

NOTES ON THE “WORTHLESS DOWRY” OF SOVIET INDUSTRIAL MODERNITY: MAKING WORKING-CLASS RUSSIA HABITABLE

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Despite a narrative of deindustrialization, monotowns and former industrial settlements are numerous in today’s Russia, and are significant not only in terms of the territory they occupy and the population they host but also because of the particular economic and cultural practices, logics of community building, and particular types of “connectedness” and horizontal networks that make these places special and habitable for their “dwellers.” This article offers an ethnographic account of the daily lives of blue-collar workers in a former industrial town in central Russia. Based on extensive fieldwork, the article demonstrates how people live their lives and manage to remain “satisfied” with what they have despite the crisis and relative poverty they faced after the fall of the socialist project, losing the town-forming enterprise, and the social trends associated with neoliberal transformation. The article presents a case study that shows the “other life” in today’s Russia, which is not at all present in mainstream academic discourse.

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Izluchino is a small town of trucks and lime and blasting quarries, mud and dust, and a beautiful river in the heart of European Russia.¹ It is early winter, and the wide pedestrianized road between the bus station and the town park is a riot of colored coats: neatly dressed women pushing neat prams promenade up and down in expectation. In this opening vignette I present some of the key informants of the research as they go about their daily lives. Galina is a shift forewoman in her fifties working at a factory that makes plastic pipes for the gas industry. Her son-in-law Petr (late twenties) works on the assembly conveyor for a foreign carmaker in Kaluga, an hour

¹ The original project that brought me to this field site involved researching informal economic practices, some of which were illegal. This, along with other ethical considerations, means that I wish to protect the anonymity of my informants and therefore I use a pseudonym for the town. I have also changed individuals’ names and obscured some details pertaining to the nature of enterprises.

away. His friend Nikita has stayed in the town, working for Cement Works—dirty, dangerous, and poorly paid in comparison to Petr. Iulia is Petr's wife.

Ethnographic materials (recorded and unrecorded interviews, participant and nonparticipant observations) for this research were gathered in winter 2009, summer 2010 to winter 2010/2011, and summer–autumn months of 2012, 2013, and 2014. Both participant observation and semistructured interviewing were conducted in a variety of settings: sometimes at work, frequently in the spaces of domesticity and leisure—summer houses, vegetable plots, park benches, and vehicles. I lived for much of the time in three different workers' homes. I was also able to try my hand at some of the trades and practices of informants such as welding automobiles and constructing double-glazing units on a shop floor. Long-term interactions with five extended family groups of informants living in Izluchino form the bulk of the materials. The range of informants in terms of age, gender, and socioeconomic status was wide. In addition to anonymizing workers' names and jobs, various minor details pertaining to the identity of the settlement have been obscured or changed.

INTRODUCING A MONOTOWN AND ITS PEOPLE

It is the end of the day shift, and the works buses are arriving to disburse their blue-collar workers. I am riding with Galina on her Polymer Works bus for the short twenty-minute ride from the decrepit workshop where she and her 60 fellow workers mold and cut plastic pipes for the gas industry. Once again the management has told her team that there will be no "bonus," the payment that makes up a large part of their pay at the plant. It looks like they will have to "live on the basic. But it's not like we don't know how to do that! If things are bad, we make sushi. If things are good, we make sushi," she remarks both stoically and ironically. Particularly since the economic downturn in 2009, locals are increasingly used to economic hardships they thought they had consigned to the 1990s. Yet, in a symbol of "normal" life continuing, sushi mania continues in the town, with regular "roll sessions" where Galina's large extended family and friends gather in her flat to make enormous servings of rice and fish wrapped in nori rolls. However, this should not be so much interpreted as an aping of "middle-class values." The sushi is "domesticated" using herring and other less exotic staples. Like other, more practical activities, it is a form of DIY: comfortable and comforting home production that also cements both strong (kin) and weaker social ties.

Despite the bad news, Galina and her fellow passengers laugh and joke, looking forward to the end of the journey and home. We get off the bus and phone Galina's son-in-law Petr—also just returned from his shift at the foreign car plant, over an hour away. We meet him and go shopping—there are friendly if brisk queues of workers in the old-fashioned stores, divided into "sectors" by kinds of produce and separate cashiers. We wait in one for milk, and acquaintances in the queue exchange pleasantries. Petr opens a plastic bag, smiling at me. "Look, I've got the acrylic paints Iulia wanted! The foreman in Kaluga owed me a favor and bought them from the art shop. Now I am nearly cleared out until the end of the month," adding ironically, "but

I am sure our dear friend Nikita will lend me enough to get by." I laugh in turn. "Fat chance of that! He owes everyone a debt himself." Taking note of Petr's words, when we get to the minimarket, I sheepishly, stealthily try to pay for the shopping, about 1,500 rubles (30 dollars) worth of groceries. Petr, always observant says, "Aaaa, what are you doing?!" and his mother-in-law bats my hand with the money away. "What's a mother-in-law for if she can't get one over on her son-in-law," says Galina, winking at me and guffawing at Petr's mock embarrassment. She pays, making chitchat with the cashier, on whom the joke is not lost.

We finally meet Iulia and baby on the main square and go home. On the way we bump into Ol'ga, the accountant from the milk combine who has also just arrived in a minibus from work. She is waiting for her father, who is the chief technologist at the German-owned limekiln. "Oh, that's good you're here! Now I don't have to come round later." She extracts a packet of medicine from her coat pocket and hands it to Iulia. Iulia's infant son has recently been ill, and Ol'ga promised to ask around the pharmacies in the district center for a particular Swiss brand of ibuprofen. "Listen, Iulia, next time he's ill just call me, ok? We've got the 4x4 in the yard with winter tires and you don't want to have to wait for the ambulance. They might not come." Recently the outpatient department of the local hospital closed down, and now anyone who wants such care has to travel nearly an hour to the regional capital along a particularly treacherous stretch of road. You may as well not bother with the district emergency ambulance in most circumstances.

