demolition of the churches created an atmosphere of constant fear and uncertainty. As a consequence, people tried to position themselves *against* religion so that they would receive as little harm as possible. What developed may be described, with Misztal's words, as “collective amnesia” (Misztal 2003, p. 46).

This situation resulted in, on the one hand, *rejection* of the past, and on the other hand, *indifference* towards the church buildings and religion - perhaps in the beginning as an involuntary defensive reaction. The new generations understood the sense of *indifference* as real: e.g. see how informant 9 described in the section “Rejection and indifference”, how her mother talked about the demolished church (meanwhile, we do not know to what degree the mother was indifferent towards the demolition).

But as the interviewees' narratives also have shown, the situation changed and the new generations have memories, which seemed to contain black holes. They did not know much about religion, or what the church buildings or practice is. “The upbringing became different” (inf. 9).

The sense of *interruption* was constantly present during the interviews. Some informants expressed this explicitly: e.g. they stated their distrust against the “new” priests and the Orthodox Church

because of the interruption in the religious traditions (inf. 1). This sense of “abyss in time” (Terdiman), on the other hand, may explain the preoccupation with the past that now seems to characterize life in Russia. In media and in social life, a disproportionately large part of the discourse is about the Russian past. Russia's place in contemporaneity is also mediated in retrogressive terms, where the Orthodox religiosity plays an important role.

The informants' accounts indicate that their relation to old, remaining church buildings appear in many ways to have improved. The churches' *age value* and especially belonging the *uninterrupted* religious tradition and continuity of the religious service give the churches some kind of legitimation. Here, it should also be emphasized that their relation to the new churches is not always negative. But it seems that the new churches are perceived also as continuers of the tradition. When the old churches were reused or mutilated during the Soviet times, the buildings became the subject of a kind of exclusion or even erasure in the mind of the informants (“ruins”, “bad smell”). Now, the restoration of churches is perceived positively, as well as the fact that they are being “re-adapted” as religious buildings.

When authorities permitted religion, after years of “forced forgetting”, a lot of people suddenly became religious. At this point, according to my informants, people's perception of the Church and religiosity appeared in many ways as formal. The religious traditions that had survived, even if altered in some parts, were of a ritualistic kind, though their meaning was in many ways forgotten (i.e. not transmitted from generation to generation automatically). In combination with the feeling of the church buildings' sacrality, the ritualistic habits and their more informal interpretations are maybe the most prominent, common denominators of the church goers I have encountered in this project, in relation to church buildings. Formalized and bodily repeatable, elements of religious practice seem to have been the first ones to re-establish and be commonly embraced. The church buildings, as spatial and highly visible expressions of religiosity, play an important role in this process, not least in the context of interruption of the collective memory.

Meanwhile, the Russian society is highly secularized, in a way much similar to other parts of the Western world. In view of this fact, and judging from how the interviewees describe the role that religion and religious practice play in their lives, religiosity might be a way for them to deal with the past, even to *heal* the past, which is a mode for the collective memory to operate. The attempt to

formally follow religious habits can also be seen as one of the ways to bind the present to the past (to deal with the interruption).

The expectations of ethical kind towards the contemporary clergy, described in section “The ethical dimension”, can also be seen as a search for the cohesion in the society.

From the above, the conclusion can be drawn that in the Russian society the sense of interruption in time, which otherwise is a characteristic for modernity, is highly present. The years of “forced forgetting” have created a desire to deal with the past. The Orthodox religion plays an important role in this process, with its formal rituals and traditions. The church buildings are in this way the essential and visible expressions of the collective memory.

## **7.2 The ritual of remembering; churches as sacred places**

My informants generally show respect for the formal rituals of the Orthodox Church, and formal traditions such as the rite of Eucharist. The Eucharist is founded on the idea of remembering.

"Do this in remembrance of me", Jesus said during the Last Supper (Luke 22:19, 1 Corinthians 11:24-25). Both Misztal and Nora have noticed that the ritualistic repetitiveness can be viewed as an archaic way to remember. The connection of the believers to the church buildings can also be expressed in this way. To follow the ritual *exactly* is important (“you should do it that way”); the restrictions have symbolical, archaic meanings. For instance, the rule that women are not allowed into the sanctuary – is (merely) based on the fact that Jesus was a man. Few people seem to understand the exact purpose of this rule today but keeping it is very important to the believers I have met in this project.

