

## ARTICLES

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### ARCHEOLOGIES OF THE RECENT PAST AND THE SOVIET REMAINS OF THE COLD WAR IN POLAND: A CASE STUDY OF BRZEŹNICA-KOLONIA, KŁOMINO AND BORNE SULINOWO

#### ABSTRACT

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In this paper we analyze three places extensively used by the Soviets in Poland during the Cold War: Brzeźnica-Kolonia, Kłomino and Borne Sulinowo. We treat these places and artefacts found there as heritage. However, instead of calling for their urgent preservation, we try to argue that heritage does not need to be perceived as a dead past. Material culture and material transformations in landscapes of the recent past last and survive their own times. The goal of this paper is to pay archaeological attention to the duration of the things and landscapes from the recent past *in the present*.

Key words: heritage, materiality, archaeologies of the recent past, Cold War, ruins, landscape

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#### INTRODUCTION: ARCHAEOLOGIES OF THE RECENT PAST

Over the last decade, there has been a clearly discernible archaeological interest in material culture of the recent past (Shanks 2007; Webmoor 2007; Webmoor, Witmore 2008). Of course, archaeology has been interested predominantly in material culture from

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its very beginning (Trigger 2006). However, it is claimed that post-processual archaeologies have lost, or at least obliterated, what seems to essentially constitute the practice of archaeology: the dirty, broken, material, day-to-day things. In accordance with it, archaeology is the discipline of things (Olsen *et al.* 2012). Material culture is, in this perspective, neither simply text, nor episteme or social body, as it was usually understood among post-processual archeologists (Buchli, Lucas 2001a; Olsen 2003, 2010). This new archaeological interest in material culture of the recent past is more about approaching things in their being and their thingness, so to speak (Olsen 2010; see also Heidegger 1975; Gosden 1994; Thomas 1996; Kowalski 2001).

This rather simple observation, a plea for *re-membering things* (Olsen 2003), has given a new fresh air to archaeological research. Broadly speaking, this interest in material culture goes hand-in-hand with the fascination with the contemporary times. Here, archaeology has nothing to do with a distant past (e.g. the Neolithic, the Bronze Age), rather it approaches how memory is inscribed in and through material culture now, in the present. This is the reason why such approaches are called either as an archaeology of the contemporary past (Buchli, Lucas 2001a), an archaeology of the recent past (González-Ruibal 2008), or an archaeology *in* and *of* the present (Harrison 2011; Kobińska *et al.* *in press*). Along these lines, for example, Laurent Olivier (2003, 2013) claims that the present is much more archaeological than a distant past. Such a claim seems to be quite true as long as archaeology is constituted by the research of material culture. If, as it is often pointed out, our times are, among others, those of garbage, waste, never-ending rubbish dumps (in short, fields and landscapes of material culture), then it is only nowadays that archaeology may become socially and culturally relevant (see more in González-Ruibal 2008). As a matter of fact, this is precisely the premise of William Rathje's longstanding studies on the Americans' garbage (e.g. Rathje, Murthy 2001).

What is especially worth emphasizing apropos a new interest in things among archaeologists is its deeply paradoxical situation. What was for many years considered as a fundamental weakness of archaeology (that it rather approaches things than people) is now to its own advantage (Harrison, Schofield 2010; Olsen 2010; Olsen *et al.* 2012; Olsen, Pétursdóttir 2014). Let us recall an insight of a social anthropologist Edmund Leach (1973, 768) who once benevolently advised that archaeology should approach people (Indians) behind artefacts, not simply artefacts for their own sake. Here, as it is succinctly claimed, actually lies the theoretical and practical strength of archaeological research. As Laurent Olivier (2013, 127) has recently accurately pointed out:

History will always have infinitely more to say about past events, just as anthropology will have more to say about the way in which human communities function. The theoretical strength of archaeology resides in its exclusive relation to material remains, which is what distinguishes it from all other disciplines in the social sciences. It draws its immense theoretical potential from its study of the materiality of the present. As scholars from other disciplines have sensed, there lies therein the source of

a radically new approach to the world, for archaeology's relation to matter leads to a veritable phenomenology of the present.