It is a good job Petr has put his car in the winter garage: the main road past the square is nearly impassable for pedestrians and cars alike now after a late-autumn deluge. In a good year, when not all the regional budget for asphalt repair is misappropriated, they "patch" the road as if it were a dear but threadbare coat. But the HGVs taking the clay and lime from the quarries make it a sea of deep potholes again in no time. There is no road drainage in the town. As soon as temperatures fall below zero, the whole town will become a death trap. It doesn't help that only a few roads have any street lighting. Local people joke about going out in the night and falling through the holes to Australia without a trace. Then there is the town's favorite topic of this time of year: the beginning of the "heating season." Ol'ga's father knows the chief of the town's district heating plant. He recently took early retirement, partly in disgust at the incompetence in maintenance of the network of pipes in the town. They had all summer to fix the leaks, but now it is too late in the year. The frosts are overdue and the system is under pressure already. Everyone is expecting a disaster: prolonged failure of the district heating and a cold Russian winter. The "lucky ones" will plug in their electric heaters. Then the grid will fail. Last winter there was a rush to buy heaters after the latest round of corporate disputes between businesses nearly led to the town being cut off from the grid just before winter.

Galina's firm Polymer, along with the similar enterprise Steelpipe, is one of the two surviving "inheritor" businesses of the Soviet-era factory complex that ran the town. The "company town district" has been identified as one of a small number of types of urban neighborhood in the USSR (Lehmann and Ruble 1997). The social character of such a locality was and remains overwhelmingly blue collar. Despite the

insolvency and splitting up in the mid-1990s of the main Izluchino Construction-Machine Plant into much smaller privatized companies, resulting in the loss of over 50 percent of Soviet-era blue-collar jobs, there are still a few significant factory- or shop floor-based enterprises, as well as specialist shops that employ from 10 to 100 workers each. The two inheritor enterprises are the main sites of this ethnography.

A few years previously, “persons unknown” making use of the longstanding legal ambiguity over the privatization of one of the firms brought their own security guards with them and locked out the director of Polymer. They had the backing of various “friendly” law enforcement agencies. Only the intervention of the district prosecutor saved the director from this *reiderstvo*, but soon afterwards he fled the country, seeing the writing on the wall.² Last year a new chapter began: the substation supplying the whole industrial zone was switched off by Polymer in an attempt to blackmail the electricity supply company over disputed debts. The substation on Polymer land supplies not only another twenty companies but also the town itself. No one really knows what generator capacity the German limekiln has or what would happen if there was a prolonged blackout there during the 1,500-degree-centigrade heating process that requires careful control to prevent kiln fracture. While only threatening to cut off the town, Polymer did cut the supply to the sewerage plant leading to a massive discharge of untreated waste into the river. Things were really “interesting,” adds Petr. We have recently added an extra layer of polystyrene insulation to his flat’s external wall, but that will hardly make a difference. But such worries can wait. It’s time now to meet Elena, Iulia’s sister, and make up sushi rolls with red fish of unknown provenance and pickled herring, Russian style. Everyone is looking forward to it.

INTRODUCTION: SOVIET AND POST-SOVIET URBAN INDUSTRIAL SETTLEMENTS

The monotown, or “town-forming enterprise,” was and remains a key organization of urban space in the former Soviet Union. The small monotown 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 percent of Russia’s population lived in industrial cities with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants (Collier 2011:111). 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 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. Monotowns themselves have always been more diverse places than they are given credit for. They were both large (like Tol’yatti—the Soviet Detroit) and small, like Izluchino, the town of cement works in Kaluga Oblast which I

² The sometimes violent corporate disputes due to legal ambiguity and the flexible use of the rule of law are called *reiderstvo*, from the English “raider” (see Sakwa 2013:69–96). “Prosecution to order” (72) in cases like that of Mikhail Khodorkovskii’s Yukos have attracted much international attention, but they take place at a “micro” level too.

have visited every year since 1998 and where I have conducted ethnographic research since 2009. At first nothing more than appendages of industry-led massive and rapid urbanization after World War II, 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 making up 25 percent of urban space in today's Russia, and around 30–40 percent of the 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,³ 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 are return and remittance. Insecurity and decay are universal experiences, but so are categories like “comfort” and “local patriotism.” To the elite (and often to the middle-class academics too) living in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, these places are an amorphous and frankly scary “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 Vladimir 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 overalls-clad manual worker's habitus: the archetypical breadwinner of the Russian nuclear family at first glance appears little changed from the Soviet era. It is these micropolitics of making ordinary life more than just survival despite insecurity that are the focus of this article.

Elena Trubina (2013) has coined the phrase “the worthless dowry” of Soviet industrial modernity. Certainly, the idea of a centrally planned mixed residential and industrial space geared to a single purpose is a particularly socialist-era conception of place. The idea of industrial Russia as a “worthless dowry” seems similar to the endlessly reinvented modernization theories through which space and, ultimately, people are reconstructed in a hierarchy of value in Russia today. According to Maria Kaika and Erik Swyngedouw, the urban dowry is not constituted by technological networks (water, gas, electricity, information, etc.) themselves but by the imposing elements of the built environment that accompany them—the network's dowry: “water towers, dams, pumping stations, power plants, gas stations” (2000:121). These are both the source of risk (explosions, pollution, unemployment) and the lifeblood

³ On their supposed “marginality”: in fact, these small towns, particularly in Kaluga Oblast, are significant feeders of low-paid labor into the transnational production sites of global capitalism.

of the community in towns like Izluchino. Everywhere the skyline is dominated by both the defunct elements (disused brick chimneys and factories) and the renovated and new industrial buildings—mainly built by foreign companies. To continue the “dowry” metaphor, as the wedding saying goes, the town has been given something old, new, and borrowed—in the form of the German limekiln and Italian linoleum rolling mill.

Scholarship on Russia often has a normative tenor that focuses on the terrible “social quality of life” of such places as Izluchino (Rafal’son 2011:59) while not inquiring too closely into the actual lived experience of the people inhabiting and making the best of this “dowry.” 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 (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 commentary about endemic corruption (Ledeneva 1998; Morris and Polese 2014).

