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## Introduction: The 'Worthless' Dowry of Soviet Industrial Modernity

'… *when the old is dying and the new has not yet been born or is too faint to notice. It is a treacherous time to interpret: Is it just before dawn, or just after dusk?'*

—Lilia Shevtsova, on Gramsci's interregnum

### Entering the Ex-monotown

About 45 minutes after leaving Kaluga city the little bus turns again and passes the large concrete sign 'Izluchino'. But the town is nowhere to be seen; it lies another six kilometres further on, along the road rutted by trucks and frost, past the prison zone, an orphaned housing scheme and the industrial zones with their chimney stacks, abandoned workshops and parked up fleets of articulated lorries full of gravel and lime. There are also the hills of extracted waste rock and soil and huge quarries with swarming monster vehicles generating enormous quantities of dust. On blasting days, the windows of houses 15 kilometres away rattle from the

explosions used to begin the process of turning limestone into aggregates and cement.[1]

It is twilight and most of the 20 passengers are dozing fitfully as the bus bumps over the pot holes and speed bumps. Some have taken the 3-hour train from Moscow to Kaluga. They are returning from their working week in service industries or construction sites—hairdressers, electricians, plumbers, shop assistants. Others have been working the long day-shift in Kaluga, the region's capital, in shops, markets and the like. The factory buses from the city and the industrial zones—the '*promzones*'—are full of blue-collar workers. These buses are faster and more comfortable. They overtake us as we bump along, the driver of our propane-powered bus murdering the gearbox and swearing now and again for good measure.

The town's concrete entry 'sign'—the word for it in Russian is '*stela*'—appears to live up to its Greek etymology: a 'stele' is a stone slab erected as a monument, often for funerary or commemorative purposes. This is pointed out to me at the crossroads out of town by a retired worker as he takes me on his moped around the countryside to a spring where he collects drinking water ('less polluted than the local stuff from the river'). 'Look closely,' says Ivan Ivanych as we get off the bike. 'What do you see?' What I see beneath the two-metre-long Church Slavonic-style lettering of the town's name are the Soviet hieroglyphs of a lost age: a blue dumper truck next to the obligatory hammer and sickle. A coiled up length of plastic piping. An atomic chemical structure schematic (or is it a depiction of moons orbiting a planet?). A gear-wheel. A military badge. A conveyor belt. The ripples of the river. All these glyphs are bordered by a floral pattern. Sometime in the early 1980s, Izluchino was given this sign indicating its importance and illustrating its trades and products. This was at the height of its prominence as an industrial town serving the defence ministry. Along with some metal street furniture celebrating the 1980 Moscow Olympics these are the last signs standing of the prosperous Soviet past.

Ivan Ivanych retired last year as a technician from the oil pipeline terminal after having previously left the bankrupt polymer pipe factory in

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[1] On the 'promzone', or industrial zone as part of the urban environment of the monotown see Bolotova (2012).

1995. Between the pipe factory and oil terminal he worked at Geoform, supervising a machine milling industrial talcs and minerals that coat plastic windows. The whole town is in plastics, metals, or bricks and cement—all dictated by what can be extracted locally from the pits. Ivan's wife stayed at the 'Polymer', as everyone calls it. Now, also in her late fifties, she is a shift forewoman at one of the smaller plastic fabricators that split from the original Soviet enterprise. Ivan leans the moped against the bus shelter next to the sign; the abandoned state farm's fields turned long ago to scrub and stretch away as far as the eye can see. Now the forest is approaching the town once more. 'I started here,' he says, pointing to the image of the dumper truck. 'In the quarries like everyone else. Only later did the Polymer set up.' Again, he points to the image of the serpentine pipe in the town sign, which represents the work of fabricating steel and plastic pipes. 'Good times, but who works there now? Just the old guard left. Soon they'll all retire and the firm will go under' (Photo 1.1).

'But what about the rolling stock repairshop?' I point down the road a kilometre to the nearest industrial building next to the 15-hectare prison



**Photo 1.1**   Galina's Polymer factory. 'Glory to Labour' and date of erection (1971) in brick detail (Image courtesy of Alyona Kudriavsteva)

site. 'It's the same there. Most of the young ones have left or nearly left,' says Ivan, referring to the bus commuters' peripatetic existence, shuttling between the town and Kaluga, Moscow, or even Sochi, the site of the 2014 Winter Olympics. 'I'm too old for that, or I'd be doing it myself,' he adds.

Ivan Ivanych is a stalwart of the old guard of townspeople, accessible due to his frenetic energy yet easy-going manner and friendliness. He is bored by retirement, tired of waiting for grandchildren from his two children (two babies will in fact be born later on during my fieldwork). I am the perfect distraction. We zip around on his moped. He has a garden plot some distance from the town, so has the perfect excuse to get on his bike and ride around the area. As long as he comes back with some kind of produce, his wife is happy.

As a young man who came to the town in the early 1980s after the main factories were set up between the quarries, Ivan views the history of his town through the lens of a wider geopolitical rise and titanic fall of his country. At first glance his and many others' positions appear one-dimensional: the town grew from nothing, thanks to the workers. It grew to a bustling, proud and relatively wealthy place with excellent 'social wages'[2]—social amenities in kind linked to employment and infrastructure. It had the best House of Culture in the area—with theatrical stages and sound equipment better than the district capital's. The housing was better too once they moved out of the temporary accommodation in wooden barracks. Not to mention the pay, the perks and the enterprise canteen in the centre of town. 'While our relatives near Moscow had to queue for their meat, we had so much *kolbasa* sausage we'd let it go green in the fridge and then just chuck it away!' Although something of an exaggeration, this is a familiar refrain throughout the town among Ivan's birth cohort. It is true that after 1993 there were major wage arears and employment fell steadily in the main workshops and especially in the branches of the enterprise servicing the main plants.[3]

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[2] On the expansion of the social wage among workers and others in the period up to 1991 see Hauslohner (1987). For a broad comparison of case studies of changes to social wages from post-socialist countries see Rein et al. (1997).

[3] Despite the much reduced present blue-collar employment, the adjustment period was relatively typical of that experienced in Russia and was not characterized by a massive and sudden layoff of workers. This is the 'peculiar Russian model' described by Gimpelson and Kapeliushnikov (2011:

There is ample evidence of the outflow of labour in the ghost-like structures the town bus passes as it wends through the promzones.

Ivan's narrative is partial, however, as he and others admit. 'What about the other plastic and metals fabricating shop, Steelpipe, run by Felix Saraev?' I ask. 'Oh, well, that's different,' says Ivan. 'Felix Grigorievich made something of the *leftovers*' (He uses the industrially evocative metaphor '*opilki*'—'shavings'). Despite what Ivan says, there are plenty of younger workers there in one of the 'inheritor' workshops from the Soviet period. Similarly, while many young people travel to Kaluga to work at the new German, French, and Scandinavian automobile plants or to the Samsung monitor assembly an hour towards Moscow, some remain in the quarries, the brick makers, the limekilns and the cement works; the choice is not an easy one to make. But these are hardly 'leftovers' or as Elena Trubina has paraphrased Kaika and Swyngedouw (2000)—the 'worthless dowry' of Soviet industrial modernity (Trubina 2013). 'What about the state-of-the-art Siemens water boilers in the town's district heating plant, unveiled by none other than Anatoly Chubais?' I ask. Indeed, as Collier (2011) demonstrates, infrastructural inheritances such as centralized heating are not so easy to write off, reform or 'marketize'. Finally, I remark on the fact that the town's population is quite a bit bigger even than in 1989 (the last Soviet census date).

During conversations like these, local people switch in an instant from a tale of woe to a grudging acknowledgement of the town's relative emergence from the turbulent 1990s; with some additional prodding the same individuals will then switch their tone and tack once again. What slowly emerges is not a fierce local pride, but rather an expression of locally here-and-now well-enough-being; a common refrain is that while people don't have everything they want or need, they have 'enough'—'*nam khvataet*'. What is important to them is the experience of making the town a 'habitable', liveable place. People seek meaning in the relative absence of the kind of extreme economic insecurity so characteristic of the 1990s. And if their lives continue to be marked by insecurity (especially since

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2) and characterized by real wage cuts (through inflation, and the reduction in the second element in the two-tier wage structure of basic and bonus payments) and high labour turnover rather than involuntary redundancies. These phenomena did the work of downsizing in the 1990s.

the global financial crisis and the effect of sanctions against Russia), they look in quiet desperation both forward and to the past to 'better' times, in a self-positioning of perpetual interstitiality and unhomeliness. Regardless, or perhaps because, of the recent experience of historical crisis, the fraught search for 'habitability' among small-town Russians is at the heart of understanding everyday life in this ethnography.

## Researching Postsocialism: Accounting for Everyday Habitability

Researchers have been calling for some time for scholars to engage more meaningfully with local actors to bring out the specific meanings of the postsocialist everyday (Flynn and Oldfield 2006; Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008). Efforts in making personal worlds habitable emphasize the agency of ordinary people in the 'making do' manner of de Certeau (1984; cf. Caldwell 2004: 29) but do not downplay the importance of ongoing insecurity; in fact, quite the opposite. The striving for mundane comfort and ordinariness—in making an aquarium from scrap materials, stealing diesel fuel from work, drinking to excess with workmates and acquaintances in garage blocks, or the social intercourse of painting neighbours' nails or cutting hair as a favour—are all telling activities in terms of how people understand and deal with postsocialist reality a generation after 1991.

After Malaby (2002) these can be seen as part of a repertoire of practices based on dealing with 'contingency'. That is to say, 'uncertainty should not automatically be perceived as dangerous, problematic or even as a source of anxiety' (Allen 2006: 215), nor should it mean that analysis is reduced to thinking of people living what appear to 'us' as precarious lives, as governed by a deterministic economic rationality we would deny in ourselves. Specifically relating to postsocialist societies, Clarke (1999b: 14) points out various problems with labelling practices as 'survival strategies': time is not strategically managed, the different incomes of household members are not coordinated, and employment choice itself does not correlate to a rational income-maximizing strategy. In short, we

need other ways of thinking about how uncertainty is understood and integrated into life, over and above a household reproduction strategy approach. This book offers the fraught search for 'habitability', not as a master trope, but as an equivocal, ersatz conceptualization of what life is like beyond 'coping' with communism's collapse, but while crisis continues, is normalized, even. 'Habitability' as an ersatz, provisional term mirrors people's fragile, unfinished and improvised forms and practices of life-making in the Russian margins.