This new interest in material culture ends up in fresh accounts on the role of ruins and material heritage in contemporary contexts (see more in Kobińska 2014a about 'the new'). By the same token, ruins, usually understood as relicts of the past, are not something clearly separated from the present. It is claimed that they are as much past as present (Gordillo 2013; Meskell 2013; Olsen, Pétursdóttir 2014). To put it simply, archaeologies of the recent past try to undermine some of modernist dichotomies, such as: past-present, spirit-matter, alive-dead or nature-culture (Thomas 2004). Even, as it was succinctly argued by Alfredo González-Ruibal (2013a), contemporary archaeological research which regards the recent past calls for a redefinition of archaeology itself. In other words, there is an urgent need to *reclaim archaeology beyond the tropes of modernity*; a search for new ways of archaeological engagement in approaching the material world.

Archaeologists of the recent past do not conduct excavations to collect new artefacts from the Neolithic or Bronze Age. They are rather interested in the ruins of the 20th and 21st centuries (Olsen, Pétursdóttir 2014), artefacts from the Spanish Civil War (González-Ruibal 2012), ruins of a council house in London (Buchli, Lucas 2001b), a World War II plane wreck (Legendre 2001; see also Schofield 2005), remains of oil-based urbanity (Vergara 2013); up to and including car or tram cemeteries (Burström 2009; Kobińska 2014b), to mention but a few. To put it simply, every ordinary piece of material culture can be here interpreted as heritage (Holtorf, Fairclough 2013). Day-to-day things, dirty pieces of objects, artefacts that have constantly been omitted by the humanities and social sciences are at the same time of crucial importance for the contemporary archaeologies (Kobińska *et al.* 2015). The fact that also Polish archaeologists have recently been studying the material remains of the recent past is also worth pointing out (e.g. Kola 2000, 2005; Głosek 2010; Zalewska 2011, 2013; Zalewska *et al.* 2014; Kobińska 2014b; Kobińska *et al.* 2015). In accordance with that, in 2014 a first Polish blog dedicated to archaeological research into the recent past was launched (<https://biografiaarcheologii.pl>, accessed 1.03.2015). All in all, mentioned research may be seen as an aftermath of the *return to things*; a new interdisciplinary attempt to reflect on the role and meaning of material culture beyond old schemas and clichés (e.g. Domańska 2006; see also Dant 1999; Kowalski 2001; Barański 2007; Krajewski 2008).

We have followed the above described perspective during our survey on 28–30<sup>th</sup> May, 2013 of the Soviet remains from the Cold War in Poland. These places are: Brzeźnica-Kolonia where we investigated bunkers and shelters in which a nuclear weapon was stored; remains of a town once inhabited by Soviet soldiers and their families (Kłomino); and Borne Sulinowo — a town which for 48 years was a base of the Soviet's *Северная группа войск* (Northern Group of Forces). In the next part of this essay we shortly describe histories of these places highlighting motifs of special interest from an archaeological point of

view. These places embody 'the archaeological' (Shanks 2012) in many ways: ruins, materiality, temporality, duration and heritage — these are the issues of the archaeological interest. After that, we focus on the Soviet remains conceived as material heritage of the recent past. In the last part we analyze the three places as landscapes of which people have been making use rather than simply preserving them for the benefits of the coming generations.

## THE 'ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES': BRZEŹNICA-KOLONIA, KŁOMINO AND BORNE SULINOWO

The results of the Yalta Conference in 1945 changed the political situation of Poland for several decades. The leaders of the Soviet Union, Great Britain and the USA decided that after ending hostilities, Poland will be under the Soviet Union's influence. Since that time, Poland became a country that was politically dependant on the Soviet Union, and thus the Soviet Army stationed within its borders for almost 50 years (Fig. 1).