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 (Dimke and Koriukhina 2012; Gerasimenko 2014). These are more sympathetic portraits that show that people living in monotowns consider them better places to live than bigger urban centers. This is in spite of poor pay, crime, pollution, and out-migration by young people (Vorob’ev, Gusev, and Malyi 2013:13). Despite hints from the locals themselves of the relatively “favorable” (*blagopriiatnye*) living conditions, the portrait of such places in Russian social research is one of “spiritual and cultural decline” (13), “hopelessness,” and “misfortune” (5). The picture of life as completely inhospitable to habitable existence that emerges from scholarship on monotowns is difficult to square with the life experienced as relatively “comfortable” by Izluchino residents. Key is the sense of agency on the part of inhabitants to control and manipulate a part of everyday life, however meager, to make it more habitable.

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 (Satybalina 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” (984). For Natal’ia Zubarevich (2011), “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.” 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 by

these inhabitants to adapt. They are a “problem,” politically and socially “backward.”⁴ In short, it would appear that the metropolitan intellectual elite would quite like industrial blue-collar populations 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 their failure to “adapt” to new market realities as much as it is the fault of the reforms themselves (Zubarevich 2009). This echoes more general arguments about adaptability and response to change used throughout the last 25 years after the fall of communism.

This is reminiscent of the discourses that serve to demonize ordinary people in postindustrial areas and the working class more generally (Jones 2011; Skeggs 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 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 labor (Morris forthcoming). Indeed, while Sherry Lee Linkon’s conception of the half-life of deindustrialization mainly relates to the ongoing experience of the past through 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 its highpoint in the 1980s, but it is still the mainstay of the town.

As well as being the object of “ruin-gazing” of a middle-class Russian academy towards postindustrial areas, as in the West, ordinary people living in these spaces are dealt a triple blow. Not only are they the main victims of postindustrialism and the retreat of the social state. They are also suddenly repositioned as part of the Global South, a site of low-cost, nonunionized labor for relocating multinational con-

⁴ It is particularly ironic that the industrial urban poor are condemned for being politically conservative and yet gain significant attention as a “motor” of social protest (Zubarevich 2011), such as that in Pikalevo in 2009 that blocked a main highway in Leningrad Oblast. Pikalevo is almost exactly the same size and profile as Izluchino (about 20,000 inhabitants). At the same time, Zubarevich is dismissive of the politically progressive potential of such protests.

glomerates like Volkswagen and Samsung. Then, as seen above, they are pathologized as a sociobiological parasite on the newly clean body politic of “liberal” Russia, even as they continue to uncomplainingly slave away at producing a disproportionate amount of the GDP that sustains Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Underpinning the present research is the aim to provide an ethnographic account of blue-collar workers’ lives as a corrective to a blind spot not only about class in Russia but on small urban towns, mono profile or otherwise, as lived and, more importantly, “livable” spaces. This research takes its cue from an overview by Michael Burawoy, in which he notes that many analyses of alternative capitalisms “exclude subordinate classes, which in effect become the bewildered-silent and silenced—spectators of transformations that engulf them” (2001:1107). Too often the inhabitants of places like Izluchino are viewed as passive victims of transformations, which they are believed to be unequipped to take part in, resist, or “domesticate” (Stenning et al. 2010). Thus the present empirical approach also interrogates more critically the reflexivity and individualization theses (Atkinson 2007, 2010) as they pertain to neoliberal inspired models of transformation.

Researchers studying the region 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 Michel de Certeau (1984) and do not downplay the importance of ongoing insecurity—quite the opposite. The striving for mundane comfort—in making an aquarium from scrap materials, stealing diesel fuel from work to sustain leisure practices, drinking to excess with mates in garage blocks, or the social intercourse of the town square after work—are telling activities in terms of how people understand and deal with postsocialist reality. After Thomas M. Malaby (2002), these are part of a repertoire of practices that comprise a lifeworld based on “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. If risk is a category approaching the normatively neutral in the everyday life, what emerges as an equally given is the intersubjective understanding of minor victories in carving out a habitable niche. This may be less than the “resistance” of *débrouillardise* (Reed-Danahay 1993), but is more than “just coping” (Morris 2012a). It is part of a “small agency” that is locally and socially embedded (Honkasalo 2009). Thus, despite a loss of generalized social trust, the social sphere and the other as a source of “comfort”—whether in drinking and smoking in the male-dominated garage space or arts and crafts at home in a circle of female friends and relations—are integral to making the successful habitability of the lifeworld. Being for others and being for oneself, and social practices for their own sake, are key to habitability (Keat 2000; Morris 2012a).

Contingency and its everyday response are therefore also important in moving analyses of postsocialist selves away from assumptions of Foucauldian governmen-

tality. Work on the self, more often than not, is not directed at molding 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” (*khvataet*) to avoid externally imposed self-transformative work. Habitable persons strive to be self-sufficient, not only materially in their livelihood practices, as an insurance policy against generalized insecurity and precarity in the present (for working- and middle-class people alike), but 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. 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 in the new middle class) often entail what appears to be equally “enterprising” risk taking in informal work, from gypsy taxi driving to unregistered self-employment in plumbing, construction labor, 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 undignified 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 2012b).

FIELD SITE, INFORMANTS, AND METHODS

The field site encompasses a district (*raion*) with two small towns (populations 15,000 and 20,000) about 40 kilometers from the regional (*oblast'*) capital Kaluga. During the Soviet period both towns were dominated by single employers. The smaller town, which I give the pseudonym Izluchino, was a “company town”—built from scratch in the postwar period around local extractive industries and manufacturing. “Company town,” or “monotown,” is my translation of the Russian term *gradoobrazuiushchee predpriiatie*, or “town-formative enterprise”; in practice this was a single, extensive, industrial enterprise responsible for building the housing and other social infrastructure throughout the town and industrial zones. The enterprise provided the vast majority of relatively well-paid blue-collar work in the town as well as work benefits (the “social wage”) such as canteens, childcare, transport, and leisure facilities to the chiefly male workers and their dependents. Like most company towns, Izluchino exerted a strong pull effect on labor from neighboring districts and regions, partly because employment guaranteed rapid access to company-provided housing (in the early 1980s most workers were allocated permanent housing in five-story apartment blocks within six months of arrival). In the 1990s most of these flats became the private property of the occupiers, providing both a significant disincentive to labor mobility (despite the economically parlous situation in the district) and a sense of security to owners, but also generational inequality (Zavisca 2008).