Malaby, writing on contemporary Greece, offers the term 'contingency' as a way of thinking about how people encounter uncertainty and interpret it, neither as a risk or threat (Honkasalo 2009) nor as something that is conceptualized in terms of control or minimization. This is not an embracing of risk, nor is it 'edgework'. Instead, it is insecurity somehow incorporated or accommodated within everyday life; 'contingency' becomes constitutive of lived experience. When insecurity in everyday life is prolonged, a person is not inured to it, but nonetheless it becomes equally a 'background' element which is then incorporated into general practices for making life more than 'bearable' or habitable in some way.[4] By virtue of everyday insecurity, people rely on equally unpredictable tactics: snatched and meagre practices of gleaning something of value from life.

If uncertainty is a category approaching the normatively neutral in everyday life, what emerges as an equally given is the intersubjective understanding of minor victories in carving out a habitable niche: 'my habitat', as Sasha puts it in the next chapter. Thus, despite a lack of generalized social trust, the immediate social sphere as a source of 'comfort'—whether in drinking and smoking at work and in the male-dominated garage spaces, or arts and crafts at home in a circle of female friends and relations—is integral to successfully developing habitability in the lifeworld. Being for others and being for oneself as well as social practices for their own sake are also part of this sense of making the world habitable (Keat 2000; Morris 2012b).

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[4] On the experiencing of and dealing with prolonged insecurity, compare Harboe Knudsen and Demant Frederiksen (2015) who have used the notion of grey zones to explore everyday lives and practices in Eastern Europe with a focus on situations in which uncertainty and ambiguity have become ordinary. See also Shevchenko (2011) on the permanence of crisis.

Contingency and its everyday response are therefore also important in moving analyses of postsocialist selves away from assumptions about Foucauldian governmentality. Looking more closely at the 'microphysics' of power requires situated analyses that reveal 'evasions' and 'refusals', as well as 'curious' and 'unexpected' alliances that arise out of confrontations (Walters 2012: 14). A good example is how work on the self among working-class men, more often than not, is *not* directed at moulding the self as an improved subjectivity or as a subject of the neoliberal order. Quite the opposite; comfort and habitability become humble categories of alternative existence in having 'enough' to avoid or distort externally imposed self-transformative work. This is both an 'evasion', but also an example of an alliance in the formation of postsocialist personhood with older normative values of 'autonomy' in work that arose before and during the socialist period. Habitable persons strive to be self-sufficient, not only materially in their livelihood practices, as an insurance policy against generalized insecurity in the present, but also in terms of personhood: 'having enough' presupposes a set of values that are at variance with the self as project and the individual as deriving self-worth through self-enterprise. 'Having enough' [*nam khvataet*]—as a number of people in Izluchino characterize existence—is both a marker of precarity but also a source of habitability that can only be achieved socially, in-common with significant others—worker subjectivities who share the same joys and pains.

Ironically, practices around 'having enough' and 'being comfortable' *without* engaging in prescribed work on the self (such as formal retraining in new production enterprises or aspiring to membership of the new middle class) often entail what appear to be equally 'enterprising' risk-taking activities in informal work, from gypsy taxi-driving to unregistered self-employment in plumbing, construction or even childcare and beautician work. What is significant about these activities is that they are undertaken precisely to avoid what is perceived as the degrading 'self-work' often needed to 'cut it' in the new neoliberal enterprises where autonomy and 'dignity-in-work' are too often found to be lacking (Morris 2012a).

Leading on from a response to self-governmentality, exploring postsocialist life through the conceptual prism of habitability requires a rounded understanding of the changing nature of personhood after socialism. In the

anthropological tradition, personhood emerges from a socially embedded understanding of the individual—always 'generated through *encounters with others*' (Skeggs 2011: 498). Following Skeggs' work on working-class personhood versus individualized, 'propertized' middle-class models of the person, in this book I ask the question: how have the 'working poor' understood and taken possession of personhood since socialism, given their even greater dispossession of 'property'—whether solidaristic labour collectives (real or mythological), a basic social wage, or industrial work itself as a reliable site of identity formation? Skeggs' informants were as uncomfortable with the label 'working class' as Izluchino residents and were equally lacking in economic and cultural capital, while aware of their marginality. Skeggs argued that her women informants 'disidentified themselves as "working-class"' (Crompton 2008: 110). Unable to take ownership of a class label they identified with being 'rough', they sought 'respectability' instead. Values around 'propriety' also emerge as surrogate class-based values. However, I argue that people in Izluchino are able to 'propertize' aspects of working-class culture and identity. Again, habitability emerges as an overarching category in ascribing value to alternative ways of dwelling in the sometimes harsh reality of postsocialist blue-collar life.

Working-class (and other forms of) personhood is marked in the small town by a stubborn attachment to the remnants of blue-collar identity and sociality. Sometimes improvised new forms of sociality and belonging emerge from the ruins of the old, for example, in both the figuratively and literally 'abandoned' space of the shop floor which is re-appropriated as a space of leisure and solidarity, even after meaningful production ceases. This is why tracing the enduring resources of labour and class in the opening chapters is carried out both spatially and mnemonically. The 'dowry' of Soviet industrial modernity turns out to be less 'worthless' than it appears—the compressed social geography of the town (little social mobility, a small middle class) impresses on people the importance of their own social resources held in common and emerging from a shared (and proud) past. No one else will help them (not the state, rarely the moribund factory enterprise). Mutuality and mutual aid, however fleeting, are equally 'normal' responses to contingency and the making of habitability, given the lack of alternatives. In terms of memory, the

understanding of the past-in-common as a period of relative 'comfort' in terms of the enterprise-related social benefits that accrued to workers remains important in understanding the present. When paternalism is sought, expected, but rarely gained in the new industrial enterprises, there are only two 'choices'—the involution of the household (White 2004) where shame and impoverishment lead to a turning away from the potential resources of community help or a reinvigoration of genuine autonomist working-class values that Skeggs sought in her own informants. This is not to say the path this research takes is not without risks: it is a case of avoiding the mistake of doubly orientalizing the research subject—as non-Western other and as classed other, as well as treading a line between presenting an unsatisfactory muteness of working-class life and assuming that the subaltern always and everywhere resists power.

Hopefully, by virtue of the presentation of the spectrum of lifeworlds in this ethnography neither 'choice'—involution versus autonomism—is offered as the whole story. Both are sought and enacted by people in Izluchino. Memory proves too much in the case of Uncle Lyova. In his eyes the disenfranchisement of a whole class leads to personal self-destructiveness and an ever-present, bitter anger—to a degree also present in son Sasha's personality. This form of traumatized working-class personhood is familiar to many students of Russia's demographic episode of mass alcoholism and premature death during and after Perestroika (Stuckler et al. 2009). By contrast, Lyova's son Sasha finds a 'habitat' of sorts in working-class practices of do-it-yourself (DIY), sociality and 'comfort' for their own sake, and for the sake of mutual recognition by significant social others—other workers. An emblematic case is the decorative hobby of home aquarium construction in which the advice and participation of social and class equals is sought, along with approval and recognition marking social inclusion into a category of autonomist class-based values. This is but one example of a set of practices *valued for their own sake*. Performances of self-sufficiency, resourcefulness, a certain amount of guile, inscrutability, loyalty, patriotism, stoic gallows humour, physical resilience and endurance, and a host of other markers may be deployed to propertize the working-class person long after socialism. These are performances of a 'person' and not an 'individual', because

more often than not these performances emerge as socially embedded categories pertaining to in-group staging of values.

Again, the small town compression of social space, where one is known to a wide circle of acquaintances, leads to an identity of self that is 'not so autonomously individuated, […] rather more socio-centric' (Carrithers 2000: 356). This is both constraining (hence the accent on propriety and respectability in working-class life) and invigorating, sometimes even liberating. This latter feeling is experienced in the sense that a person is not an atomized subject whose only hope is to self-discipline and self-improve; a person inhabits a space of ever-present consociates (with whom one shares an ever *visible* marker of class—the blue overalls of the manual worker). It also feeds into shared assumptions about comfort and habitability. If space and identity are understood as *a priori* socially-shared categories, it then becomes normative that the dwelling in these spaces and identities is also carried out in common: the sociality of practices, rather than the lone pursuit of the individual, is central.

## Enduring Ongoing Dislocation and 'Betweenness'

Crisis in recent living memory is most marked out as the period 1993–1998. These were the worst of years when most of the newly private or disaggregated inheritor businesses became obviously insolvent. The machine enterprise was split up completely only in 1998. In the mid-1990s the enterprise soldiered on, or rather, the unpaid workers kept on without salaries from one month to the next. While everyone suffered real privations at this time, the town showed resilience, and what emerges from talks about this period is not so much an understanding of the early-mid 1990s as a crisis, but of making do. Andrei, a six-foot-six-inches-tall welder known locally as 'shorty' who came to Izluchino in 1991, aged 21, from a neighbouring region, remarks:

> Yes, the town turned to a kind of voucherization of existence. It was like a time of betweenness [*vremia promezhutochnoe*]. You couldn't buy whatever you wanted any more as there was no money, but the actual goods available

didn't really change much so it didn't make any difference. You'd go to the shop and get your fish, your potatoes, sausage, just as before. I wouldn't call it a time of shortages or even queues. Of course it was different for my relatives back near Moscow in [names city] and in the big cities. But you see, Rodomirov, the Director, had been so effective at getting building materials and stockpiling them that we sort of just lived off that for a while. You know, instead of pay we'd get stuff to do our flats up with.

This is a different experience of the immediate post-Soviet living crisis to that experienced in larger urban spaces and in the countryside (Bridger and Pine 1998). It is not so much a narrative of survival, but of resilience, at least partly explained by an inherent toughness and stoicism within working-class life historically in Russia (Alasheev 1995b; Ashwin 1999; Temnitskii 2011). The enduring nature of the inner will to withstand privation and come through without complaint, the deceptive 'quiescence' of the Russian working class, remains at the heart of the experiences of workers as they attempt to make and shape their everyday lives as 'normal', and 'habitable'.

