

**GENDER, LIFE-COURSE, GENERATION:
ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE POST-SOVIET
INDUSTRIAL TOWN OF MEZHDURECHENSK**

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ABSTRACT

In my thesis I explore self-employment in Russia's small de-industrializing town of Mezhdurechensk, as one of women's livelihood strategies after they lost the opportunity to keep their white- and blue-collar working places in the aftermath of post-Soviet transformation. The study is based on semi-structured interviews with seven women born in the 1960s and 1970s, who started to run small-scale businesses in Mezhdurechensk in 1990s and 2000s while being young mothers, as well as on archival materials such as local newspapers and official statistics.

Doing business offered women flexibility in structuring the workday to combine it with the household work, which has been considered women's duty. I focus in my research on two important historical turns: the 1990s as the birth of entrepreneurship, and 2008 as a moment of snowballing crisis and vulnerability. The continuing macro-changes affecting Mezhdurechensk made female entrepreneurs, who started to run business in early post-Soviet time, to adopt and eventually re-consider their working tactics. Mothers' decisions to become entrepreneurs can be understood both by looking at their life courses, and by embedding their individual biographies in the broader transformations of the post-Soviet gender regime. The entrepreneurial subject is not a genderless subject as it is often considered in the neoliberal model of personhood. The figure of the entrepreneur belonging to a certain generation of women has been gendered within the broader social and economic transformations of the post-Soviet space. Within the gender regime enabled in post-socialist neoliberal Russia, women's lack of access to financial capital has been compensated by social relationships, cultural capital and their gendered skills.

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The indicated in the Table of Content time reflects on the period which the women refer to, and not the time when this self-reflection was realized.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores the interconnectedness of female entrepreneurship, motherhood and structural context of life and work over the period from 1991 to nowadays. I study entrepreneurial action as a specific response of women who lost the opportunity to keep their white- and blue-collar working places after the fall of the Soviet Union and the relationship between entrepreneurial action and the reproduction of family life since 1990s to nowadays. I argue that the entrepreneurial subject is not a genderless subject as imagined in the neoliberal model of personhood, and the decision to become and be an entrepreneur cannot be understood without looking at the (gendered) life-course of a business owner as much as into the ways social and economic macro-changes impacted local realities in Mezhdurechensk. The notion of gendered life-course implies the notion of generation. The women in this study belong to 1960-70s generation and experienced and de-industrialization of Mezhdurechensk following the dissolution of the Soviet Union as young mothers in the 1990s. Thus, I will show how being part of the 60s-70s generation and being young mothers in the 1990s produced pro-active orientations for action while being abandoned by state.

My research contributes to a broader discussion about post-socialist transformation, concerning more concretely the relationship between work and family, behaviour adjustment under the logic of neoliberal governmentality, and the tensions of professional women's lives caused by combining paid and domestic work. By bringing experience of women entrepreneurs living in a coal mining industrial town of Mezhdurechensk (South-Western Siberia) over last three decades I document how the gendered regime of post-socialist state, enabled in local configuration in post-Soviet Russia, did not tend to release women from care work, but also harden their paid working life. By adding family embeddedness such as motherhood and life-course to analysis of female entrepreneurship activities in de-industrializing small Russia's town, I enrich scholarships of post-socialist entrepreneurship and of labour market in post socialist countries which often consider only the male-oriented factors of performance such as markets and money.

In this research I consider the period since 1990s to nowadays, which can be split into three parts. First period is the 1990s which characterized with almost purely unregulated market and

dramatically reduced social services. Second period lasts from 2000 until the consequences of financial crisis 2008 started affect the businesses, which is approximately the beginning of 2010s. This period is featured with economic growth and stability at Mezhdurechensk labour market along with raising control from the government over different spheres of life. Third period is after 2013 to nowadays when malls and franchise business became well-spread in Mezhdurechensk in highest scale, which together with the consequences of the Financial crisis hit heavily small enterprises.

The female entrepreneurs who came of working age at the time of regime change in the early 1990s or thereafter are women with different or no working experience before, with diverse levels of education; all of them got children in the end of 1980s – the 1990s, while being married. I have interviewed five women who started their business in 1990s, and two women who started their business in the period of 2008-2010. Thus, I have gathered seven biographical semi-structured interviews with female entrepreneurs, each of them lasts around one hour. The women I talked to are non-privileged working women. I have not interviewed women who have private connections to the top administration of the town and/or to the executive board/ shareholders of the mines as planned before the field due to possible different access to the forms of capital which could be needed to start an enterprise.