Despite the demise of the single industrial employer, blue-collar work continues everywhere, along with the building of personal networks predicated on social and occupational positioning, some of which endure from the socialist period. Despite disaggregation of the firm, the town remains a “resource monotown” (Vorob'ev et al. 2013),

in that the majority of work is connected in some way to the extraction and processing of limestone. The best blue-collar work pays only about 800 dollars a month. Well-qualified professionals earn from 1,200 dollars a month, while living costs like food, heating, and transport are comparable to those in much of Western Europe. Many people regularly spend over half of their wages on basic foodstuffs; the declining purchasing power of workers is well documented as a key issue in industrial relations literature on Russia (Morrison 2008), and in-work poverty is characteristic of most postsocialist countries (Stenning et al. 2010). Because of the poor wages in manual labor, informal work is highly valued. Work like skilled moonlighting as a plumber or electrician can provide double a monthly wage in a matter of days (although the frequency of such work depends on luck and the extent of the worker's contacts and social network) (Morris 2014a). Some younger workers commute to Moscow, three hours by bus to the north, or live on-site there for weeks at a time. There are very few other work opportunities for men in the formal economy: the service and retail sectors continue to be seen as "women's work" and agricultural jobs are scarce and poorly paid.

In terms of everyday life, settlements like Izluchino could be said to have undergone a loss of corporate civic identity since the demise of the enterprise that supported it. In the Soviet period little attention was paid to creating a town space and infrastructure suitable for the needs of a high-density development. Now, civic, leisure, and consumption-oriented amenities are poor by regional standards. Unlike the district center town about 20 kilometers away, Izluchino has many unpaved spaces, large abandoned brownfield sites, and almost no street lighting between its arterial roads. It had a civic building housing a theater stage, but this is in disrepair, as is a large secondary school complex. Its communal canteen closed down some years ago. There is a small open-air market once a week selling local produce, and a dozen or so shops, dominated by small businesses selling mainly foodstuffs. Many families, regardless of their current economic status, maintain a small wooden village house and private vegetable plot a few kilometers outside the town. However, 75 percent of plots near the town are abandoned due to lack of water-pumping equipment, again as a result of the loss of enterprise patronage.

HABITABILITY AT THE NEXUS OF WORK, MUTUAL AID, AND EXTENDED AND ENDURING SOCIAL NETWORKS

THE ONGOING SALIENCE OF WAGED WORK AND DIGNITY

At the heart of studying the making of the local habitable for the "working poor" in Russia outside the metropolises is understanding the nexus between waged work, mutual aid, an extensive social network that extends beyond kin, and informal opportunities for getting by and, sometimes, "getting ahead." This constellation of social and economic interests was at the heart of my previous research and continues to inform its direction, particularly with regard to the informal economy (see Morris 2014a). The starting point of this research was a feeling, based on my long-standing engagement with people in small town Russia, that even the best scholarship on lived

experience inevitably reproduced a picture of existence that was certainly true in the 1990s—"just coping," or scratching a living in the aftermath of economic shock therapy. Life is still dominated by economic imperatives, but there is also a need to foreground the "normality" of life in "marginal" spaces and communities.

The opening ethnographic vignette that begins this article was not a typical day, but neither was it uncommon. Many days in Izluchino were a strange mix of everyday social connectedness against the backdrop of everpresent social precarity. What then is the point of the portrait that opens this article? It illustrates the continual striving to make habitable the inhospitable and insecure space of lived experience for "ordinary Russians," a generation after socialism. Reciprocity and mutualism, while not universal, are an everyday, indeed normal and normative experience. They arise out of a compressed social geography (Morris 2012a) that is generated by the working class industrial history of the place, the meaning of which continues to be salient long after the end of communism and the beginning of deindustrialization. These modalities, in turn, serve to "produce" the local in a particular way (Appadurai 1995). Indeed, production of the local in this so-called marginal urban space in a "marginal" part of the former Second World is grounded in actual knowledge of how "to produce and reproduc[e] locality under conditions of anxiety and entropy" (Appadurai 1995:210). While "fragility" and loss are at the heart of the experience of industrial urbanity in Russia, its ethos is the propertizing of *social life* in spite of insecurity (211). At the same time, it is impossible to understand the production of the local in isolation from the context of neighborhood as a "social form" (212). While the postsocialist present is fraught with uncertainty and danger, Izluchino benefits from the compressed social geography that emerges from the overwhelmingly blue-collar nature of the monotown. This pertains both to the sense of "security," comfort, and habitability of being "at home" among others, as well as the experience of the town as a semiclosed "site" where exploitation and risk are managed far away from the wealthier cities. This latter interpretation is contained in the meanings of the Russian word translated as "test range" and "site"—*poligon*. Izluchino, as part of the defense ministry industries in Soviet times, was a "post office box," a semiclosed city. Its residents today make use of the literal meaning of *poligon* as "test range" and "closed site" to explore metaphors of their spatial and economic insecurity in the present.

Uncle Leva is one of my oldest informants—a kindly, if irritable, and thoughtful welder in his early fifties, overweight and wheezing from too much smoking. In late 2009 we sit in his kitchen with his wife Auntie Masha and discuss the imminent opening of the new district domestic waste-processing site being built in the town. The town's many exhausted quarries make it a perfect site for waste disposal. Indeed, for most of my years of visiting the town a major problem was the illegal dumping of waste by residents in such places at the town limits that threatened to pollute the water supply. People had little choice, as regular rubbish collections and disposal were only instituted a few years previously, another example of the difficulties of life in such a place. Leva and Masha are worried—and not only about potential pollution from the new site accepting all the district waste:

The new waste site [*poligon*] is on the clay-mining pit. Of course it is just a way of the district dumping on us. There won't be jobs for the locals, they'll bring in some Uzbeks or something. We're worried that they'll open up to Moscow waste: who knows what they'll dump there; it could be medical and toxic waste. And then there's the traffic through the town.... If you think about it, we are just a site of exploitation for Moscow and always have been. It is like a test firing range [*poligon*] for everything they aren't yet prepared to inflict on the city dwellers: cutting all the social benefits like Masha's utility subsidies. She works for the local authority so she should get a discount on heating. Then, there is the reduction in our welding team at work. Down from 40 to 10 in the last 8 years. How can you work in such conditions when the expectations are the same?