Andrei's story is at the heart of this experience and is explored in more detail later. At the same time he touches on another aspect of people's search for habitability—the understanding of the present as coming after an interstice or interval (the alternative translation of the word used by Andrei is the more everyday 'inbetweenness'). This is not to say that the present is postcrisis; nonetheless, it is as if everywhere there is a 'catching up' to do after a delay, after putting life on hold. At the same time for many (not just those who grew up in the Soviet Union, but those who have not benefitted significantly materially from the last 25 years—which may be the majority) the interstitial experiencing of the present continues (cf. Oushakine 2000: 995).[5]

'Things will get better soon; they have to.' The sense of temporal dislocation is then paradoxically enduring. People, young and old, feel 'out

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[5] Oushakine's idea of 'transitional objects' (e.g. the Soviet national anthem reworked) as ways of people coping with change is pertinent here too (2000: 1009–1010). The problem people face in developing meaningful purchase on the 'new' present, and the dangers of using familiar objects (Soviet symbols) to avoid this and 'retreat into the realm of illusion' is part of what Oushakine calls 'no(w)stalgia'.

of time'. This is particularly true for the workers in their forties and fifties. However, it is also striking to encounter this among younger people in their thirties who may only have a hazy, but nonetheless formative, memory of 'before'. A feeling of being 'unsynchronized' with the times may also arise from deeply embedded values and strong personal ties to other generations—as is true in any culture (Sanghera et al. 2011).[6]

People in Izluchino refer to the 1990s in an abstract way as an interval, rather than a time of troubles. Things are thought of as coming 'before' or after the changes: the early 1990s. Concrete naming or discussion of the 'collapse' or 'end' of the USSR is absent—an aspect of the 'silent' or 'speechless' culture and anomie of the helpless subjects of transition (Naumova 1999; see also Oushakine 2000).

Nonetheless, in Izluchino, major losses in core employment are understood not only as displacements and '*dislocations*' (Burawoy et al. 2002: 61) but also as *shifts* in patterns of employment and labour—people made do with their garden plots and petty trade and simply did not engage with the emerging consumer economy, for a time at least. From around 4000 employees in the late 1980s, the inheritor businesses, sometimes technically insolvent for over five years at a time, slowly but surely shed their jobs until the 1998 Russian financial crisis and default emerged, not as the nail in the coffin, but the beginning of a turnaround, at least of sorts.[7] The significant devaluation of the rouble led to some respite

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[6] Cf. Yurchak's (2006: 258) discussion of 'intervals' as a delineated western form of conceptualizing time versus temporal indeterminacy and heterochronia (temporal discontinuity) in late-Soviet experience. Yurchak's study is of the experience of 'heterochronia' for the 'last Soviet generation' as they are wrenched away from their customary time. For them the end of the Soviet period is experienced as an 'absolute break', as Foucault calls the heterochronia (1984 [1967]). However, for small-town Russians there is more of a continual ebbing that has not yet seen the tide completely go out. I do not see this as inconsistent with a continuing experience of temporal interstice, parenthesis or 'inbetweenness'. See also Bhabha on the condition of postcolonialism. For him 'liminal space' and 'interstitial passage' (1994: 4), leads to a dwelling that seeks to '*touch the future on its hither side*' (emphasis in original: 7). Bhabha's striking characterization of postcolonial culture as 'unhomely' (9), is also of relevance to understanding postsocialism's so-called marginal denizens' thirst for habitability in the persistently uncanny present. For a comprehensive treatment of how the theories of postcolonialism may inform the study of postsocialism see (Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008). See also Harboe Knudsen and Demant Frederiksen who have utilized the notion of grey zones to explore everyday lives and practices in Eastern Europe, with a focus on situations in which uncertainty and ambiguity have become ordinary (2015).

[7] See Clarke (2007: 61–3), for a discussion of the macro and firm-level consequences of rouble devaluation after the 'Default', otherwise known as the Russian 1998 financial crisis. Of relevance

for domestic industry. 1998 then is the local mnemonic marker for the 'old guard' that indicates the return to employment growth in the present period. And it is to this more recent period that I attempt to draw informants' attention as a check to their narrative of the 1990s survival, the better to understand the past, present and future of Izluchino, which continues to be a town of cement, lime and plastic tubing.

## The History of an Experiment in Soviet Urban Planning: Izluchino as Town-Forming Enterprise

The monotown, or 'town-forming enterprise', was and remains a key organization of urban space in the former Soviet Union. The Soviet logic of siting a factory immediately at the point of extraction dictated the need for 'forming' towns, its employment and therefore housing.[8] These settlements made up nearly 40% of urban settlements in the later USSR period, both small (like Izluchino) and large (like the famous Soviet Detroit, Tolyatti).[9] These towns are also often called 'monotowns', highlighting the structural vulnerability in their employment profile and social infrastructure, dependent as it was, and in some places still is, on a single enterprise. The small monotown is emblematic of a process that occurred throughout the Soviet Union—the proliferation of small and medium-sized towns. Bound up with such a specifically socialist conception of space is a host of social and cultural signifiers relating to class, kinship, social networks, local identity, and more. These signifiers remain salient

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for Izluchino is his identification of the lag in salary increases, consolidation of ownership, a new impetus for hands-on management, and strong recovery for strategically located firms and those with flexibility in use of space and resources. He also makes note of the conflicting interpretations of the event by liberal economists.

[8] For the definitive historical and social accounts of such planning logic, see Kotkin (1995) and Collier (2011), respectively.

[9] In fact while my selection of Izluchino had nothing to do with seeking a 'representative' monotown, perhaps half of Russia's monotowns (250 of them) resemble it in terms of size (less than 25,000 inhabitants). More than eight million Russians live in comparable urban spaces. Only a relatively small number of large monotowns exist (50 with a population over 100,000) although more than nine million people live in them. See Maslova (2009: 30–34).

long after socialism, the 'end' of the Soviet industrial experience, the 'end' of class and, indeed, long after Russia's entry into the global economy. At first nothing more than appendages of industry-led massive and rapid urbanization after WWII, these towns grew into communities, in their own right, of blue-collar workers and their families—tied together by employment in a single enterprise and bound to, or embedded within the enterprise by not inconsiderable social benefits and wages (Stenning et al. 2010: 86; Kesküla 2014: 62).

Despite now making up only 25% of urban space in Russia and around 30–40% of GDP (Maslova 2009; Pit 2011), towns like Izluchino have largely been written off as hopeless relics of the Soviet urban planning that made no allowance for organic development or human habitability (Aron 2009). In a vision of globalization that sees Russia as a square peg to be rammed into the round hole of the global economy, these so-called marginal spaces have no role to play,[10] Eurasia having been reimagined, from the 1990s into the present, as a vast experiment in unbridled neoliberal economic reform. And yet, to their inhabitants, they are thriving, 'habitable' places, despite the systemic risks outlined in the opening vignette. Out-migration is common, but so is return and remittance. Insecurity and decay are universal experiences, but so are categories like 'comfort', and 'local patriotism'. To the urban middle-class living in Moscow and St Petersburg, these places are an amorphous 'second Russia' (Zubarevich 2011). Historians have attempted to describe the variegated nature of life and culture in the 'magnetic mountains' of the Soviet industrial hinterland. However, even some of those who write off the monotown, at the same time acknowledge them as a bellwether of national trends in job loss, destitution, and possible rises in political opposition to Putin's regime (Aron 2009; Illarionov 2009; Zubarevich 2009). Clearly, despite partial deindustrialization, these places retain significance both as markers of the incomplete transition from planned economy and as examples of everyday resilience and resolve. The bustling, if decrepit air of the blue overall-clad manual worker's habitus: the archetypal breadwinner of the

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[10]On the supposed 'marginality', in fact, these small towns, particularly in the Kaluga region, are significant feeders of low-paid labour into the multinational production sites of vehicles and food.

Russian nuclear family, at first glance appears little changed from the Soviet era.

According to Kaika and Swyngedouw, the urban dowry is the imposing elements of build environment that accompany technological networks (water, gas, electricity, information etc.): 'water towers, dams, pumping stations, power plants, gas stations' (2000: 121). These are both the source of risk (accidents, pollution, unemployment) and the life-blood of the community in towns like Izluchino. In turn, Trubina (2013) has coined the phrase 'the worthless dowry' of Soviet industrial modernity. The idea of industrial Russia as a 'worthless dowry' recalls the endlessly reinvented 'modernization' theories through which spaces, and ultimately people, are reconstructed in a hierarchy of value in Russia today. Scholarship both in Russia and elsewhere is typified by a normative tenor that focusses on the terrible 'social quality of life' of such places as Izluchino (Rafal'son 2011: 59). While there is no doubt that, by abstract measures of human potential, these spaces have fewer amenities or opportunities for social mobility, it is problematic to consider their inhabitants 'slaves' of place (ibid.: 60). Equally, estimates of the 'quality' of social life seem to derive more from ideas about the superiority of access to the cosmopolitan consumer economy than any actual measurement of social trust or connection. Indeed, while generalized social trust by any measure is low in Russia, particularistic social networks have long been a measure of 'success' in postcommunism, even when these are too easily elided into a commentary about endemic corruption (Ledeneva 1998; Morris and Polese 2014a, b).

While the mainstream view of the degraded and disintegrating 'hinterland' prevails, there are increasing signs of sociologists, anthropologists and journalists working in and on settlements like Izluchino (Gerasimenko 2014; Dimke and Koriukhina 2012). These are more sympathetic portraits which show that people living in monotowns consider them better places to live in than bigger urban centres. This is in spite of poor pay, crime, pollution and out-migration by young people (Vorobyev et al. 2013: 13). Despite hints from the locals themselves of the relatively 'favourable' [*blagopriatnye*] living conditions, the portrait in Russian social research is one of 'spiritual and cultural decline', 'hopelessness' and 'misfortune' (ibid.: 13, 5). At first glance, the picture of life as completely

inhospitable to habitable existence in monotowns that emerges from scholarship is difficult to square with life experienced as relatively 'comfortable' and 'habitable' by Izluchino residents.