In accordance to Joseph Stalin's command, the Northern Group of Forces (NGF) was established on 10<sup>th</sup> June, 1945. The Group emerged due to the reformulation of the 2nd Belorussian Army. Its main goal was to protect the inviolability of the western border and a new political order in Poland. The staff and command of the Group was located in Legnica where stationed the largest Soviet garrison. The Commander-in-Chief was Marshal Konstanty Rokossowski. Several smaller garrisons, mainly armour, air, and rocket were located along the western border of Poland within the so-called 'Recovered Territories', and they were subjected to the headquarters in Legnica. Thus, 70 thousands hectares of built-up area, ranges and forests were subordinated to the Soviet's command. This area, which constituted one-fourth of the whole country, was separated from the administrative division of Poland and it was fully under the command of the NGF (Kondusza 2011, 19–25). During that time, in Poland stationed the Soviet soldiers, whose number varied from tents to several hundred thousand, as well as the unknown number of the members of the families of officers and civilian personnel (Magierska 2000, 332–333).

One of the several Soviet military areas in the western Poland was Borne Sulinowo (Fig. 2). It was built on the terrain of the former German range named Gross Born. After the evacuation of the German Army, the whole area was taken over by the 90th Guards Rifle Division. During the next several dozens of years the range's area was one of the most secret military places in Poland. It did not appear on any official maps and lists of towns. Within its borders were also two post-German barracks towns: Borne Sulinowo and Kłomino, which were adapted and expanded by the Soviet Army. Soldiers lived mainly in the former barracks' buildings, however, for the officers and their families, as well as civilian workers, blocks of flats had been built. Some of them were of the 'Leningrad' variety (see also Buchli 1999). The characteristic feature of such blocks was the elevation made of white and blue mosaic. Borne Sulinowo was totally isolated and self-sufficient Soviet town.

In its grounds were, apart from the military objects, buildings for the public use, such as: kindergartens, schools, hospital, post office, bank, and sports halls. There were also cultural amenities such as: cinemas, theatres, libraries and a museum. The centre of cultural activities was the Officer's House which was the most impressive building in the city (Rohatyński 2003, 5–9; Rostkowski 2004, 85–102).

Constant rotation of people was typical for such military towns. The same situation was taking place in Borne Sulinowo. Private soldiers were there on duty for two years; officers, if they came with their families, for five years. Also, the civilian workers could not reside there for more than five years. The division counted more than 10 000 soldiers, and with the civilian residents the town was inhabited by more than 15 000 people. The characteristic feature of Borne Sulinowo was the ethnic and cultural diversity of its dwellers. In the city stayed Russians as well as representatives of all nationalities of the former Soviet Union, among others: Ukrainians, Armenians and Georgians. After the first half of the 70s the city was opened to Polish people who from that time trade there and contacted with the Soviet soldiers (Rostkowski 2004, 86–89).

The situation of Borne Sulinowo and other similar garrisons changed with the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. Due to the agreements between the Third Polish Republic and the Russian Federation, an operation of the Russian Army's withdrawal from the Polish territories had begun. The whole action was initiated in Borne Sulinowo when on 8<sup>th</sup> April, 1991, in the presence of the international delegation, the first departure of the Russian soldiers and their equipment took place. But the whole operation of retreating the Russian forces from Poland concluded on 17<sup>th</sup> September, 1993 (Magierska 2000, 336–338).

However, the individuals that were departing Poland took everything (not only the army's equipment) that could be packed into the goods vans. Thus, the Russians took heaters, baths, wash basins and parts of the pavements. This fact contributed to the devastation of newly abandoned buildings which were then taken over by the Polish administration. Also, local communities took part in this damage because they were stealing things that Russians had not been able to take with them. 5<sup>th</sup> June, 1993 was a date of an official opening of Borne Sulinowo by the Polish government. The town was, at that time, the youngest city in Poland and new inhabitants quickly started to move in.