Leva's use of metaphor echoes Nikita Pokrovskii (2005), who likens the entire neocapitalist "experiment" in Russia to a military firing range. In turn, this is similar to the lay narrative of likening Russia to an expendable patient in a medical experiment. The West first "injected" the bacillus of communism here to see whether it would kill or cure the patient. Not satisfied, they now use Russia as a site to experiment in the most extreme rollback of the social state and destruction of civic and economic rights (Morris and Polese 2014).

However, quickly Leva's tune changes:

Some of the young ones go to Moscow to earn a crust [of bread], but they soon come back. No one wants to sleep in a railway carriage on a building site behind barbed wire. What did my nephew Grigorii bring back from Moscow after six months working there? Syphilis, that's all.

Like many inhabitants, Leva sees uncertainty as somehow manageable in the local, in comparison with the uncertainty beyond the familiar rhythms of the town. These rhythms are revealed in the immediacy of sociality outlined above, which may or may not coincide with mutuality. Equally important to other people is the built environment as a source that produces the local and "structures its feeling" (Appadurai 1995:210). Leva, Masha, Galina, and others remember their part in literally building the town in the 1980s, after the use of prisoner labor ceased (the "zone" of the three prisons remains another important "site" that defines the town as a place somewhat apart). The memory of worth, dignity, and pride in the monotown is readily accessible even now, amidst the decrepit and decaying industrial zones. While half the workshops have been abandoned, the town still prides itself on its House of Culture (or *DeKa*). True, the *DeKa* is in poor condition, but still boasts children's arts and crafts clubs, dancing groups, amateur theater, discos, and more. Leva and even younger workers openly weigh up the options of labor migration. But as many return as leave permanently. For them Izluchino remains a "little motherland." While Leva and others reinforce a sense of "marginality" in their talk of the big disregarding "other" of Moscow, their small actions reveal how a rooted sense of emplacedness endures. This may be revealed in ongoing commitment to domestic improvement (decorative and DIY practices), the building of country cottages and purchase of land plots, or expressed in less material terms.

For Galina attachment to place is grounded in affective attachment to both the people of the town and enterprise she works in but also the remnants of pride in work itself:

I like the people. It's people as much as the place. I feel the need [*nuzhnost'*] of what I do and the social aspect [*obshchenie*]. Here at home it's not the same, I mean they don't value me in the same way.... The spirit of the collective has remained, despite having three younger operators. Of course there's also the fact that we can't live on my pension of 9,000 rubles.... But there is something of the delight [*prelest'*] of the place that remains. There were always lots of worries without a doubt, sure. But we always had a good workshop and collective. I'll never forget how we sat and chatted after I came back from maternity leave. My cheeks hurt from the laughter. Good people, and still are. Even now people come back to the place to work after trying out something else, because it is near home and they are in their element [*svoia stikhiia*]. What we do isn't taught or trained anywhere.... I never thought of leaving, I love my workshop a lot. Not just the collective. It is everything taken together. You can't take one thing out and say that is what I love.... We are stewing in our own juices [*varimsia v sobstvennom soku*].

Galina's use of "element" reveals how a sense of making the local links habitability to the comfort of class-based "feeling-in-common" rather than political consciousness or solidarity. Once again, if the making of life habitable is indicative of small agency in seemingly insignificant and meager practices, it is not the same as "resistance." People repeatedly talk about being "in their element" and the small acts that make life "comfortable." While people do not have everything they want or need, they have "enough"—"*nam khvataet*." This is the refrain underpinning reflections on habitability. What is important is the experience of making the town a habitable, livable place in the here and now. People seek meaning in the relative absence of the insecurity characteristic of the 1990s. Or, if their lives continue to be marked by insecurity (especially since the global financial crisis), they look both forward in quiet desperation and back to "better" times, in a self-positioning of perpetual interstitiality and contingency. What is the "normality" of life against the backdrop of ongoing precarity and insecurity? Regardless or, perhaps, because of the experience of recent historical crisis, the search for "habitability" among small town Russians is at the heart of understanding of everyday life in this ethnography.

MEAGER SATISFACTION DESPITE DOWNWARD MOBILITY: DEPLETED YET ENDURING SOCIAL NETWORKS OF LABOR

Another dreary late autumn day I sit in the turbine hall of the heating plant. The windowsill holds a beautiful display of enormous cacti, lovingly tended by the two female blue overall—clad technicians who religiously mark the hours by noting the temperature burn of the Siemens gas boilers every half hour, 24 hours a day. Antonina looks older than her years. At 45, she has worked in this quiet corner of the

town since leaving a job in a shop 5 years ago. Her husband works as a security guard in Saint Petersburg, staying with relatives there. The other technician, Polia, chimes in:

My husband too left to Moscow for a time, but he's too old now at 50 and drives a [unregistered] taxi here. He wanted to come back. Saved up the money for the Renault Logan in Moscow, but now he won't go back. It's enough [*khvataet*] for us, even if it is little.

Polia looks slightly nervously at her boss, Nikolai Viktorovich, as she says this last "little," worried that he will be offended. He isn't. More than most, the town's chief heating engineer knows what it means to "get by" on a small salary. In the Soviet period he was a factory director a thousand kilometers to the south. He has come down in the world now, tending a town's heating supply for not much more than a foreman's salary. Nikolai Viktorovich is that gem of the Russian provinces: an eccentric polymath—a Russian Renaissance man. He always has an opinion he is willing to share and takes up the theme of his technicians:

Today we've got those material goods [*blag*] which we didn't have 20 years ago. People no longer need to strive for those things even if they remain poor; they are striving for knowledge, for the Internet, for TV.... We obtained our self-expression. It has given us everything; the Internet has meant elements of that freedom. We got freedom of our thought. We can express what we want there. But engagement with politics is meaningless. We got our self-expression. And now material compensation for our labor is less important. We got freedom.... Do we really need much? I've eaten my salad and I am so satisfied, it's so cheap and so little. But it's not that I am particularly hungry. The posteconomic is here too, if you want to look for it.