In first chapter of this thesis I analyse the limits of labour market of Mezhdurechensk in the 1990s and women's motivations to be self-employed as well as resources and obstacle they had for establishing their own enterprises. In second chapter I explore the change of urban infrastructure of Mezhdurechensk over last two decades and changing attitudes of the state towards entrepreneurship. I discover how women changed their working tactics, and to what extent their motherhood, their age and their marital status affect their working decisions. In third chapter I analyse the retrospective attitude of the female entrepreneurs – who are facing the retirement age currently – towards last 25 years over different spheres of life including motherhood, their career life and social benefits they expected to receive.

The main research question is how interconnectedness of personal life, work and impacts of global structure are interconnected in female entrepreneurs' lives in post-Soviet mono industrial Mezhdurechensk over last 25 years. To answer this question, there are several sub-questions. What are the reasons / motivations of mothers of young children behind the decision of starting a business in a small Siberian town? What structure of possibilities has been opened for certain individuals in post-Soviet Mezhdurechensk? How are post-socialist and neoliberal

shifts in working patterns and structural context are articulated in these women's lives over a span of three decades? How neoliberal order enabled in post-Soviet former industrial town modify female entrepreneurial subject?

Mezhdurechensk, a mono-industrial town in South-Western Siberia (Russia), was built in the end of 1940s around coal resource to power Soviet Union's industrialization. The economic restructuring in the 1990s, the arrival of unregulated market, and the influence of fluctuating world market prices on the profitability of industrial enterprises dramatically changed the life of habitants of Mezhdurechensk. A factory-town located in the South-Western Siberia's region of Kemerovskaya (Kuzbass), Mezhdurechensk is Russia's second largest and most significant coal agglomeration. As every settlement got exposed to the dogma of the free market after the dissolution of the Soviet State and pushed to obtain a new niche in the nexus of global and local capital flows, Mezhdurechensk too was redefining its identity. Like elsewhere in the post-socialist space, privatization happened in an unjust and non-transparent way, even though the workers were distributed shares when the city's enterprises got sold (Alexander 2004; Verdery 1999; Dunn 2004). Gradually, all the fourteen enterprises of the city belonged to three huge holdings, one of which is controlled by Gennady Kozovoj, one of the top 100 richest people in post-Soviet Russia.

Privatization resulted in highly unequal accumulation of power within the city. It was followed by the collapse of social infrastructure and security, which had been organized around the industrial units and were defining features of Soviet working life. Still existing industrial enterprises went through changes in ownership, managerial practices, and labour force structure. The workers found themselves in a squalid situation: unemployment rose, as did the cost of living, while social services declined with no visible improvement in the future. Many enterprises started to pay wages well below the subsistence minimum, and some paid wages late; chaotic and poorly regulated labour market forced out many working-class women and men, living in industrial cities, to informal and illegal work (Ashwin 2006). Mono-industrial cities with a large proportion of blue-collar workers were pushed in a severe crisis and were in the most vulnerable position during the early post-socialist period, when the lack of profitability of a few enterprises started to question the existence of the entire city (Crowley 2015: 7). The assurance to keep or receive the formal employment at state enterprises vanished, along with the lack of choice to get other formal employment (due the only one industry presented). The local citizens of a coal-industrial city of Mezhdurechensk faced a labour market

with informal, precarious and/or illegal jobs characterized by labour intensity and minimum guarantees (Ashwin 2006). De-industrialization, from one side, and extension of trade and service sectors on another are the consequences of restructuring of post-Soviet Russia's economy towards neoliberal, market-based system (Yaroshenko 2013: 25).

CHAPTER 1 – GENDER, WORKING LIVES AND THE POST-SOCIALIST CONTEXT

In order to examine the impact of post-socialist social changes on the female entrepreneurs in the city of Mezhdurechensk, I rely on the concept of gender regimes. Following Connell's (1987: 120) definition, I understand gender regimes as the „state of play in gender relations in a given institution ... [including] practices that construct various kinds of femininities and masculinities,” the sexual division of labour and gender ideologies. From this definition it follows that social institutions, such as states, the labour market, and the family are marked with beliefs, habits and values based on gender differences. The notion of gender regimes implies that these gender orders are not fixed or natural, but constantly negotiated.