The connection that believers experience with the churches is emotional and what may be called *theatrical*. The church goes are part of the mystery, in which moving, gestures, clothes, colors, and the smell of incense are included. The derelict churches, as deprived of all that, can evoke rejection: they are “just ruins”, have “bad smell”. They are not churches anymore, not “sacred places” - but can be that again. “Do not go there” (inf. 7 about her grandfather saying about the abandoned church). Simultaneously, the ruined churches evoke sadness – and desire to rebuild them. The old derelict church architecture can even give some revelations (see in the “derelict churches”-section,



inf. 1's story).

The implied importance of formal religious rituals can be a way of *dealing with the past*. The church building is a place where it happens – the place for connections in time. The feeling may be described like this: looking at the old church, there is suddenly a sense of a perspective in time, with all the voices, and the smells, a young girl singing that now should be more than 100 years old... The vision disappears but remains in the memory, and in some way it gives fullness to the life, as a kind of a necessary revelation.

Sacred places that "have remained" sacred during the Soviet era, where the religious service has not been interrupted, bring positive feelings now, "just because they last" (as *heritage*, see p. 14 in the thesis) - but not only this. The long sequence of repeatable prayers to God, that, in addition, has not been interrupted in time creates some kind of value, as Russian believers use to say, *namolennost'* (it can be described as "feeling of a place where many prayers to God were conducted uninterruptedly") – the special materialized feeling of sacrality. In the section "Orthodox church buildings and services" I quote P.-A. Bodin who describes "spirituality's material manifestations" in the Russian Orthodox tradition. It seems like a materia becomes holy by the sanctifying, but also as quantity goes into quality. Hence the relationship to the old and valuable Orthodox icons that are not only representations but something more than this (of course not original, but I think some kind of mediator to original). The new churches do not seem to evoke such associations of sacrality (inf. 3), but their very old style seems to be a some kind of legitimation of their value in the peoples' eyes.

To conclude, the old churches cannot be regarded *only* as ordinary old significant buildings (or *conventional* heritage), because of the experience of the (Orthodox) sacredness, and their materiality might be experienced differently because of sanctification because of rituals and presence of relics, not only because of cultural significance (as a heritage). The ritual and its repetitiveness, especially the ritual of reminiscence, or remembering (the Eucharist) seems to contribute strongly to the feeling. The archaic way to remember feels maybe obsolete now, but its survival shows its relevance in the modern society.

### 7.3 Collective memory as a creative act

As mentioned in the theoretical part, the character of memorizing requires creative identity-activity in order to interpret the past. As Lowenthal claims, material heritage is "the icons of identity".

Such *newfound* social identity seems to include the newfound relation to the churches. There is constant appealing to the past in the society (as mentioned above), but the past is "the icon" as well, created in the present and by the present. Again, new rituals and new habits create a new identity.

But in the Russian society, the transformation of identity has happened too fast (the most important is that it could happen several times during a one generation's life). The claim "I found my wings" (inf. 2) now has double meaning, double interpretation, both connecting and mixing the past and the present. As a result, a more multidimensional kind of *meaningfulness* appears: "wings" are not only wings of calling, but also wings of faith, by the providence. The past is being interpreted in various ways, creating multidimensional identities. Thus, *meaningfulness* creates the icons of the past, it is heritage (in form of meaning) that creates the *real story* – or the constructed past if you will. We create myths, whether real or not. However, the newfound meaning and consistency might overcome the chaos and disorder of the world.

The ritual of reminiscence as a constantly re-created metaphysical present (where there is no particular "past") is also a creative act of remembering, in terms of creating a newfound identity. The act of forgetting is also a part of the process that actually can be described in terms of narrativity.