Clearly the 'worthlessness' of the monotown dowry is about more than the places themselves; it is bound up with a particular pathologization of a segment of the population that is inconvenient to a teleological vision of Russia as a potential liberal democratic European state. Thus there is resort to the characterization of 'consciousness' as narrow and restricted (Satybaldina 2013: 983), while the incredulity that anyone could live in such an environment is dryly noted by authors' attention to data that show employees in monotowns 'hardly survive' (ibid.: 984). For Zubarevich, 'Second Russia is the land of middling industrial towns […] Far from all the middle-sized towns retained their industrial profile in the post-Soviet period, but its spirit is still strong, just as is the Soviet way of life of the inhabitants' (2011). This, she notes, is the land of the 'blue-collars', minus its 'workers' noun element. In Russian, the calque has a ring of exoticism and ambiguity. The main problem is the failure of these inhabitants to adapt. They are a 'problem', politically and socially 'backward'.[11] In short, it would appear that the metropolitan intellectual elite would quite like the industrial blue-collar population to go away. We are left with a quasi-Soviet vocabulary of confused social Darwinism— these people represent a number of indicators of 'backwardness'. Such people's low life expectancy is due to the failure to 'adapt' to new market realities as much as it is the fault of reforms themselves (Zubarevich 2009).

This is reminiscent of the discourses that serve to demonize ordinary people in postindustrial areas and the working class more generally (Skeggs 2011; Jones 2011). However, the history of painting the working class as lacking value is as old as socialism itself in Eastern Europe and became particularly acute in terms of *representation* after the fall of communism. Workers after the workers' states were denigrated across the

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[11] It is particularly ironic that the industrial urban poor are condemned on the one hand for being politically conservative and yet gain significant attention as a 'motor' of social protest (2011) such as that in Pikalevo in 2009 that blocked a main highway in the Leningrad region. Pikalevo is almost exactly the same size as Izluchino (c.20,000) and has the same profile. At the same time Zubarevich is dismissive of the politically progressive potential of such protests.

postsocialist space (Kideckel 2002; Stenning 2005) and served as a pivot by which these societies revalorized middle-class identities (Walkowitz 1995; Stenning 2005). In that sense, monotown life as an impediment to 'useful' modernization is just a continuation of the narrative of the working class as an obstacle to 'transition' (Stenning 2005). In the West, company towns are also symbols of failure and decay (Linkon 2013), but even problematic 'smoke stack nostalgia' (Strangleman and Rhodes 2014) might be preferable to the invisibility of the industrial workers and their communities themselves in Russia. But then, the 'half-life' of deindustrialization (Linkon 2013)—where processes of decline are experienced by generation after generation and memory is of increasing importance—is even more pertinent to the Russian context where entry into the global economy and the peculiarities of economic transition have stretched and thinned out the experience of deindustrialization to such a degree that the experience of crisis becomes a multigenerational wound that only serves to reinforce the ties and memories of labour. Indeed, while Linkon's conception of the half-life of deindustrialization relates mainly to the ongoing experience of the past though memory, narrative and place; the social fact of blue-collar work in the Russian monotown remains, regardless of the reduction in employment itself. As the vignette at the beginning of this article illustrates, twice daily Izluchino is a sea of people in two-tone blue-collar overalls making their way to and from shifts. Manual employment has never recovered to the highpoint in the 1980s, but it is still the mainstay of the town.

For all its former and present importance, Izluchino is not officially a town, but an 'urban settlement',[12] reflecting its connection to rapid industrialization after WWII. Locally, the town is emblematic of a process that occurred throughout the Soviet Union—the proliferation of small and medium-sized towns. By the end of the Soviet period nearly 30% of Russia's population lived in industrial cities with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants (Collier 2011: 111). Along with Izluchino, there are two 'towns'-proper nearby, from which some informants for this study were also drawn. These towns also have some significant industry and similar levels of population (between 15,000 and 30,000 inhabitants),

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[12] Literally, '*poselek gorodskogo tipa*'.

but Izluchino is the only settlement to have been purposely developed as part of Soviet urban-industrial policy. The town was literally built on the limestone quarry by a 'town-forming enterprise': the Thirteenth Directorate of the Ministry of Medium Machine-Building Industry (known universally by the acronym *Sredmash*), closely connected with the nuclear industry, but in Izluchino exclusively concerned with extracting and processing raw building materials.

In the 1950s, the Ministry needed raw materials for vast military building projects throughout European Russia and the town was set to work. A few individually owned wooden houses, rebuilt after being torched by the Wehrmacht in 1941, were surrounded by wooden barrack houses for the new workers. New quarries were opened up. The lime kilns poured out their smoke and the skyline of the industrial zone was filled with chimneys. After the 1960s, machine factories under the Ministry also arrived and Izluchino grew rapidly right up to the end of the Soviet period as evidenced by the gradual change in housing stock as one moves away from the river's edge. First there are wooden houses from the 1940s, then 1950s' wooden barracks, 1960s–1970s' low-rise panel buildings, until at the edge of the forest there are the best five-storey flats built from brick in the 1980s. Older people reflect on the progressive expulsion of nature and the rural from the town as it spread out from the tiny space occupied by the original village (Bolotova 2012). They recall the orchard on the site of the House of Culture, or the goatherd's pasture near the block of 200 brick garages near the river. The rural is not entirely in the past or retained in memory alone: a herd of goats still grazes incongruously behind the main administrative building. The renovation of the central park and its regreening in the early 2000s was the only major works project funded by the town authorities since Soviet times.

The settlement more or less functioned as the fiefdom of a single state employer. One of the chief problems with the monotown model, which became evident after the demise of the Soviet Union, was the closely interwoven nature of civic and cultural life with the economic logic of the urban space. The 'single company city' entailed a large corporate role in the many para-state systems of welfare and patronage: housing built and maintained by the factory organization, and leisure, health and other amenities partly funded from the same source (Alexander and Buchli 2007).

Many monotown enterprises acted almost as 'total social institutions' (Clarke 1993: 26) and the economy produced within the town was the 'the nexus of need fulfilment' (Collier 2011: 83). After 1991, such towns were dealt a triple blow: a haemorrhaging of jobs often over a protracted period, a concomitant breakdown in finance arrangements for infrastructure and social benefits that had made living in such impromptu settlements worthwhile, and then the wage arrears and labour hoarding by surviving enterprises—preventing workers from moving away (Friebel and Guriev 2000).

The 'company town district' has been identified as one of a small number of types of urban neighbourhood in the USSR (Lehmann and Ruble 1997). The social character of such a locality was, and remains, overwhelmingly blue-collar. But despite—or perhaps because of—the disaggregation in the mid-1990s of the main enterprise *Sredmash* into much smaller privatized companies, there are still significant blue-collar enterprises that represent the vestiges of what was in reality a relatively diverse set of economic activities. Around 2000 workers are now employed in the town in around 15 employment-significant blue-collar enterprises.[13] While the company town was meant to be a cog in a larger chain operating within an economy typified by shortages and labour hoarding, it became a relatively self-contained unit of production, and in the end, its activities overall were not solely dictated by the logic of closeness to the extractive industries that had brought about its existence. It also necessarily created a subset of maintenance micro-operations (e.g. vehicle repair shops) of the autarky type designed to support core activities. This has been called a 'DIY approach' to Soviet enterprise activities (Winiecki 1989, in Gentile and Sjöberg 2006: 714) with many jobs in peripheral activities.[14]

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[13] All statistics on numbers of workers are derived from the State Labour Inspectorate's registration data results for certification of workplaces according to working conditions at the firm level. The data are for 2011 and available at the *raion* level.

[14] On autarky it is worth stressing that more 'monoprofile' enterprises in the Soviet period and after were by their very nature forced to develop particularly creative and inventive parallel production facilities to avoid long periods of delay due to the difficulty of repair or replacement of capital machinery in an economy of shortage. This reinforces the argument about the illusory inflexibility of the monotown. See Alasheev on this point (1995a: 83–9).

Now the industrial zones similarly contain a hinterland of inheritor businesses disaggregated from the Soviet-era main firm. This is also to a degree dictated by the multizonal reality of the original enterprise which was characterized by industrial sprawl of the development on 'virgin' land. This means the town is actually four settlements associated with what are now 'self-sufficient' individual industrial zones (and contiguous with further zones associated with neighbouring settlements). This swells the official 'settlement' population of 15,000–30,000. For example, one zone is associated with the cement works and lime kiln, another with a metal cable factory.

Economic activity is diversified yet further even within particular enterprises, with near-derelict cavernous workshops sublet to formal and informal, fly-by-night businesses or Russian doll-like subsidiaries undertaking work only peripheral to that of the registered enterprise. A prosaic example is a small business refurbishing and refilling portable oxygen and acetylene cylinders for welding that operates out of an otherwise almost completely derelict site of workshops covering nearly ten hectares. The only other business there is a hand carwash. In other cases, property and other assets are mortgaged or sold while the original enterprise continues inexorably towards actual bankruptcy (rather than a zombified insolvency), or not, as the case may be. For example, the main plastic pipe fabricating firm (Polymer) happened to have an electricity substation within the boundaries of its factory grounds. It created a subsidiary that then rented the land upon which the substation stood from the mother company. When the supply company cut off the firm because of its energy debts, the whole town was plunged into darkness as the supply was routed through the substation. When both the energy supplier and the victims of the blackout attempted to sue the firm, the cases failed on a technicality as the mother company didn't control the land, having rented it out (and accrued a bookkeeping profit) to its own subsidiary. While the days of non-profitable companies withholding wages are felt to have largely gone (although the recent 2014 economic crisis has led to renewed periods of unpaid furlough), the tactics of dealing with debt continue to intersect with inter-firm conflict, badly defined property rights and unpredictable arbitration courts.

# Living, Breathing, Eating Plastic

As old-timer Ivan Ivanych's wife, Galina Vilgel'movna[15] relates, sitting in her blue overalls in the kitchen of the Polymer factory recreation area:

> There was a time in the 1990s, perhaps 1994 if I remember right, when for three months we were paid only in-kind—plastic! Well of course you can't eat it! That was when Ivan quit and did all kinds of things including cultivating the kitchen plot, and working in Moscow as a nightwatchman, as a school security guard. There were lots of times when they held back wages, but we were lucky; we only lost months, not years. Thank goodness Ivan got a local job in the oil terminal as a technician in the end. Now there are only us old people at the Polymer, but at least there are no arrears.