My research builds on studies on gender regimes in post-socialist Russia by Yaroshenko (2003, 2013), Lytkina (2004), Ashwin (2000, 2006), Burawoy (2000) and in post state socialist countries by Einhorn (1993), Fodor (1997, 2005), Gal and Kligman (2000), Kalocsai (2008). It considers scholarship on women's survival strategies scholarship in post-socialist countries embedded in life-course scholarship by Kispeter (2006, 2012) and Pine (1998), as well as the everyday life of inhabitants of post-Soviet industrial settlements by Morris (2016), Echevskaia (2015)), entrepreneurship in post-socialist societies by Cucu (2008), Lin (2001), Rona-Tas (2005), Szerb (2018), Manolova and Yan (2002) and others. In addition, this thesis is built on scholarship on female entrepreneurship outside the UK and the USA such as the studies by Ruta Aitis et al (2007), Leung (2011), Byrne et al (2019) and Gabaldon (2015) and on scholarship of combining income generation with childcare responsibilities by Jennings & McDougald (2007)

1.1. The Life-Course as a Tool

By 'life course' I mean the phases of life that we move through over time – an approach which emphasizes interconnection of individual life history and structural context. In my thesis, I will follow the approach offered by Silvia Walby (Walby 1989), who argues that both life cycle and de-industrialization have significant influence on women's wage and paid economic activities. She highlights the importance of institutional limitations for women to be embedded in the labour market as much as men and demonstrates how women's life cycle impacts the job and the wage they can get. Following feminist historians' scholarship, I agree with Gisela Bock

who argue that women's life circles and family lives structure the jobs women do and the wage they are paid (Bock 1991). Empirically speaking, women are particularly affected by their stage in the life cycle because of the importance of child birth and child care in their lives as mediated by social institutions, social policy and gender divisions of paid and unpaid labour. The feminist historian of post-Soviet Russia Barbara Engel (2002) follows the pattern of discovering interconnection and interdependence between 'work' and 'family'. In industrial cities in the Soviet Union, as Kolokolchikova (2011) points out, the participation of women in production was welcomed. At the same time, motherhood was morally and materially encouraged. As examples, she refers to special sites of production for light labour, located not on the territory of the plant, but on the territory of a city of Cherepovets, near the permanent place of women's residence, under more favourable conditions for pregnant women). Silvia Walby, on the example of a British industrial city of Lancaster, draws attention to how women navigate their maternity break through the changing industrial and occupational structure, and argues that „if women wish to return part-time rather than full-time, then their options are even more constrained, since part-time jobs are concentrated in the lower levels of the service sector” (Walby 1989: 179)

1.2. Subject construction in neoliberal post-socialist context through gender and generation

Neoliberal norms, values and dispositions on the one hand, and emerging patterns of work on the other are gendered, and so constrain and shape women's working lives in a manner different from men's working lives. While entrepreneurial subjects are often perceived to be genderless in post-socialist entrepreneurship scholarship, the gendered tensions around work time and family reveal its limit at maintaining businesses in the rapidly changing post-socialist context (Kalocsai 2008, Bruni et al 2004). As many researchers argue that the 1990s were a time of family-survival strategies (Morris 2016, Clarke 1999), livelihood depended a lot on ability of a woman to find a job (Kiblitckaya 2000, Ashwin 2006). Working decision of a mother are connected to the age of child as much as to the state of social institution and support. Work – family balance considerations in particular are noticeably absent from much theorizing and research – despite the importance of such considerations to entrepreneurs themselves. The experience of entrepreneur-mothers is significant, as having children increases the likelihood that a white married woman will become self-employed. There are studies of

female self-employment in Sweden (Baxter 2013); Australia (Joona 2017; Wellington 2006, Foley 2018), Japan (Leung 2011), Spain (Gabaldon 2015) that demonstrate self-employment as a strategy to balance family and income-generating work. Married women with greater family responsibilities are more likely to be self-employed (Goffee and Scase 1983; Scott 1986; Kaplan 1988; Buttner 1993), at least while her children are young (Jayawarna et al., 2013). Recent studies have examined how women with children use entrepreneurship to manage the spatial, temporal, and identity dynamics of combining paid work with motherhood (Carrigan and Duberley, 2013; Ekinsmyth, 2011; McGowan et al., 2012; McKie et al., 2013) and analysed the business practices of entrepreneur-mothers.