Searching for *meaningfulness* can, as I mentioned above, generate the construction of a past. The Pokrovskaya church in the Baranchinsky settlement is one example. Though, the keynote there is an exceptionally strong sense of impermanence: the place has fully changed few times, even during the one's life - even during my own life (appx. III). Obviously, this mutability feels as chaotic and meaningless (when literally "all that is solid melts into air" - Berman). If the one generation has felt sorry about the disappeared church, the other do it about the disappeared school – or both. And, it is not any logic in that. But the collective memory, in searching after context and explanation, creates the new identity, where, for instance, the new school gets same kind of legitimation as the demolished church has had, and has been built *instead* of the church. Additionally, this succession

can be deliberately manipulated: who knows why the people in the Baranchinsky settlement believe that the school has been built of the church bricks? Could it be the manipulation of the collective memory, done by the Soviet authorities?

With Nora's words, buildings still may appear as illusions of eternity, even though they are perishable. Now there is a request for something *permanent* in the society - which creates a new social reality. The old church building as sacred place gives a promise for eternity, by its supposed (or expected) connection with the eternal world. It is a strong impersonification for the collective identity, and it might give two ways of remembering: by its materiality, and by its perceived timeless sacrality. Are these two different ways to remember? If we think about outcomes, what we get in practice, answer is yes: some examples are contemporary conflicts between heritage authorities and church authorities on what to do with the beautiful old church, where the contemporary understanding of sacrality can be in conflict with the understanding as heritage. But in both cases, the discussion is about the *new* identity, not the old one – even if the parts not think about it.

Why is it relevant to discuss the creation of new identities, while using retrogressive and conservative ideas? I think it is a tendency in the contemporary world to *look back*, and not seldom *manipulate* “new-old” identities, with the material heritage as a part in this process. Therefore, it is worth to pay more attention to this, in connection to the heritage research.

## **7.4 Conclusions**

The question I wanted to answer was how Russian people relate to historic church buildings, in terms of remembering, memory, forgetting. I wanted to know how the “re-adoption” of the churches as sacred buildings is handled and find out how people deal with their memories of the churches from the Soviet era.

Some main threads can be found in the research data. From the informants' stories it can be seen that the historic church buildings (and relations to them) are now an important element in the Russian contemporary society. This should also be seen against the background of the contemporary attention to the past (as a result of modernity, and the Russian Revolution as in some way an extreme expression of this). The churches are an important part both as heritage (cultural significance in the secularized society) and as “re-adopted” religious buildings, as sacred places (as

experienced by believers). There can be discussions about churches as sacred places – is a heritage site as such a sacred place? I tried to discuss the Christian, particularly Orthodox, view on sacrality: an Orthodox church is a sacred place not only by its age or cultural significance, and my interviewees' stories show this. In my informants' stories, this double perception of historic church buildings seems to appear.

As the Orthodox churches are a part of the Russian history – and this itself is in turn an important part of the contemporary discourse. Furthermore, the churches appear in the interviewees' memory and mind in a rather *emotional* way, both positively and negatively. The emotional significance of following the formal rituals is an important part of the relation between people and their church buildings. The abandoned churches' architecture can also be perceived emotionally: either as ruins with bad smell - or majestic structures that evoke some positive associations. The “re-adaption” is perceived positively. The sites for destroyed churches appear, with the change of time, as reminders of discontinuity and “forced forgetting”. This incoherence in time is replaced, insensibly, by another continuity – a created, new identity, where the past echoes in the present.

The memories from the Soviet era are rethought and reconsidered by the respondents that have lived under the Soviet times. The indifference is replaced by positive associations, mostly; but the contemporary picture of churches and religion during the Soviet era is more or less constructed. The fact of discontinuity is though well-understood, the big part of the respondents tries to deal with it. The reminders about ethics and morality are a result of this dealing and a common request from the big part of the society.