A different situation happened to a second post-Soviet town, Klomino. It was founded near the southern border of the military training ground, where a German town Westfalenhof had previously existed. This town, following the evacuation of the Russian Army, has never been re-inhabited and from 2008 on, it has been being continuously demolished. Until today only a few buildings have survived and they are attractions for tourists who visit this — as it is sometimes called — 'ghost town' (Fig. 3).

Near the Borne Sulinowo range there is another unusual place about which until today historians do not have any detailed information. It was one of the best protected secrets of the People's Republic of Poland. Not far from the town Brzeźnica-Kolonia, during 1967–1970, was built one of the three depots of nuclear ammunition located in the Polish terri-

tories. It was supposed to be used for the potential attack on the Western Europe. This depot was named 'Obiekt 3002'. Until today there survived two underground bunkers 'T-7' which were two floor warehouses that could contain 160 nuclear warheads each (Fig. 4). There was also a building of the 'Granit' type which was built from the prefabricated reinforced concrete elements in which high-tech nuclear warheads, bombs and nuclear missiles were stored (Sadowski 2011, 49–52; Fig. 5). Nearby these bunkers were also military barracks with the welfare infrastructure. They have recently been destroyed by the State Forests.

The multiplicity and diversity of the military buildings in Borne Sulinowo and nearby territories make this area one of the most attractive regions not only in Poland but in the whole Europe. One can say that these places are interesting for archaeologists as well: ruins, materiality, temporality, changing contexts, cultural heritage are archaeological issues which are often taken up by archaeologists. Therefore, the goal of this paper is similar: in the next part of this text, we discuss and theorize the results of our filed survey of the previously described places.

## A WORLD IN RUINS

At first sight, material remains and transformations in the landscapes of Brzeźnica-Kolonia, Kłomino and Borne Sulinowo are the traces of how the Cold War and Soviet's occupation in Poland represent the past. It seems that surveying destroyed houses, decaying public utility buildings, ruined military infrastructure in the three places is a kind of time travel: travel from the present into a distant, bounded and dead past (see also Burström 2009). This is the reason why Kłomino is sometimes called the 'ghost town', an abandoned place no longer inhabited by people but by the dead ('ghosts'). What comes to mind while visiting the places is a sensation of watching a post-apocalyptic film. It is as if some traumatic event once happened there. Kłomino is like a landscape after such a catastrophe: a world in ruins (see more in Kobińska 2013, 2014b).

Ruins, or more generally speaking, remnants of the past are usually too quickly conceived as something lost and dead (e.g. Farmer 2005). As Gastón Gordillo (2013, 324) argues, such perspective is our legacy of modernism when the trope of ruin was "often conceived of as a bounded, self-contained, dead object, a relic of the past severed from the living geographies of the present". Although ruins and archaeological artefacts are the relics of the past, and most of them have lost their primary meaning and function, it does not simply mean that they do not function in contemporary contexts (e.g. Burström 1996; Kopytoff 2000; Darvill 2006). They are as much modern, in a way, as skyscrapers or cars we use every day. Material remains as well as material transformations of the landscapes *last* beyond their primary cultural contexts. The later events happened to things and landscapes belong to their long life histories. These histories deserve an archaeological interest. In short, Soviet remains of the Cold War are important not only because they are *Soviet*

*remains of the Cold War*. These remains may be of interest to the archaeologist approaching the use and re-use of the material remains of the recent past *in and of the present*.

An archaeological attention to chronology, the precise dating of each pit, artefact, building simplifies and obliterates the fact that all of them create one coherent material landscape in the present. This is precisely the goal of Christopher Witmore's (2013, 135) critique of *chronopolitics*:

By placing emphasis upon particular past episodes as comprised exclusively of lived events, the pluritemporal mixture falls through the coarse sieve of a modernist chronopolitics. The past as it was is gone, never to return. The past that persists in 'the memories that things hold' is here and now.