 Galina's last words turned out to be incorrect. Due to the global economic crisis in 2009 and the Russian economic problems in 2014, the factory did start to hold back the 'bonus' part of wages again. A stout, strong woman in her fifties with a nearly full upper set of gold teeth, Galina wants to carry on as a forewoman at the plant for as long as possible while acknowledging its long term lack of prospects. 'Of course I wouldn't want my daughters or their husbands working here. The pay is so low. No, let them work for the other companies or in Kaluga.' This concern for the younger generation belies Galina's attachment—affective, social, strategic, and habitual—to her work. Work is not set off or apart from other aspects of her personal and social life. The household is run around the very visible display of Galina's responsibility at work and her work-related 'blue-collar' identity. This is unremarkable in itself—she is now the main breadwinner since her husband retired. But it is not just about underlining her status as head of the family: spotless overalls are displayed, hanging in view in the entry hall, the dial of a man's wristwatch held by a safety pin to the front pocket; ritually the family sits before the

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[15] Galina's patronymic name indicates her Volga German roots, similar to many middle-aged workers who came to work in Izluchino from nearer or further afield in the 1970s and 1980s. A number of informants had ethnic German backgrounds and had previously lived in the coal-mining areas of neighbouring Tula, a region to which their families had been deported from the Volga during WWII.

6 p.m. evening shift in the kitchen as Galina makes the transition from head of the household to forewoman. She serves dinner to her mother, husband, children, grandchildren and then abruptly leaves for the factory. No one is allowed to forget that now Galina will go out to 'the most important thing' ('*glavnoe*') in a few minutes.

But what is the nature of that *glavnoe*? More and more time is spent by Galina in the recreation area. There are more stoppages due to lack of orders, lack of workers. While plastic pipes are in demand both in domestic plumbing and in the gas industry, there is plenty of competition from other firms, both locally and further afield. Demand is also seasonal and dependent on the construction trade—which is highly sensitive to economic confidence, generally. As forewoman, Galina watches over a small group as they tend injection moulding machines to make guttering spouts for domestic dwellings. On a workbench others finish these parts, shaving, filing and sanding. They work largely without masks and the toxic polymer dust and debris fill the space. Then she moves on to another department that is spooling the finished product—100 metres of high density polyethylene water supply pipe—onto a massive steel reel. Again, she shuffles on to a third department, complaining of her hips. Here they make rigid pipes with rubber flanges that can be connected together to form junctions in domestic sewer arrays. Technically more demanding a process, there are fewer workers here, but oversight by Galina is more crucial to make sure the chains and gears of the conveyor and the long cooling pools of water of the extrusion line through which the grey pipes snake are not neglected by the bored workers under her tutelage. What Galina said earlier about 'only us old people' remaining is not really true. There are numerous young inexperienced male workers in the most intensive part of the factory—the extrusion line—where dexterity, vigilance and unceasing attention to the endless plastic, squeezed out like toothpaste, are required. Labour turnover here is high and Galina despairs of the 'job hopping' by young men. There are a few younger women too on the line. These tend to put up with the low wages and intensive yet boring work. Perhaps there will be another generation of women blue-collar workers after all, Galina wonders aloud, looking on as a young woman uses a knife to cut a sample of paste-like plastic and hands it to her. Before she or her charge can consider this further, Galina

is off again to the lab, where a couple of white-coated female technicians, their hair in nets, greet her and set about chemically testing the plastic. Despite the labour churn, despite the competition and the lack of capital investment, despite what looks like over-diversification of production to cope with low profitability, and despite what Galina said about not being able to eat plastic, like the 1980s and 1990s, it is plastic polymers, all derived from Russia's second most plentiful natural resource petroleum, that remain the bread and butter of Izluchino's inhabitants.

## The Continued Double-Burden for Women

The double-burden of domestic and work responsibilities for Russian women like Galina and her few female colleagues has only increased since the end of the Soviet Union as childcare has become increasingly privatized to the domestic sphere.[16] Women workers were in any case disproportionately affected by post-1991 unemployment (Morvant 1995). The labour churn that sees men job hopping in the hope of better wages and conditions sees households increasingly reliant on the woman's wage. However, the truism of the Soviet-era environment of work as an activity embedded in social relations is reflected in scholarship on the importance of the workplace and work relations for women in Russia today. Anne White echoes others in identifying work for women as a space of 'rest' from the domestic chores and feminine gendered roles of everyday life (2004: 133, see also Alasheev 1995b; Ashwin and Bowers 1997). For women like Galina, work remains not just an escape, but a space for carving out an identity no less important to that of mother and wife.

Satisfaction in fulfilling a role at work is an important end in itself for Galina. In a sense she is continually remaking work as a 'habitable' practice and place for herself and the significant others on the shop floor, in particular other foremen and subordinates. As Sergei Alasheev notes, there is a particular kind of 'love' involved in the relationship between the factory worker and 'work' (1995b: 70). This is connected to complex and not unproblematic feelings of belonging, ownership and satisfaction in

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[16]On the 'familialization' of care, see Pascall and Manning (2000).

work regardless of its nature. Not in spite of, but because of, the decline in the enterprise, the value of others and the value of self is continually rediscovered by Galina in the most prosaic of practices and settings— going to the factory and showing oneself to be of increasing 'worth', not so much to the employer, but to co-workers who rely on formal and informal help and support in work and outside it. Like many men, Galina and other blue-collar women in Izluchino make the work space habitable as an interstitial zone of identity reinforcement and sociality between domestic gendered role-identities and the individual self. A key aspect of this is the mutual interpellation of blue-collar workers, of both sexes, as *competent* representatives of the working class (Morris 2012b). Competency is simultaneously a correlation of success in 'making habitable' and dwelling in everyday spaces of work and home. It is also a prerequisite for gaining *respect* and *respectability*—itself the basis of any kind of 'solidaristic' social ties.[17] Galina upbraids an extrusion line worker for inattention to the tube-of-toothpaste-like plastic under his care, showing him how to cut the end of the pipe cleanly without wasting material. She makes valuable comments to the lab technicians about the quality of the polymer resins. On the one hand, she is over-performing her role as foreperson, and on the other, she has a genuine reputation among others as competent; despite the automated nature of much of the Polymer processes, quick fixes and bodges, a 'feel' for the machines and materials constitute a craft-life knowledge and intimacy with her work environment. This is the pleasure of competence (Crawford 2009) derived from what remains of self-efficacy, autonomy, and most importantly, recognition from others. This kind of competence-authority-self-esteem nexus is one continually uncovered in the varied working and non-working environments of 'making do' in Izluchino.

Competency is entwined with two moral features of working-class personhood: 'propriety' and 'work-related respect' [*avtoritet*], the one having little value without the other. Propriety is straightforward display and

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[17] Particularly on respectability, this insight resonates with some of Skeggs' findings on the propertization, or otherwise, of working-class values among women in the UK (Skeggs 1997: 32). Skeggs' more recent work attempts to deal with the difficulty of applying Bourdieusian 'capitals' analysis in contexts where subjects' claim to personhood are delegitimized by virtue of a lack of access to 'dominant symbolic circuits' (2011: 503).

awareness of one's own moral inscrutability in one's dealings with others. For example, for women it often involves traditional and normative feminine working-class values such as hospitality, cleanliness, moderation, parsimony, and particular circumspection in social interactions with men (although this does not imply adherence to traditional gender norms of subservience). These values in turn help in the development of reputation 'in production', that is, at work. Most 'respected' workers [*s avtoritetom*], whether male or female, recite well-practised narratives of expertise, skill, inventiveness and recognition (Morris 2012b); for Galina these values are traditionally 'feminine': she keeps the yard in front of the main enterprise building weeded and stocked with decorative plants. But they are also 'masculine': she has a knack for no-nonsense 'man-management' allowing her to motivate workers by a mixture of upbraiding and sincere enthusiasm and example. At the same time, Galina radiates genuine warmth towards work as a space and as a grouping of important people in her life. There are frequent non-enterprise-initiated social events both at work and between workers, at home and in summer houses.

In turn, displaying such 'competence' allows Galina to access a wide social network of fellow workers who mutually recognize each other as deserving persons. But rather than taking a methodologically individualist approach that would emphasize Galina's accrual of social capital through actions, this 'propertizing' of personhood puts an accent on values of duty to others, which in turn assume a generalized mutuality among 'deserving' workers. When one of the lab technicians falls pregnant and lacks familial support, Galina comes visiting with her own grandchildren's hand-me-downs. Through a concern and commitment to moral obligations, women and men like Galina make habitable their difficult positioning at the margins of labour, class and gender relations in today's Russia. While they struggle sometimes to make a livelihood, rarely is their dwelling, within a moral space of relations and understandings, insecure.[18] Galina's making habitable of her life in Izluchino is

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[18] I use the term 'dwelling' to draw attention to the relationship between 'habitability' and Tim Ingold's concept of dwelling and livelihood. Aspects of Ingold's use of the word have significant resonance with my use of habitability (2000: 153).

explored further in Chap. 4, while the meaning of 'respected' and competent worker status for men is returned to throughout this book.

## Going Underground: To the Demiworld of Informal Enterprise and Work

While Galina and her co-workers can be said to be making the best of an enterprise that continues to struggle for survival, its avoidance of arrears comes with its own price—endless conflict with other businesses. In another even more convoluted case, a manufacturing enterprise sold a heating plant on its land (but officially owned by a subsidiary) to the private company responsible for municipal district heating of the town. The heating company paid a mortgage over a number of years to the manufacturing company (but with the subsidiary on paper receiving the rents to prevent profit officially accruing to the main firm). When the mortgage was completed, the firm promptly refused to hand over the deeds to the heating company resulting in another case for the arbitration court.