## 8 Sammanfattning på svenska

Arbetets titel: *Att minnas kyrkor: Rysk-ortodoxa kyrkor och människor genom tider av förändring*

Mitt intresse i hur minnet fungerar har uppstått mot bakgrund av min uppväxt i före detta Sovjetunionen och de förändringar jag har sett framför mina ögon under perestrojka-tiden. Ett av de viktigaste kännetecknen för förändringarna blev ett plötsligt intresse för religion och returen av byggnaderna till den ortodoxa kyrkan. Dessa före detta kyrkor har stått och förfallit i några decennier – eller används till något annat. Som uteslutna ur det sociala livet, så har de varit uteslutna ur folkets minne i stort sett, under Sovjettiden. I och med perestrojkan har situationen förändrats och är nu mycket annorlunda i jämförelse med Sovjettiden.

Den fråga som jag ville svara på i undersökningen är om det förhållande människor i nutida Ryssland har till historiska kyrkobyggnader, hur de avbildar det, i termer av minnen, memorering, glömmande. Hur tänker de om återanvändandet av kyrkor som sakrala byggnader? Vilka minnen har de om kyrkor från den Sovjetiska eran?

Arbetets mål är att fördjupa vår förståelse för hur människor förhåller sig, och beskriva deras förhållande till historiska kyrkobyggnader.

Som en teoretisk referensram, har några teoretiska begrepp och förklaringar används från minnesforskningens fält, där jag tar framför allt Barbara Misztals forskning. Det teoretiska begreppet *kollektivt minne*, med sin narrativa karaktär, blev viktig som instrument för sökandet för meningsfullhet och överbyggandet av “avgrunden i tid”, den känslan som många forskare menar är karaktäristisk för modernitetens upplevelse. Vidare, *minnesplatser*, som materialiserat minne, framträder som förmedlare av minnet i vår tid. *Sakrala platser* (och kyrkor som en typ av dem) kan också beskrivas som minnesplatser, men deras underförstådda, och genom ritualerna framförda, *sacralitet* skiljer dem från “vanliga” minnesplatser – men ger dem karaktär av “borta från vår tid”. Den nutida minnesprocessen är karaktäriserad av kreativiteten och identitetsskapandet, där ovan nämnda narrativitet spelar en viktig roll. Minnesprocessen inkluderar inte bara memorering, utan också glömmandet; “*påtvingat glömmande*” brukar vara en del av minnesprocesserna i mindre demokratiska länder, där också materiella minnesmonument kan tas bort avsiktligt. Det kan resultera i vad som några forskare kallar *kollektiv amnesi*.

This study follows partly the inductive, partly the deductive logic. As an inductive study, it is explorative (explores “the key issues” in the particular case, i.e. issues of importance). As a deductive study, it explains and illustrates the theoretical concepts that are presented in the theoretical part

Min studie kan beskrivas som följande både deduktiv (förklaring, beskrivning) och induktiv (upptäckande) logik, och metoderna och materialtolkningen har utvecklats med tiden. Utgångspunkten för studien blev mina minnen om två kyrkor i Nizhnij Tagil i Ryssland.

Det blev ett fallstudie som grundas på nio intervjuer, mer eller mindre strukturerade. De intervjuade är kvinnor med förhållanden till Rysk-ortodoxa kyrkan, i ålder 37-85 år, som berättar om sina minnen från Sovjettiden, perestrojkan och nutiden vad gäller kyrkobyggnader samt förhållandet till Rysk-ortodoxa kyrkan som sådan. Rent territoriellt är deras minnen kopplade till den ryska staden Nizhnij Tagil med begränsande territorier, där de alla bor och där alla kyrkor de nämner finns.

Det kompletterande materialet har hittats i arkiv (i Nizhnij Tagil), i litteratur och på internet samt via deltagande observation.

Den tidigare forskningen handlar, å ena sidan, om minnesforskningen som sådan, och å andra sidan, om den specifika ryska situationen, med sin historia över de sista 100 åren. Vidare, den nutida diskursen, som kan karakteriseras som retrospektiv (vänd till det förflutna), har många kopplingar till den ryska ortodoxin, i sökningen efter den nya ryska identiteten. Rötterna är gamla och grundar sig i ryska, även bysantiska, historien, där nära förhållande mellan den sekulära och den kyrkliga makten har alltid varit stark.