A good example of such mixture of temporality and materiality are the three investigated landscapes. The shelters in Brzeźnica-Kolonia were built between 1967–1970 as a part of secret plan ('Wisła') to destroy the West through a nuclear attack. It would be the beginning of the Third World War. But the facilities exist until now and are the very part of the present. It can be said that by *dying they actually were born for the present*. They shape the present and are shaped by it. Many people visit these places, as may suggest the artefacts like: beer cans, wine bottles or remains of the bonfires (burned wood) that we found there.

The same may be said about Kłomino — the 'ghost town'. Although most of the blocks and other facilities were built in the 70s and 80s for the Soviet soldiers and their families, this place is still visited by people. One of the blocks is even renovated to be a hostel in the near future. Another one will be rebuilt to become a museum. Similarly, Borne Sulinowo which was once a German base in the 30s, was later, until 1992, a top-secret base for the Soviet army. Now, it is a place where completely destroyed buildings are side by side with the very new ones. Such places seem to embody very opposite perspectives. One the one hand, one sees the old Soviet buildings, often in a total decay. On the other, the new buildings stand close to ruins. They seem to belong to two different modalities, two opposite worlds, and at the same time they create one coherent landscape in the present. In short, one can say that in the context of these three landscapes we, as archaeologists, have a unique chance to see how *archaeological sites* are born (see also Harris *et al.* 1993). The Soviet remains from the Cold War in Brzeźnica-Kolonia, Kłomino and Borne Sulinowo are examples of such places, of landscapes which last beyond their own death (and life). We describe them closer below.

## SOVIET HERITAGE AND ITS MATERIAL DURATION

The lack of material culture was striking to us during the survey of the places. Inside the two bunkers T-7 we noticed only a few fragments of metal pipes which were still located *in situ*. All metal doors, material culture used to store nuclear weapon and the weapon itself were missing. As pictures from the 90s show, the Soviets took only nuclear weapon from

there, the rest was left in the bunkers. The same situation happened to the third building, 'Granit' was — as some researchers, journalists and enthusiasts of the Soviet ruins (e.g. Sadowski 2011) suspect — a kind of garage where two tracks with missiles could be hidden. The building was in the forest, rounded by trenches. We documented one of them in which a barbed wire and one of the wooden posts as a constructive elements of the trench were still discernible (Fig. 6).

The same can be said about Kłomino where during the 80s lived almost 5,000 soldiers with their families. Nowadays, most of the blocks are destroyed. We approached some of them and found only a few artefacts like e.g. one Soviet shoe, fragments of newspapers, or remnants of a pan. Neither furniture, nor doors or windows or any metal elements remained there. The Soviet buildings in Borne Sulnowo were very similar in this respect. The old granaries completely lack material traces of the past events, the same situation was in one of the buildings in the city centre. An exception was a theatre in Borne Sulnowo where in a basement we found a lot of the Soviet relics. What this lack of material culture indicates is a very dynamic process of using this heritage (Fig. 7). Poles who settled there after the Soviets' departure from the country used it for their own purposes. The local inhabitants told us that bricks from the Soviet buildings were often used for constructing new facilities by Poles. What from one point of view can be conceived as a destruction of heritage, from the other, may be seen as a contribution to the potential creation of the new form. The death of some heritage means here quite literally the birth of another heritage.

The region where Brzeźnica-Kolonia, Kłomino and Borne Sulnowo are located is poorly industrialised. This is a rather impoverished part of Poland with many unemployed people. This is one of the reasons why every piece of material culture made from metal (aluminium, copper etc.) is taken ('re-contextualised') and sold in a nearby purchasing centre. These Soviet relics have become elements of new things, of new material culture.