Sublets of disused workshops and property indicate the lower level of industrial activity overall after the Soviet period, but also allow 'flexibility' for those brave enough to negotiate the minefield of back-handers and personal deals needed to set up shop illicitly, if not illegally, in these spaces (Polese 2014). But the existence of this economically diverse hinterland along with what remains a socially compressed public geography is crucial to understanding the existence of ready-made network resources for workers. It also explains the ease of movement between jobs—the readiness to job hop among men—and the availability of informal work. On the face of it such labour is embedded within factories producing the same goods as 20 years ago. The question of informality as entrepreneurialism or indicative of further marginalization of the unskilled is of increasing relevance as its ubiquity grows, despite Russia's supposed incorporation into the global economy and transition to marketization (Morris and Polese 2014a, b; Gimpelson and Kapeliushnikov 2014).

When it comes to connecting formal and informal work opportunities in Izluchino, Sergei is the man to know. A round man of impulsive bodily movements, he always wears formal trousers and a shirt, even on the production line. Part of a social network of people born around 1985 with family or work connections to the House of Culture, Sergei quit work in the steel cable workshop after the Moscow owners sent many of the workers on furlough during the economic downturn in 2009. I first met him at an impromptu all-night party there. He related how unregistered subletting of workshops takes place through informal contacts. A foreman at the cable factory told him about a brother-in-law's work in the neighbouring *promzone* where many workshops stood unused and unheated, but with sufficient electrical power to run the lathes needed. A drinking companion knew of an older mutual schoolmate who had started up a business making plastic window frames in another workshop out of town, but whose lease was up. Sergei didn't miss a trick and soon was hired as the team leader (*brigadir*) for the half-dozen workers making the windows in an informally sublet workshop. They paid a small payment to the local factory director without the Moscow owners knowing. The only issue was keeping the electricity usage down so no one would notice.

The operation of the 'underground' production line is discussed in Chap. 3, where workers entering and leaving informally is explored. This too is a kind of interstitial niche. The interpretative understanding of workers leaving formal employment for informal self-employment and hired work is clearly more than the sum of low wages and prospects in the moribund factories where Galina works. There is genuine 'entrepreneurialism' among the skilled and usually older 'tradesmen' (Morris 2012a; Gimpelson and Kapeliushnikov 2014). However, there are also complex reasonings by younger informants that emerge, connected to autonomy and dignity in work. These include 'exit' from formal employment into cash-work as the only option for those unwilling or unable to put up with what is perceived as a new managerialism in production regimes, as well as older narratives about time autonomy and autonomism more generally that relate to Soviet-era work and its flexibility (Yurchak 2006: 151–2; Temnitskii 2011). Even for those with few contacts or skills, the large scale of informal work in Russia is just another 'normal' opportunity for

'making a living' as part of a multitude of informal and formal resources for blue- and white-collar workers (Morris 2014). A very different kind of 'making habitable', informality nonetheless intersects with formal blue-collar identities and sociality. As Munck has argued, (re)proletarianization is not incompatible with informalization (2013: 755). And informalized workers while engaging in insecure work do not necessarily comprise a precariat (Morris 2012a; Munck 2013).

Overall, in looking at economic activity and individuals' diverse employment and work histories, the monolith portrait of post-Soviet industry, and the ex-monotown in particular, should be reconsidered, at least in the case of Izluchino and other smaller blue-collar towns throughout Russia.[19] Even in the Soviet period, the actual work could be diversified, even if employment was structured within a single enterprise. This in turn makes a more flexible use of industrial space possible in the present—industrial vehicle-hire yards border an oil pipeline terminal next to a ceramic tile mill over the wall from a linoleum rolling mill which in turn is next to the vast derelict cement factory site occupied by the tiny acetylene refill shop mentioned earlier. The 'inheritor' enterprise of the original cement factory still makes cement, but occupies a new site purpose-built for the French-made lime kilns. Each business may only employ 10–100 workers, but coupled with the notoriously high rate of labour turnover 'churn' there is no shortage of 'choice'[20] in blue-collar work, even within the confines of the town. While much of this is understood unambiguously by informants themselves as drudgery that they would avoid if they could (by finding work in Kaluga or Moscow), a key factor in evaluating and differentiating between work is the perception of the relative level of paternalism at the level of the plant. The long echo of the importance of social wages from the Soviet period is heard again and again in talk with workers and their children, many of whom have no personal memory or experience of work relations before 1991.

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[19] Izluchino may have the 'appearance' of an ex-monotown, but even in the mid-1990s less than 30% of workers were employed in *Sredmash*. 30% or more employment in the main enterprise is the main definition of a monotown (Maslova 2009).

[20] Like the term 'exit' used in the previous paragraph, the word 'choice' here intentionally echoes the 'voice' of Hirschman's (1971) *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*.

# The Long Echo of Paternalism and the Social Wage

We need to return to the 'old timers' like Ivan Ivanych, his wife Galina and other workers in their late forties and older, to understand what underpins their understanding of the paternalistic relationship expected from enterprises. This in turn informs so many of their values and the understandings of their positioning and agency within society generally. The mutualism of everyday life as a recognized 'competent' person—a worker with *avtoritet*—extends to the relationship between worker and enterprise. Workers show a kind of affective regard for the enterprise, which does not preclude attitudes of disgust for working conditions or specific managerial practices. In the socialist period, especially in monotowns, the community was embedded within the structure of the enterprise, or rather dictated by it, and in turn, for better or worse the corporation was inside the 'community'. There are obvious connections between the strongly corporatist institutions of the Soviet period—but more importantly, affective and moral entwinement of enterprise and worker—and the (largely unfulfilled) paternalistic expectations of ordinary people after socialism. At the same time these quasi-moral expectations did not, and do not, preclude an unambiguous and age-old severe distrust of the state as a distant, 'alien' and often abstract entity (Tucker 1971: 122–125). Enterprise and state were already disaggregated in the 'cosmology' of ordinary people of the later Soviet period.

Blue-collar work, particularly for incoming migrants from neighbouring regions to Izluchino in the late Soviet period was a key route to social mobility, but more importantly as Stenning et al. argue, to 'security […] education, training, childcare, housing, recreation and leisure, health facilities, retail and consumption, and heating and energy' (2010: 86; see also Kesküla 2014: 62). All these affordances of the working class comprised the 'social wage' and were fundamental to an implicit social contract for labour—which had to put up with relatively poor wages and working conditions.[21] The social wage was therefore fundamental

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[21] Clark and Soulsby calculated that the social wage was worth up to 20% of the value of the money wage in industrial enterprises in 1980s Czechoslovakia (1998: 36, in Stenning et al. 2010: 87).

to socialist legitimacy in the eyes of workers. At the same time, labour—especially in monotowns and large enterprises generally—was part of a solidaristic community, a fact which also could be counted as an intangible component of the social wage. On the latter, people in Izluchino recount being able to articulate a right and expectation of certain benefits, even in person, to the Director of the enterprise, known to everyone by his first name and patronymic (cf. Collier 2011: 107 on such personalized relations). Reflections on the loss of social wage and changes in the positioning of labour in terms of dignity in work, labour relations, the meaning of a labour community and identity are at the heart of informants' discourse and everyday talk about work and are discussed throughout this book.

The ever-present backdrop of the Soviet-era expectation of minimal social insurance indirectly through social wages and its postsocialist echo provide further context for understanding the meaning of 'habitability' for people. This is why social benefits accrued by virtue of a connection to an enterprise need to be understood alongside or as part of a spectrum of other kinds of social network support strategies; marginality as a paradigm to understanding the postsocialist experience for these workers is therefore problematic. Even as the social wage shrinks or disappears other dynamic informal systems of welfare develop, be they kin-based or class-inflected. On the other hand, the moral 'memory' of a more significant social wage remains strong in the former second world, unlike the global south.[22] Just as families and communities 'inherit histories of precarity' (Skeggs 2011: 506), the mnemonic inheritance of a right to a meaningful social wage remains important.

The socialist experience and understanding of the social wage should not just be equated with social income, which in most cases consists of a collection of goods and services valued in terms of money. Then and now, value is as bound up with recognition of the social personhood of an individual and a panoply of visible social welfare supports, as it is with calculative equation of services with money. Nonetheless, it is useful to reflect further on the meaning of the social wage, how its loss is felt and

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[22] See Munck (2013) who challenges the 'marginality paradigm' along with precaritization more generally as a useful heuristic.

experienced and sometimes 'compensated' for. This occurs through new forms of—sometimes less tangible—social bonds, reciprocal practices and narratives of postsocialist working-class personhood.

Social income is a concept used to measure the wage-equivalent of all the money or in-kind benefit flows that a household or person receives. A key reason for thinking about the experience of postsocialist blue-collar workers in Izluchino as part of a new form of insecurity if not 'precarity' in Russia (Standing 2011; Morris 2012a) is the relative loss of social benefits associated with a paternalistic enterprise like *Sredmash*. For example, witness the local lamentation after the kindergartens were privatized and turned into luxury flats and the subsidized communal canteen turned into shops. The ubiquitous Soviet *putevka* (the enterprise-paid holiday voucher) is a rarity, where it still exists; it is a thing of wonder, a rare treasure from the past. These are just a few examples discussed later in this book. However, social income can be broken down further into self-production which has not changed much in Izluchino, although many people's relative impoverishment is compounded by the lack of access to a local vegetable plot after the loss of water pumping funded by the enterprise. The myth of the urban peasant is confirmed by the experience in Izluchino (Clarke et al. 2000). However, those with access to vehicles and other resources still derive significant economic, but more importantly, social and intangible benefits from food production on small plots, often further afield. This is particularly true of Ivan Ivanych, who takes great pride in the quality and variety of tomatoes he produces on a tiny 3/100 of a hectare—less than the standard Soviet allotment. I have discussed the symbolic meaning of DIY decorative activities elsewhere (Morris 2012b). They too form part of self-production.

The erosion of the money wage from work is keenly felt by all in Izluchino. But money wages are not necessarily the most significant issue around insecurity and feelings of injustice, especially when wages across the board in the town are relatively similar (Morris 2012a). After wages/benefits and self-production, informal mutual aid is often seen as a third aspect of social income (Standing 2011). Private benefits are largely irrelevant as little saving activity takes place that does not go back into consumption relatively quickly. People learned this lesson from their loss of Soviet-era savings and high relative inflation and devaluations since

1991. The motto becomes: 'Don't save in a bank'—recycle the money into property or durable goods. Enterprise and state benefits historically then were the most important part of social income and constitute that part of it called the social wage. But above the monetary value of these benefits, comes the interpretation of the wage as a 'just settlement' of the socialist-era social contract. The social wage was, and remains, key to 'norms and obligations' that are commonly taken together to constitute the 'moral economy of the poor' (Thompson 1993: 189).