För att kunna analysera hur de intervjuade förhåller sig till de rysk-ortodoxa kyrkobyggnader, har den rysk-ortodoxa gudtjänsten redovisats, framför allt den rysk-ortodoxa liturgin, bland annat genom en deltagarobservation i en av de berörda kyrkorna. Vidare, en kort historisk översikt har presenterats, över de sista 100 åren med fokus på den ryska ortodoxin och dess förhållande till statsmakten, Nizhny Tagil och dess kyrkor.

Intervjumaterialet som sådan har bearbetats och sorterats, och några frekvent förekommande teman hade blivit urskiljda. Det sorterade materialet sammanställs i tre stora kapitel, som handlar om minnen om religionen, minnen om kyrkor samt den ortodoxa kyrkan i nutiden. Minnena om religionen handlar om godtycklighet (av de sovjetiska myndigheterna emot de troende och prästerskapet under framför allt de tidigare sovjetiska perioder), förkastande och likgiltighet (som reaktioner av de vanliga sovjetiska medborgarna mot religionen under det sovjetiska styret),

resterande vanor och övertygelser (som inte alltid uttryckte sig i de ordinära ortodoxa uttryckssätt, utan ofta i mer ovanliga och dolda former), intresset till religionen och det utbredda dopet av sovjetiska människor under perestrojkan, samt minnen om prästerskapet. Minnen om kyrkor har delats upp enligt följande teman: förfallna kyrkor (att de kunde väcka olika reaktioner, under den sovjetiska tiden och framåt), försvunna kyrkor (hur de platser där kyrkor tidigare stått uppfattades och uppfattas, hur platserna förändras över tiden, samt hur överhuvudtaget faktum av försvinnandet upplevs), kyrkor som inte slutade fungera under sovjettiden (hur det upplevdes då, och senare), samt nya kyrkor (vad är det för skillnad i upplevelsen av nya och gamla kyrkor, och varför). Kapitlet "Kyrkan i samtiden" tar upp sådana aspekter som den etiska sidan i det nutida förhållandet mellan kyrkan och samhället (ofta förekommande temat hos vissa informanter speciellt vad gäller det "nya" ortodoxa prästerskapet), brytning av traditioner och konservatism (det orsakssamband som kan ses i mina informanters berättelse, dock oftast implicit), den nutida vanan att gå till kyrkan (kopplad till det föregående temat, och där formalism i det religiösa utövandet behandlas närmare, och vad för betydelse det har) samt framtida relation till kyrkan.

I diskussionen analyseras materialet utifrån de teoretiska begrepp som redovisas i teoridelen. Först, "påtvingat glömmande", som är nära sammankopplat med den atmosfären av terror och godtycklighet, men också med de fysiska försvinnandena av de materiella monumenten från den föregående tiden, har tagits fram. Som resultat av "påtvingat glömmande" har den kollektiva amnesin utvecklats, vilken också uttrycker sig i den allmänna känslan av "avbrott i tid" (för övrigt, karaktäristisk för modernitet). I samhällets försök att överbygga detta spelar konservatism och den ortodoxa religionen en framträdande roll, med sina formella ritual och kyrkobyggnaderna. Hit hör olika aspekter, inte minst folkets etiska krav till det ortodoxa prästerskapet. Kyrkoritualerna i sig, speciellt eukaristin, är ett gammalt sätt att minnas, till detta hör också den ortodoxa uppfattningen av kyrkobyggnadens sakralitet, speciellt oavbruten. Det ger nu de gamla kyrkobyggnaderna en dubbel betydelse: som kulturarv (modernitetens produkt) och som (tidlös) sakral plats. Dock den identitet som skapas i samhälle som till synes vänder sig till det förflutna, är inte gammal utan ny, paradoxalt nog: begäran för någonting permanent, sökandet efter sina rötter skapar en helt ny identitet.