While the engineer's understanding is typically bookish, his emphasis on meager satisfaction, with small needs, his articulation of habitability was not unlike that of workers themselves.

It has become a dubious truism that postsocialist societies have undergone a massive loss of generalized social trust (Hann, Humphrey, and Verdery 2002) and are among the least "trusting" societies (Giordano and Kostova 2002; Delhey and Newton 2003; Kopecký and Mudde 2003). At the same time they are characterized as network and informal exchange societies (Ledeneva 1998, 2006; Rose 1999) where horizontal ties connect individuals and encourage personalized relations and obligations in the absence of trust in formal institutions and systems. Much attention has been given to both personalism and patrimonialism in the political sphere (Ledeneva 2006), as well as the necessity for connections in order to survive the first waves of economic and social dislocation after socialism (Bridger and Pine 1998; Burawoy, Krotov, and Lytkina 2000). Elsewhere (Morris 2014b) I have argued that even in such economically and socially devastated spaces as the monotown, loyalties and identities forged as blue-collar workers prior to the mid-1990s remain salient despite gen-

uine feelings of anomie and atomization, particularly among older people.⁵ These can be given a working definition of metaoccupational, or classed, communities of mutuality: people call on place- and class-embedded social networks of support, based on values of "reciprocity and fraternity" that, Guy Standing (2009) argues, belong to existing occupational communities.

While out-migration to construction sites in Moscow or long-term unemployment and subsistence existence in the informal economy locally are also common narratives, as social insecurity increases, people fall back on the support of old acquaintances, even if this is uneven and patterned by changing fortunes and the bitterness of social mobility. Polia the technician speaks of an old factory acquaintance, now a shop owner, who will do no more than greet her in the street. She has "got above herself." Leva tells a similar tale about his schoolmate, now the director of Steelpipe. At the same time, there are others on whom one can rely through thick and thin and for the smallest or more significant support. When Galina's daughter had a child, she could rely on her people from the factory to help out with clothes and toys galore. When Petr's car is damaged by a hit-and-run driver, even though he now works in Kaluga for Volkswagen, he can call on a wide network of old worker confrère from the cement works to help him out in fixing it.

Labor and entitlement were closely linked in socialist-era ideology (Bridger and Pine 1998:9). While formal entitlement to the social benefits of the enterprise is largely gone, an informal entitlement as a suitably deserving (ex-)worker, remains a tangible form of social capital and is constitutive of social networks in the town. In the case of Izluchino, many younger and middle-aged men had at one time worked for the main cement works. Even if they no longer work there, status as a former Cement (or Steelpipe) worker acts as a kind of surrogate calling card as individuals seek support or access in other areas. While certainly there are many people who lack social capital through a lack of others to whom they can turn, a blue-collar identity remains highly pertinent to understanding the maintenance of social networks, even if an individual has not worked in a factory setting for some time. One main informant, Sasha, provides an example.

At the beginning of a second period of ethnographic fieldwork I am sitting in the cab of Sasha's flatbed truck at night in a garage block on the outskirts of Izluchino. Sasha is outside talking to a long-distance truck driver he used to work with at the cement works. A small amount of money changes hands, and Sasha passes me a canister. The Driver siphons off 20 liters of diesel fuel from his cab. "See you at Auntie Klara's on the 5th?" says the Driver to Sasha. "Maybe not," he answers, "I've got a *kalyim* [moonlighting] job on that off-day." The Driver indicates his cab with a twist

⁵ A similar issue to the difference between genuine feelings and perception of atomization versus evidence of the continuation of informal social support is the case of crime. In the town people often speak of the fear of crime and link it to the atomization of their community. There is no doubt that property-related and petty violence has increased substantially locally since the early 1990s (although people also discuss a marked reduction after 2000 as prosperity increased across the board). Nonetheless, fear of crime among many older people can be said to be out of any proportion to the everyday risks of becoming a victim of it.

of his head: “Fancy a drink? Are you on or off tomorrow?” Sasha replies: “I’d stay for one, but the wife is waiting. We’re both on tomorrow; why don’t you come by the garage on Saturday and we’ll put a few away there.” The last phrase is accompanied by a sharp movement of the head, indicating his property in the next row of brick garages—an important male refuge from the domestic space. The Driver locks up his cab and walks off to the nearest block of flats 50 yards away. Sasha and I get back in his truck and drive to his own block, five minutes away.

In this brief exchange, replete with tacit mutual understanding, the nexus of blue-collar sociality, formal work status, and informal economic activity is neatly encapsulated. Let us follow the trickle of the illicit diesel and unpack the imbrications of the social and economic from Sasha’s encounter above. Firstly, stealing and selling of fuel and other workplace property must be understood as being as much for sport as for profit. Petty theft is hardly an important source of income, nor is it especially widespread, despite the practice of “filching” from work as an institution under socialism and after (Verdery 1996). Nonetheless, the activity sets various important markers: it reinforces solidarity between “workers”—in the sense of putting into relief the literal contrast, in the eyes of Sasha and the Driver, between people who “do work” and the bosses, white-collars, managers. In the face of derisory benefits from formal employment contracts it is an entitlement “perk”—owed to the employee, in his eyes. Finally, it is part of a “making ends meet” philosophy of self-provisioning, understood in its widest sense, on the part of the working poor. Such activity may encompass mushroom picking and an economy of jars (Smollet 1989), DIY at home, or even filching diesel on the part of blue-collar workers. The fuel allowance “perk” is facilitated by a robust and mutually trusting network of “sometime colleagues.” In the past, the Driver and Sasha worked together. Now they do not, but through social and kin networks they maintain a sort of arms-length friendly contact in the compressed social geography of the town. The social fact of simultaneous closeness and distance is good for reducing the risk of the Driver getting caught—there is nothing in particular to link Sasha to the enterprise from which the diesel originates, but at the same time Sasha is not some stranger on the side of the Kiev–Moscow highway.