Local people do not gather Soviet things only to sell them. There is an interesting example of a private museum in Borne Sulnowo where things left by the Soviets in the early 90s are stored. To see this place one must pay five PLN though.

Like many landscapes of ruins and relics of the past, the three that we analyzed have become landscapes of a creative street art. In each surveyed area it was impossible not to notice how people marked their presence in these places. Most of the graffiti comprised of simple sentences like: 'we were here 13.10.2010' (*'byliśmy tutaj 13.10.2010'*), or 'Sonia + David' (*'Sonia + Dawid'*). Nonetheless, there were also those which evidently have an artistic value. One of the artists, for example, used window holes as part of his work. The holes are like wounds through which blood is dripping down (Fig. 8).

Another worth mentioning process closely linked with the ones previously described is the fact that the three landscapes are quite literal material palimpsests (see more in Zalewska 2011; Kobińska *et al.* 2015). New words, new sentences appear on top of the others. There are words written in Polish as well as Russian. As it is often happening in such cases, they consist of very detailed information of when and who was writing down each sentence and word (Fig. 9).





**Fig. 1.** Location of the sites



**Fig. 2.** View on one of the blocks in Borne Sulinowo (author Dawid Kobiątka)



**Fig. 3.** A view on the blocks in Kłomino (author Dawid Kobiątka)



Fig. 4. A bunker 'T-7' in Brzeźnica-Kolonia (author Dawid Kobiąka)



Fig. 5. A shelter 'Granit' in Brzeźnica-Kolonia (author Dawid Kobiąka)



Fig. 6. One of the trenches in Brzeźnica-Kolonia with a barbed wire on the front (author Dawid Kobiąka)



Fig. 7. During surveying one of the buildings in Borne Sulinowo (author Dawid Kobiątka)



Fig. 8. Street art in Kłomino (author Dawid Kobiątka)



Fig. 9. Landscape of material palimpsests in Borne Sulinowo (author Dawid Kobiątka)



Fig. 10. Remains of the fire inside of one of the blocks in Kłomino (author Dawid Kobiątka)



Fig. 11. The use and re-use of the material past (author Dawid Kobiątka)



Although the three places are seemingly abandoned, they are still very alive. Borne Sulinowo has more than 4,000 citizens nowadays. Every place we visited, including the nuclear bunkers T-7 which are underground, has many material traces of quite recent human presence there. We encountered the remains of fires (Fig. 10). We found instant barbecues as well. All of this may suggest that the ruins have been often visited by people. Many of them, most probably, stay there for the night as well. Material memories of the places may suggest that they are the dead, lost and gone. However, the same material memories of places and things give a chance to the archaeologist to study how *the past that persists in 'the memories that things hold' is here and now* (Witmore 2013, 135). Indeed, material relicts of the Cold War are *here and now*; they are an inherent part of today Poland's landscape.

In accordance with it, many similar buildings which live after their own death can be easily discovered in Borne Sulinowo. One of them is the old guardhouse. Between 1934–1945 German soldiers had been sitting there and controlling who visited the town. Between 1945–1992, the very same place was a guardhouse for the Soviet soldiers. However, today the building is a shop where one can buy shoes or bags. This would be another example of how heritage is used rather than simply preserved for the benefit of future generations; how it is living, so to speak, beyond its own death (Fig. 11).

We hope that our discussion has implications for future research directions and for heritage management more generally. If material heritage often lasts beyond its primary context, then it does not have to be persevered at any cost for future generations. What is at stake here is not the fact that all material remains can disappear but rather that things never completely vanish: without the material past there is no present. This can one aspect of a new cultural heritage policy (Holtorf, Fairclough 2013): *heritage is for people*.