I slutsatserna konstateras det att den ortodoxa kyrkan och dennes byggnader är nu en viktig del av samhället, av det sociala livet, vilket också ska ses mot bakgrund av den allmänna

uppmärksamheten för det förflutna i moderniteten som sådan, och den ryska revolutionen som en del av den. De gamla kyrkobyggnaderna ses som både kulturarvet och de sakrala byggnader (i mening av den ortodoxa sakraliteten); det faktum att de nu igen används som sakrala, väcker nästan alltid bara positiva reaktioner. Människor förhåller sig till kyrkorna ofta emotionellt, och de formella ritualerna är en viktig del av det. De platser där kyrkorna tidigare varit men försvunnit under sovjettiden är nu omtolkade som påminnelsen för diskontinuiteten och amnesin, som resultat av det sovjetiska avbrottet i tid. Samhället försöker att bearbeta diskontinuiteten, och på det sättet skapas en ny identitet, med hänvisning till det förflutna och moral, men inte densamma.



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### 9.3 Images

Cover: the church of Alexander Nevsky, view over the Tagil city pond. Photo of author, summer 2012

1. The Nizhny Tagil view, photo 1879: <http://visualhistory.livejournal.com/1616280.html> [2017-05-22]
2. The Nizhny Tagil map: Google maps
3. The church of the Ascension: in Chemezova, V. A. (2014), p. 59.
4. The church of the Alexander Nevsky 1959: in Koverda, I. T. (1993)
5. The church in the Travianskoe village: Gavrilova Svetlana I., 1984
6. The church in the Rybnikovskoe village: Korotovskih Tatiana A., 2009
7. The cross on the place for the Vhodo-Ierusalimsky cathedral: <http://gidpotagilu.ru/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/%D0%9F%D0%BE%D0%BA%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%BD%D1%8B%D0%B9-%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B5%D1%81%D1%82.jpg> [2016-12-12]
8. The Pokrovskaya church in the Baranchinsky settlement: in Kuznetsova N.V. (2012)
9. The Kazanskaya church in Nizhny Tagil: in [http://historyntagil.ru/books/11\\_07.htm](http://historyntagil.ru/books/11_07.htm) [2016-10-26]
10. The St. Nicholas church in the Nikolo-Pavlovskoe village: <http://xn--80aaiiocs7akm5bzi.xn--p1ai/%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%B2%D1%8F%D1%89%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%BD%D1%8B%D0%B9-%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%BA%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%B9-%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%80%D1%88%D0%B8%D0%BB-%D0%B1-2/> [2017-01-03]
11. The church of Dmitry Donskoy in Nizhny Tagil: [http://www.temple.ru/show\\_picture.php?PictureID=205453](http://www.temple.ru/show_picture.php?PictureID=205453) [2016-12-30]
12. Inside the church of the Alexander Nevsky during the Sunday service: author, 2016-10-09



# Appendices

## APPX. I. Interview questions

### Topics:

#### **People's religious practice:**

Describe what you usually do in the church today

Do you always do the same things in the church when you are there? Can you explain why?

How often do you go to the church?

Which days of the year is the most important for this? Why?

Do you go to the church with someone, or alone? Can you explain why?

#### **Thoughts**

What do you think about when you pass the church on your way to something else? What do you think when you see the church?

How often do you think about the church/religion?

#### **Meaning today**

What does the church mean to you today?

Can you describe in what way is the church important to you? What is most/less important?

Do you talk about the church with your friends / family / children / grandchildren? How do you talk about this?

#### **Memories about religion as a child during the Soviet time**

Can you describe the church you remember it when you were a child/young?

Do you remember how your family / parents / grandparents used to talk about church and religion?

What you/they did think about activities there (or a way it was used)?

#### **Religion and the future – how they would like to see this? Hopes, expectations**

What do you think can be in the future with the church/religion?

Can you describe what your hope/expect about religion?