However, the last 25 years have seen an overturning of the 'just settlement'—the erosion of the social wage is documented most clearly and consistently in the work of Simon Clarke and his research associates who describe 'decaying paternalism' in the post-Soviet enterprise (1995). Defined benefits are stripped away, previously embodied in organizations (kindergartens), buildings (canteens) and other material substances (subsidized food) that were once intrinsically part of the physical-social structure of Izluchino. All that is left are the hollowed out resources of the industrial processes themselves: 'The only tangible good which all the workers in such an enterprise receive is the right to plunder the enterprise's property […] Practically everything is misappropriated—money, equipment, supplied, the use of services for personal aims' (Bizyukov 1995: 128).

The residents' stories of the early 1990s mirror the portrait by Clarke's team exactly—the payment in plastic experienced by Galina and the fixtures obtained by Andrei. However, 20 years have passed now and the 'stripping' of *Sredmash* is thought of more often as an inevitable stop-gap. If anything, the material went to good use in repairing and improving the very recently built housing stock, also constructed from the enterprise's resources in the 1980s. Andrei, the welder, is sanguine:

> The director took our work team into the store of ceramic bathtubs and said 'two each: they're no use to us now!' That was the kind of management we had in those days! Even during such a time they tried to look after us. Dmitry Aleksandrovich was a clever one, he'd stockpiled a lot of stuff— building materials, you know. There's no point now in trying to judge people. We don't have the right.

As Sarah Ashwin observed, even in the later 1990s while the paternalism of surviving enterprises was being eroded, in the 'mind of the workers' the idea of the enterprise as a 'site of social provision' remained strong and 'egalitarian principles of social justice persist[ed]' (1999: 125), in spite of reality.

While the enterprise is 'hollowed out' of jobs and resources, it somehow survives. In the early 2000s it even undergoes a kind of surrogate renaissance as the disaggregated inheritor businesses thrive during the building boom in Moscow and the relatively positive political climate of Putin's first term. There is also Russia's 'peculiar' flexibility (mainly of workers) and 'adjustment' (a euphemism for putting up with over 50% real cuts to wages) (Gimpelson and Kapeliushnikov 2011). Perhaps this also partly explains the 'in spite-of' loyalty to place that local people feel.

But 'paternalism' can be understood in different ways. Galina, the forewoman, feels that since the old directors are dead and gone it is the continuity provided by the presence of 'old timers' like herself that is responsible for the survival of blue-collar work in the town. The placeness of belonging, dignity and habitability in and at work (spaces) coalesce around feelings of ownership, or at least investment of postsocialist personhood in the ongoing blue-collar work. This is true of men and women; the gendered experiences of working-class personhood and investment in work are explored further in subsequent chapters.

## The Globalizing of the Rural–Urban: Placeness and Habitability Within and Beyond the Town

Ironically, it is the very 'rootlessness' of the population that makes this sense of ownership and investment possible; despite the strong sense of placeness, if not local patriotism,[23] expressed by Izluchino's inhabitants, most of those over 40-years-old are not local born, a statistic typical of monotowns. While some informants can trace family back locally and see an attachment to local land as important to their identity in the present,

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[23] A sense of belonging to the locality was sometimes expressed by informants using the commonplace phrase '*malaia rodina*', or 'little motherland'.

the idea of an urban-peasant identity and practice is questionable (Clarke et al. 2000). Working a dacha or garden plot has never been a substitute for wage labour (ibid.: 485). That is not to say that the most marginal urban inhabitants do not depend on self-production more generally: gleaning, or in a few cases stealing building materials, scrap metal, and even crops for want of basic fresh staples. Self-production can—if providing a niche product like bootleg alcohol, seasonal mushrooms or even medicinal berries—give an income comparable to state benefits which many rely on, if not a working wage. In one village close to town, Yegor, a 40-year-old disabled man, is involved in a protracted negotiation and conflict with a neighbour over access to an abandoned plot of a third party where sea-buckthorn berries can be collected in large numbers and then sold for 200 roubles ($6.5) a litre in town. Another rural resident lives close to Izluchino and does a very profitable trade selling moonshine, the turnover of which provides up to 1500 roubles a day (about $50). Alcohol for the rural poor remains a surrogate currency (Rogers 2005) and is still used widely by all as a gift or informal payment for services. For example, a poorer resident might pay a municipal plumber who has fixed their heating with a bottle of vodka. A variety of gleaning and self-production and provisioning activities combined—including cultivation and consumption of produce—remain important to a large minority of urban dwellers, both the very poor and those with a relatively high income (Ries 2009). Ries argues that production of home grown potatoes 'lends shape to particular forms of action, interaction, and intentionality', helping shape personhood in terms of ritual as well as 'legitimiz[ing] and celebrat[ing] the population's ability to feed itself autonomously' (ibid.: 183).

Like Ries I argue that self-provisioning is a 'cognitive resource' (ibid.: 182) that also contributes to a sense of making the world of Izluchino a habitable space. However, for people in Izluchino the value of self-provisioning lies in the way a panoply of such activities provide a person with the robustness of mindset that feeds into a willingness to practise other, more profitable informal practices, including undeclared waged labour. It is worth noting that the very poorest plot cultivators like Yegor have mainly abandoned the growing of potatoes for sale.

Regardless of its economic significance, the visibility of self-provisioning does give Izluchino an urban–rural character. Every day pensioners from the surrounding villages bring produce to sell in the main square, for example, the seasonal mushrooms and berries, but it is the frantic shuttling to and from garden plots by locals that really marks this aspect of life in the town. The town also serves as a 'throughpoint' for many rural dwellers working either in the local factories (they must traverse the town to get to the industrial zones), or those working in Kaluga, who also travel via the town, often taking three buses to get to their destination. In the other direction, Muscovites and wealthy Kalugans also use the town as a stepping off point to their exclusive dacha settlements along the picturesque river. Thus the town's positioning between the greater periurban space around the region's capital and the vast, emptying rural hinterland is economically significant. Both directions of travel entail the movement of taxi drivers (largely unregistered), agricultural produce and, for the wealthy holiday makers, building supplies.

Since the later 1990s, permanent village migration to Izluchino and further afield to larger urban centres has only increased as services like public transport, education and healthcare have withered. While there used to be a school and a frequent bus service to the closest village of around 2000 people, now there is only one bus a day and the older grade school children have to come to the town to study. Again, the town is often a stepping off point, a 'bridge' (Walker 2010) or a foothold in rural–urban migration with better-earning younger relatives renting locally while working in factories. They save money to move the rest of the family away from the village later, or sell large plots of village land to fund the purchase of tiny apartments in the town. Sale of land can bring massive cash windfalls of ten times annual household income. But it is a one-way bet on cramped apartment living, sometimes in spaces a quarter of the size of village accommodation (spacious wooden cottages exchanged for pokey single-room apartments). Because of the relatively benign employment situation in the town, property prices are high by European Russian standards (starting at around eight times the annual household income). Another layering to the scalar complexity of migration is the recent arrival of Central Asians and Belarusians working as undocumented and documented construction workers, respectively, for

wealthy holiday home builders. Finally, despite the dismissive attitude of metropolitan Russians towards such settlements as 'the back of beyond' ('*u cherta na kulichkakh*'), two hostels have been profitably housing a permanent stream of foreign technicians working in the multinational subsidiaries of the industrial zones. German and Italian can be heard in the beer shop in the evenings. Even in the rural hinterland, nodes of the global economy have hardened and become part of the normality of life, making it more habitable. In the same village, as the well-respected moonshiner, a local called Grigory makes €3000 a year selling free-range geese to the Christmas market in a Scandinavian country (they even send him a refrigerated lorry to collect).[24] But his main income is from managing the dacha building projects of absent Muscovites, at a thousand dollars a month. In turn there is plenty of moonlighting work for the plumbers and electricians of Izluchino there too.

Far from being a backwater to the monumental changes in Russia's economy and the slow but certain incorporation of it into the global economy, Izluchino is witness at every step. Neither could it be called an element of the patchy 'cellular globalization' posited by Nikita Pokrovskii and S. Bobylev (2003) to highlight the contrast between the hypermodernity of metropolitan Russia and feudal rurality.[25] The globalized element of the constant churn in the town's make up is nothing new after all. At the opposite end of the scale, the globalizing of the local economy can be considered in terms of the entry of multinational employers—particularly car producers like Volkswagen and Peugeot. Since 2009 more and more local people have gone to work for these assembly and parts producers who operate from large, purpose-built industrial 'parks' near Kaluga. But this

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[24] In contrast to other rural dwellers who make the 'one-way bet' on selling up and moving to the town, Grigory has strategically expanded his land holdings maintaining a core of agricultural practices as subsistence 'insurance' while making a very good living by project managing building dachas for the wealthy Muscovites and a side-line in free-range geese. He is a new kind of small landholder (*melkii zemlevladelets*). His freedom of action is partly a function of his control of a large enough holding of land, but it is status as a kind of parish elder who is consulted over the most minor issues as a matter of deference even by the new rich that marks him out as a new kind of freeholder or alderman, if only of the most modest kind.

[25] In turn, Pokrovskii's cellular metaphor appears related to Finn Sivert Nielsen's characterization of urban and enterprise-related 'islands' in the Soviet period, ruled as semi-feudal domains (2006). This metaphor seems more appropriate in evoking the fragile yet cherished sociosphere of the small town for its inhabitants: it is both 'refuge' and 'home base' (ibid., n.p.).

is not a 'cellular' globalization. The increasing scale of such activity binds the Russian economy closer both to the global and to the ordinary people who work in such plants closer to the consumption and labour norms of the global north. This is understood as a Faustian pact by some, who see only risks in taking on big mortgages and consumer loans on the back of higher paid work that is itself dependant on the acceptance of neoliberal production regimes by the individuals doing the work and the expansion of debt-funded consumption on a national level. What emerges is a form of global assemblage (Ong and Collier 2005): the multinational form of car production, for instance, which is based on the capitalist logic of expansion to lower labour cost sites and simultaneous opening up of new consumer markets (Škoda and VW cars built in Russia for the Russian market) marks the arrival of a 'new material, collective and discursive relationship' for Izluchino's workers (Ong and Collier 2005: 4).