So in this encounter Sasha has reinforced his solidarity with a “sometime confrère,” as Burawoy calls the particular class allegiance of blue-collar workers under socialism (1992:123). What else has he gained and why? Russian annual inflation, especially in goods people actually need—food, fuel—has remained at about 10 percent for a decade. Petrol and diesel are the lifeblood of blue-collar workers’ strategies of household reproduction. Whether you work in a factory or do own account work, you need wheels. Disregarding the “sporting” element of such a transaction with the Driver, Sasha has now got a full tank for perhaps 15 dollars instead of 30. This will increase his margins somewhat in the *kalym* job he has to go to on his off-shift day tomorrow. *Kalym* refers to any moonlighting job using skills, connections, or even materials related to formal work.⁶ For Sasha this happens to be using his flatbed

⁶ The word still carries derogatory meaning left over from the Soviet period due to its association with misuse of state property and informality per se, though significantly, my informants’ neutral moral attitude to differentiating this work from formal work indicates a change in nuance.

to deliver building material, from which he derives a small cash income from the informal (i.e., unregistered and undocumented as a legal entity) enterprise that “employs” him, of which more below. He calls it *kalym* because this informal work environment is dominated and perpetuated by ex-workers from his formal job.

At the same time Sasha works as a regular worker in a German-owned limekiln as a forklift driver. This work is in 12-hour shifts, every other day, with every third shift overnight—hence the question about “on” and “off” days. For Sasha, working as a delivery driver is manageable because of the “gaps” in his shift work, although often he can barely keep his eyes open. The informal work nearly doubles his take-home pay from the equivalent of 350 dollars at the kiln to 700 per month. Finally, our scene of informal exchange ends with an obligatory reference to the geography of masculine sociality among blue-collar workers: the garage block space where mechanical tinkering and vodka drinking receive equal attention from men gathering there whenever they can, whatever the weather. The “garage,” actually a substantial brick structure with electricity, a cellar, sofa, table and chairs, and a hi-fi, is also a space between work and leisure where many informal economic and not-so-economic activities can take place. From traders storing stock to welders fixing cars or just workers hanging out after the shift discussing the latest *kalym* opportunities—the garage and other places like it are key spaces where the intersection of blue-collar social networks and the creation of a habitable lifeworld are made visible.

THE SHARED EXPERIENCE OF MATERIAL CULTURES

Another entry point into habitability revolves around material cultures of make-do and DIY—“do it yourself”—that intersected with both a working-class identity and a network of social equals for whom the working-class subject is “suitable” in terms of rendering mutual aid. Most of the workers at the brick works, the biggest employer in town, live in similar accommodation and maximize space utilization by constructing “do-it-yourself” furniture, often from materials gleaned from work or scrounged from others. The homes of all workers contain examples of do-it-yourself skill engendered by necessity—all the families are on low working incomes. At the same time these domestic spaces showcase the workings of a specific kind of social and cultural capital, the fruit of networking and skill exchange, evidenced by the pride of place given to handmade decorative elements. In a number of homes the focal point in the cramped apartments is given to hand-built tropical aquariums. This practice of decoration, and the skill with which it was accomplished, is constitutive of an important internal rather than material “good” and emblematic of a more wide-ranging alternative practice to conspicuous consumption within the formal economy (Morris 2012a). In talking to one fish tank maker, the same Sasha as above, conversation turns to the original topic of my fieldwork—“working-class identity.” Could it be that hand-built decorations like the aquariums are a badge of honor, something to do with showing oneself as a worthy working-class subject? Perhaps in this initial period of fieldwork I put it clumsily to Sasha, but his response is nonetheless revealing:

What do you mean “working class”? I’ve worked at all the production lines in this town at one time or another.... Me, I’m just a simple citizen—I can go out among the people. “Socialize?”—no, we just spend time together like normal people. I’m just a bloke, not a “worker.” Those who know how to work know many other things besides and so won’t lose out. They can do things with their own hands. They get a satisfaction from it—that they did it themselves. I suppose it’s a kind of inner happiness [*dushevnyi pod'em*]. You’ve just got to try to do it! Don’t be afraid, someone will see and try to help you if you are prepared to help yourself.... This is where I’m comfortable, my habitat [*sreda obitaniia*], and this is where I will stay.

At the time, I made little of Sasha’s comment on habitat and comfort, but as my research progressed I encountered more “folksy” resourcefulness, pride in such activity for its own sake. Most importantly, the striving for what I call “habitability” more generally became one of the key categories by which people in my everyday Russia make sense of their lives and their dwelling within postsocialism, 25 years after the end of the Soviet period.

When he mentioned “trying to do it,” Sasha refers to the DIY practices of making decorative elements for the home from found, scrounged materials, some of which were filched from workplaces of those “in” the system of production, even if Sasha, who eventually left the limekiln to become an informal taxi driver, was not (Morris 2012a). The “inner happiness” and “comfort” after leaving blue-collar work is, for Sasha, clearly related to long-standing structures of feeling in the local and in a classed identity developed over a number of generations in socialist-era workspaces. The low technological reality of blue-collar work, where skill and “wit” remain a tangible element in the successful carrying out of production tasks, illustrates another link with long-standing and persistent tropes of working-class life: the “handicraft” nature of some production under socialism and after that owe more to the rural past than the Fordist assembly line (Alashev 1995:99; Dunn 2004:12–13). Just as rushing and storm work echo older peasant rhythms of work, the affective meaning of work that in part arises from the “handmade,” do-it-yourself necessity of the shop floor must also find its origin in the generalist competencies of the peasant worker, who needed a wide range of skills to survive the geographical and climatic reality of rural Russian life. At the same time the resourcefulness of the person who does “handwork,” and who seeks to make habitable their environment, is predicated on practices that are held in common and developed through a sociality.