Heritage has been conceived for many decades as something priceless, something that deserve careful preservation and professional management. From this point of view, heritage was limited to outstanding achievements of humankind such as Stonehenge or Middle Ages' cathedrals. That is why heritage has been something rather separated from than integrated into society. However, some new, interesting things have recently happened within the heritage management sector. In 2005 a new *Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society* was announced. Due to the fact that it was signed up in Faro (Portugal), the convention is often simply called 'the Faro Convention'. Its repercussions are far reaching. It changes our understanding of heritage and its management. Now it is assumed that a right to cultural heritage is a human right *per se*. Everyone has the right to practice its own heritage. In short, *heritage is for people in the present*. It is about *doing heritage with people for people*. Robert Palmer (2009, 8) summarizes what the Faro Convention is proposing in the following way:

Heritage is not simply about the past; it is vitally about the present and future. A heritage that is disjoined from ongoing life has limited value. Heritage involves continual creation and transformation.

We can make heritage by adding new ideas to old ideas. Heritage is never merely something to be conserved or protected, but rather to be modified and enhanced. Heritage atrophies in the absence of public involvement and public support. This is why heritage processes must move beyond the preoccupations of the experts in government ministries and the managers of public institutions, and include the different publics who inhabit our cities, towns and villages. Such a process is social and creative, and is underpinned by the values of individuals, institutions and societies.

That is why heritage is relevant when it is a part of peoples' day-to-day life. This also means that sometimes elements of heritage may be changed, disintegrated, destroyed (as it happened to our case studies buildings) (see also Kobiałka 2014b). Nonetheless, there is nothing truly to complain about. Material culture and buildings in Brzeźnica-Kolonia, Kłomino and Borne Sulinowo have been extensively used and re-used by the local communities. People destroyed many buildings but also built some new ones. That is why, to paraphrase an old dictum: the (old) heritage is dead, long live the (new) heritage! So, perhaps the time has come to heritage managers to focus not only on how to preserve things from the past but on a creative cooperation with and engagement of local communities in using the past heritage for the good of living people.

## CONCLUSION

Ruins seem to embody how the past is separated from the present. That is why ruins might cause existential questions and reflections upon one's own existence and meaning of human life *per se*; how everything is *vanitas* (e.g. Burström 2009; see also Kobiałka 2014b). However, what ruins truly confront us with is something quite opposite: an issue of the duration of material culture made and used by people. This was the main aim of this paper: presenting how material heritage does not have to be understood as simply belonging to the past contexts (something what is dead), but as part of the present (something what is alive). Accordingly, using the examples from Brzeźnica-Kolonia, Kłomino and Borne Sulinowo we wanted to present our understanding of material heritage. Something what at first sight may appear as ordinary, abandoned remains of the unwanted past is, at the same time, creatively used and re-used in the present. This means that the Soviet material heritage in Poland (as most of contemporary ruins) lasts beyond its own death.

Archaeology is not just a study of the prehistoric or medieval times. It can be said that archaeology is, at its most elementary level, a way of perceiving and understanding of the surrounding world. This world consists also of material heritage of the recent past. The same concerns the three places discussed in this paper. Indeed, these places are of the archaeological interest: ruins, time, decay, materiality, changing contexts and heritage, among others, which without a doubt, are the archaeological issues. In short, one can say that in the context of these three places we as archaeologists have a unique chance to see

how *archaeological sites* are born. Indeed, we as archaeologists cannot to miss this unique chance.

Brzeźnica-Kolonia, Kłomino and Borne Sulinowo are not the only remains of the recent past in a constant process of ruination and decaying. There are many very similar places in today's Poland. In our opinion, there is an urgent need to do more archaeological research oriented towards the recent past. If, as it is often pointed out, our times are those of garbage, waste, never-ending rubbish dumps (in short, fields and landscapes of material culture), then it is only nowadays that archaeology may become socially and culturally relevant field of knowledge. Without any doubt, there is a need for the archaeologies of the recent past in the contemporary world. Such archaeologies broaden archaeological fields of interest and open up archaeology to dialogues with other humanistic disciplines. In a nutshell, the present is no less *archaeological* than the Neolithic.

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