After Paul Rabinow, Ong and Collier call these types of global assemblages 'anthropological problems' because of the disruption they entail to the forms and values of community lifeworlds (ibid.). The appearance of Volkswagen, in particular, is experienced as a disruption and challenge to labouring values on a number of levels. There is the promise of higher pay which in turn means the availability of credit and 'western' modes of consumption (Morris 2012b). At the same time, work there demands a wholesale rejection of values of labour inherited from the socialist period that endure powerfully in the present: autonomy, solidarity, paternalism and local loyalty. The presence of the multinational intrudes on the social psychology of all households with working-age men, regardless of whether they intend to work there or not. This sense of 'global assemblage' is seen to disrupt socialist-era norms and values a quarter of a century 'after the fact' of postsocialism's arrival. Elizabeth Dunn argues that global assemblages are part of the 'making legible' of production processes in Eastern Europe in Latourian 'immutably mobile' forms (Dunn 2005; Ong and Collier 2005: 11). In Izluchino, the car plants act as sites which similarly remake the working class, both materially, as embodied instruments of disciplined global labour, and as new worker identities. But their victory over earlier strongly held meanings of membership of the Russian working class is by no means assured. This disruption is captured in verbal and symbolic debates between reflexive workers in Izluchino on the 'zom-

bie' v. 'entrepreneurial' nature of those who choose the multinational car plant. Like Dunn's findings (2005: 175), the global's pressure on personhood results in some worker's creative circumvention of these imperatives, either in embracing arguably more precarious informal labour or the revalorization of labour in Soviet inheritor enterprises.

## Paternalistic Guardians of Labour, Symbolic Kinship and Affective Work in a Hostile World

As seen earlier in this chapter, in the Soviet period, the town attracted migrants from neighbouring regions and further afield to its well-paid industrial blue-collar jobs. Volga Germans like Galina and others arrived as youngsters with no ties, but quickly started families, some of them relatively large by Soviet Russian standards (i.e. three children); the short waiting queue for housing was a major factor. Izluchino was, and remains, witness to the high level of Soviet and post-Soviet Russian interregional labour mobility (Clarke 1999a; White 2007, both in Walker 2010: 649). As the Director of Steelpipe recalls:

> Izluchino was just *Sredmash* and the gravel pits. The mechanical factories were just a few particular cogs in the machinery of the ministry—the ministry had one aim: turning nuclear fissile material into warheads and pointing them at the West. But that aim was a million miles away from us here. We were a state within a state within a state. Each responsible for sourcing its own material and delivering it. The *Sredmash* director here was Tsar, or at least it was his personal fiefdom. The ministry had its own building directorate which alone built complexes for the military—the town-forming concern worked like a pump, churning out the material for that. It also sucked up labour from surrounding regions. Why did the town appear here? Because of the nuclear power station in Obninsk [the first operational nuclear power station in the world]. And they needed the limestone for the railway…
>
> So even after the Soviet Union as a space disappeared, this other space remained, until at least 1994. After the bankruptcies the space split up into separate universes, one of which we are sitting in now…

The Steelpipe General Director Felix Saraev employs about 100 workers in his specialist plastic pipe fabricating shop (separate from Galina's company Polymer). He is one of the few locally born entrepreneurs, and his business is an example of an 'insider-controlled' enterprise, surviving into the present. Typically for monotowns and for this kind of enterprise, directors like Saraev secured 'their position by representing themselves as the paternalistic guardian of the labour collective in its struggle to survive in a hostile world' (Clarke 2007: 68). This is something Saraev excels at, treating his workers as best he can and also indicating the no lesser importance of social networks, both horizontal (between local elites—he is a local municipal councillor) and vertical (paternalistic and patrimonial towards 'the workers') in the postsocialist period. It could be argued that given the loss of social wages and support for infrastructure that came from *Sredmash* in the 1980s (the electricity to pump water for garden plots, the funding for the school swimming pool, the subsidized canteen and shops—all keen memories among the inhabitants), any scrap or hint of social paternalism that remains is clutched at with both hands by the old guard of workers, and not only them. Saraev is a case in point sponsoring local youth concerts, disabled facilities and, most importantly, healthcare of his own workers.

Saraev is described by workers as the 'good man' from the past (he was the chief engineer of the workshop he now owns). These 'good men' who still exist and give something of a confused hope for the future—are present symbols of the past too. Their modest success among failure and their 'niche'[26] existence between the influx of foreign and Moscow capitalists are an ever-present reminder of the past success of the monotown town model as it is perceived by Izluchino folk. The link of the past to their hopes for making the town worthy of habitation and 'liveable'[27] again is clear when they switch from woe to grudging acknowledgement of their

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[26] 'Niche' is precisely the term used by Saraev to describe his firm's positioning in the Russian globalized economy.

[27] Collier (2011: 107) notes in passing that the small industrial settlement in the USSR was able to achieve a 'livable' balance between industrial production and residential development for its inhabitants. In particular Collier's Chapter 4 on the building of the small industrial city Belaya Kalitva can be read in parallel with the current chapter as a more 'bureaucratic-impersonal' analysis of the development of such urban spaces (105).

recent relative 'good fortune' at 'having enough' and again to the uneasy feeling that *something* is good here, even if so much is worse. 'He shows that the town is worth something…. He reminds us that we came here to build things for the people,' is said of him without apparent irony. Saraev, his enterprise, his entrepreneurialism and local insight, and especially the equivocal and not unqualified interpretation of his 'goodness' by his own and other workers, deserves a description of its own in this book (cf. Nikula and Tchalakov 2013).

The close, even claustrophobic socially-intertwined reality of the monotown in the 1980s is a constant reference point for workers and bosses alike. Everyone can remember a friend or relative's 'audience' with the *Sredmash* Director. Some were successful, like that of Uncle Lyova— an old guard welder who obtained a three-bed flat in 1986. Some were less successful, like Dima, a lime-kiln operator whose parents pretended they had thrown him out for boozing, but who were actually desperate to help him get a room of his own. He did get accommodation, but was too late to get an actual apartment. It was the early nineties and all the Director could give him and his two dependants was a single room in the down-at-heel block serving as a hostel for migrant workers where Sasha lives. Even now you have to watch your back in the entrance ways there after dark.

Elizabeth Dunn writing on the paternalistic (and maternalistic) relations pertaining to production in a Polish factory notes how associations of symbolic kinship complicate reconfigurations of labour–management relations after socialism (2004: 131–61). Considering the upheavals of the 1990s and the inseparability of enterprise and social infrastructure in Izluchino, it is unsurprising that something of a child–parent relationship remains embedded, at least in the discourse of enterprise as provider, among the workers. Dunn identifies narratives within the factory of nourishing and sustenance—referring to the baby-food produced and the maternal care of workers towards its consumers. But in Izluchino, a rather more masculine site of labour despite the numerous blue-collar women, it is the work itself, regardless of its danger and dirt, that is cherished as an object of love, even now. Hard work as the 'single socially-approved possibility of self-realisation' (Alasheev 1995b: 75), is as true today as it was in the late Soviet period. As I argued in relation

to Galina the forewoman, this attitude towards the workspace, if not the work itself, is even more important now because of glaring inequalities and the ubiquitous wheeler-dealers of the informal economy. Work was, and remains, a home from home. Uncle Lyova, cast adrift out of time, pines for the old certainties of factory welding. The factory was family to him and the Director was both king and father (the word *batya* having a flavour of both, cf. Collier 2011: 106, on the expectations of personalistic care from '*khoziains*'—the directors of the monotowns). Paternalism and affect intersect in the sense of belonging that the enterprise, like the army, provided to men. The loss is of course felt keenly by the old guard, although they are careful not to transmit it to those younger too. Any mnemonic link, however misrecognized or partial—like the well-meaning but inadequate philanthropy (*metsenatstvo*) of Saraev—is powerfully evocative of the past.

But Saraev is that unusual inhabitant of Izluchino, locally born. Most people came in the late 1970s or early 1980s and lived and set up families in the low long wooden barrack houses, all of which are still standing. They have large light airy rooms and are nearer the river. But the best workers soon got their flats in the brick blocks, equally roomy by Soviet standards, with well-planned yards and views of the river. Then as now, the buses lined up near the post office and each shift of identical workers in two-tone blue overalls was transported to the disparate workshops in the *promzones*. Only now the buses are all different and rather smaller; they carry superfluous indicators of destination stencilled in plyboard signs pushed up against their windscreens (who couldn't recognize their own bus! And who doesn't know the driver by name and patronymic?). Most of the signs are self-explanatory: 'Linoleum', 'RollingStockRepair', 'Polymer', 'Steelpipe', 'Filter', 'Lime', 'TraxAuto' (the lorry park), 'Crushing-Sorting' (processing the gravel quarry), 'OilBase', 'Cable', 'Ceramics' (bricks), finally, the out-of-town-bound 'Volkswagen', which has something of a mystique about it. The buses carry only a handful of workers each, but nonetheless impart a buzzing, by turns grumpy (at the start of the shift) and jubilant, atmosphere (the end of shifts) to the town park, through which most have to walk to the stop. As they walk the workers call out to each other or greet wives and a fleet of prams (the baby boom is in full swing in 2009 thanks to generous state maternity

payments) as they approach the main shops and housing. Some workers even drive themselves to the first cement works just two kilometres past the edge of town. That's an expensive luxury, even for the technicians on 150% of the manual wage. At least on the bus you can sleep, especially if you're going further, up to the RollingStockRepair, for example, a good 20-minute drive even in summer. But now it is time to wake up, as the Kaluga-local bus we rode at the beginning of this chapter has finally reached Izluchino, 45 minutes after leaving the region's capital and a town's life-story ago. And now the stories of its inhabitants can begin in earnest.

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