This returns us to the “helping out” that Sasha, despite being a rather unsocial type, highlights as so important. The ability to call on help, whether as a “normative” worker in blue-collar employment or as a gypsy cab driver on the margins of the formal economy, indicates an acknowledged identity as a deserving recipient of mutual support in developing and enacting the skills of DIY. This extends across a raft of necessary and less essential activities: the skills involved in building a house or a garage, mending a car or a lawnmower, or making a fish tank are maintained through the interpretation of self as a competent worker. The competent worker engages in personal production, but that production is not possible without recourse to a recog-

nizable blue-collar personhood. Because only with that recognition will “help” from others arrive. And without help facing the ongoing contingencies of everyday life is unthinkable, uninhabitable. How else will the car get fixed, the dacha roof get put up, or the bathroom heater plumbed in? Outside the comforting confines of the remaining factory paternalism, with its equally alienating new regimes that bridle the urge for independence, habitability is even more dependent on the “horizontal social network” of confrères (Morris 2014a). Sasha can leave “work” behind but not his fellow workers, even if they remain significant others and not “friends.” What kind of labor is the building of decorative items like aquariums that combines the economic, the social, and renders the border between at-work identity and off-work identity problematic, at the same time as drawing strongly on the socialization of its participants as workers? It is a practice as much for its own sake that involves homosociality, leisure, self-production, and, perhaps most importantly, the continual reproduction of strong-weak ties between multiple people and an expansion and cementing of a blue-collar male social network through more or less “deep commitments, intense emotions, and everyday acts of relatedness” (Sanghera, Ablezova, and Botoeva 2011:185). Thus it is practices “for their own sake” that emerge as most central to the habitable lives of workers in the monotown. This is as true for women as it is men. Gendered craft activities like painting and the making of decorative items from materials found in nature were as important for women as the making of items from scrap industrial materials were for men.

CONCLUSIONS

Bound up, then, with identity but crossing gender boundaries are the shared practices and display of folksy resourcefulness in the monotown that relate closely to more traditional working-class markers of respectability, propriety, manual competence, and thrift. The production of the local as habitable is entwined with the comfort of the compressed social sphere. Of course, this narrowness is for some as much a burden as a resource, in particular if they seek to break out of traditional gender or classed roles. Nonetheless, many monotown inhabitants “use” such practices to approximate class-, occupation-, and kin-based solidarity within a circulating value system that allows them to “propertize” a worker and monotown identity as “theirs” (see Crompton 2008:110 on Skeggs 2004, 2005). The very “poverty” of the habitus is itself generative of alternative sources of worth and autonomist values (Skeggs 2011). While economically structured into the worst position, this “positional suffering” in a Bourdieusian sense (Bourdieu 1999) should not extend to a denial of social and cultural capital understood in its own terms. To do so would be to make the same mistake as those who see the monotown as a worthless dowry: containing nothing of value, not for a postsocialist groom (society generally), but the actual people inhabiting and making habitable the lot that befalls them. Indeed, here, when focusing on everyday life, the metaphor of dowry breaks down. It is more appropriate to speak of ordinary people in monotowns as making the best of the postsocialist “inheritance” of urban space—one that will be with them for a long time to come, regardless of the

political and policy decisions (such as the “resettlement” plans frequently mooted). Where some people see lack of worth, “others see homes situated within painful processes of transformation” (Mah 2012:11).

By any of the conventional measures of human development, the monotown is indeed a poor place to seek habitability: its denizens lack financial security, their health is at risk, and their life expectancy is lower than elsewhere. Their access to the vehicles of social mobility, in entrepreneurialism or education, is fraught. Nonetheless their lives are structured by multiple and valued social ties of extent, commitment, and deep content. They share practices that create autonomist value. If we substitute for human development the concepts of human potential—“happiness,” “creativity,” and “fulfillment”—then why shouldn’t their lives be thought of as any less habitable than those of the middle-class Muscovite? People in Izluchino inhabit a dangerous and insecure deindustrializing environment far from the natural world Tim Ingold describes in his thesis about the dwelling of human beings in their environment. Nonetheless his insights are particular revealing of the construction of the social and the local as habitable in the monotown; it is worth considering them in that very different context:

We learn in a specific environment; our life histories are accretions intertwined with others by shared experience in particular places; we do not “build” but dwell; our cultural knowledge is not imported into the settings in which we dwell but developed there as “specific dispositions and sensibilities” that lead us to orient ourselves in relation to our environment “and to attend to its features in particular ways.” (Ingold 2000:153)

As has been demonstrated in similar urban contexts in the West, “care and connection” (Linkon 2013:44) can be built on the remains of the past—the dowry of Soviet modernity need not be seen as worthless. A blue-collar sense of value in shared identity remains and invigorates such social bonds, and this need not be nostalgic, even as the certainties of the socialist and industrial heritage fade into the past.

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ЗАМЕТКИ О «БРОСОВОМ ПРИДАНОМ» СОВЕТСКОЙ ПРОМЫШЛЕННОЙ МОДЕРНИЗАЦИИ: СРЕДА ОБИТАНИЯ РОССИЙСКИХ РАБОЧИХ

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Несмотря на распространенный нарратив деиндустриализации, в современной России по-прежнему много моногородов и бывших промышленных поселков. Значимость проблемам, которые возникают у них, придают не только размеры занимаемой территории и населения. Здесь существуют особые экономические и культурные практики, логика построения общества и характерные типы «взаимовыручки» и горизонтальных связей, благодаря которым эти поселения и по сей день остаются в глазах местных жителей «пригодными для проживания». Данная статья предлагает вниманию читателей этнографический отчет о повседневной жизни «синих воротничков» – производственных рабочих – в некогда промышленно развитом городе Центральной России. На основании данных обширных полевых исследований в ста-

ть показано, как эти люди живут и умудряются оставаться «довольными» тем, что имеют, невзирая на экономический кризис и относительную бедность, постигшую их после краха социалистического проекта, на утрату градообразующего предприятия и на социальные тенденции, связанные с неолиберальной трансформацией. В статье предпринят анализ частного случая, наглядно демонстрирующего «иную жизнь», исследование которой совершенно не представлено в господствующем сегодня академическом дискурсе.

Ключевые слова: деиндустриализация; рабочий класс; обитаемость; моногород; Россия; человеческий потенциал