#### **Resumed (restarted) religiosity: why they start going to church again (after the break because of atheism)**

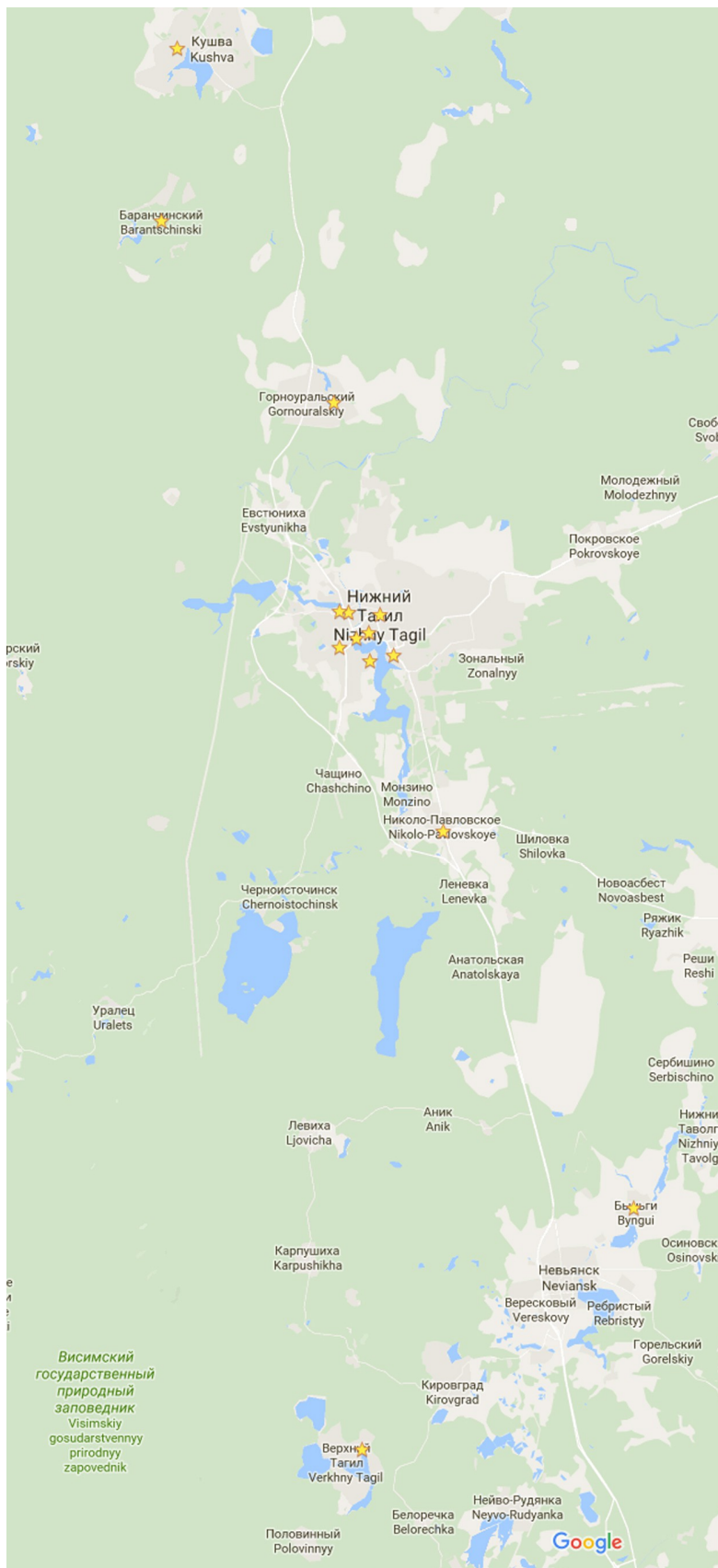
Can you explain why did you start go to church?

When did you start go to church?

Could it happen that someone of your relatives/contacts went to church under the Soviet time?

What do you know about that?

## APPX. II. Nizhny Tagil and surroundings – churches mentioned in the thesis





### APPX. III. Transformation of the church place



The Pokrovskaya church in the Baranchinsky settlement over time, top down:

1. Early 20th century;
2. Late 1930s (the destroying of the church, the new school to the left);
3. Somewhere before 1953, monuments of Lenin and Stalin in the park;
4. 2013 – the new Pokrovskaya church is almost ready – but neither the place nor the style are exactly the same; the school is gone.



The symbol of permanence is, ironically, the base of the former monument to tsar Alexander II, which after the revolution 1917 was redone into the monument to the revolutionary heroes, and now, deprived of the upper part, is just nothing but pure heritage (red structure on the last picture).