A number of studies also reflect on commercialization of gendered skills (Ashwin 2006, Kispeter 2012, Yaroshenko 2013) such as practice of juggling multiple responsibilities, developed through combining paid and domestic work, as well as emotional labour which can be source of profit especially at care-work and at trade for building long-term relationships with customers. Fodor argues (1997, 2003) that previously feminised human capital has become revalued in the privatised sector of post state socialist economy, and women possessing this human capital could improve their positions in the labour market. Beata Nagy also argues that skills which were previously considered feminised have become advantageous during the transformations and can contribute to „improving women’s situation in economic management” (1999). Yaroshenko (2013: 27) and Kozina and Zhidkova (2006) argue that the capitalist emancipation project is built into the processes of economic and cultural exclusion of women’s actions: they can pursue careers through the adoption of the norms of the “ideal worker”, masculine and abstinent reproductive duties. She argues that this career approach is available only for middle-class privileged women, so non-privileged working women use their body, emotions, gendered skills as a source of profit.

The notion of generation is no less important at working decisions. Being socialized as professional in a socialist state, the interviewees’ professional plans and education occurred to be in no demand in a market-oriented system. Nonetheless, the legacies of the Soviet regime understood women as emancipated but family-oriented citizens. Being socialized in late socialism, the interviewed actors (re)produce the image of an emancipated but family-oriented woman. The entrepreneurial intention, or the state of mind directing entrepreneurial behaviour, may combine with other beliefs, habits, values, and goals to be oriented toward control over work and family issues (Anna & Chandler 2000).

My research thus shows that gender, life-course and generation are crucial categories in the analysis of neoliberal globalization and post-socialist transformation. The results of the research are necessary to be contextualized due to specific continuity of socialist and post-socialist regimes (Pine 1998), and specific way of neoliberalism in post-socialist Russia (Clarke 1999, Ashwin 2006), precisely in industrial settlements (Crowley 2015, Morris 2016). Changes in provincial Russia are shaping a complex subjectivity of a women that is at once the one of entrepreneurial actors, and one that reflects on older, late socialist sensibility of emancipated but family-oriented female worker. Aihwa Ong (2006) has explored the global environments of companies in China addresses how complex negotiations of gender, race, and class play into picture on neoliberal calculations. Lisa Rofel (2007) argues that central to meanings and practices of subjectivities that emerge at the intersections of post-socialist (post-Mao socialism in her case) and neoliberalism is the historical constitution of gender and other vectors of social difference. Thus, examining the intersection between gender, life course, and generation in the mono-industrial city of Mezhdurechensk represents a powerful analytical tool to expose differentiation among entrepreneurs, who are often considered neoliberal model subjects.

1.3. Methodological (Ethical) Reflections, Or the Story of This Knowledge Production

The research pursuit stems from my own experience as a daughter of a non-privileged working woman, a wife of a miner, a mother of two daughters, who has made several attempts to make her own business work. I grew up in a home where cosmetics, accessories, non-traditional health-care attributes and awards for my mother's work were both a source of my mother having full of my mother's self-respect and at the same time a gendered practice. As far as I remember, our home was always crowded by my mother's colleagues which were all women and coming back home I knew that we might have a guest. Gradually, by the time I was finishing my secondary school, my mother already rented a place for her office, and had almost every evening business-events for women who wanted to join their business or for those who need support in their cosmetics businesses. In my childhood imaginary, the office of my mother and her own room in our apartment was a mysterious place where great ambitions and dreams can come true if a woman works hard for it, despite the objections of her husband. My mum - and she was not the only one - wanted to educate their daughters and to show them the

example of alternative living for women in industrial regions like Kuzbass. Being a child, I perceived this job of my mum as a style of life. Given the role that my mum's working decisions had played in my own socialization as a ordinary working young woman from a heavy mono industrial city, I could not help being intrigued by – what retrospectively I consider – the politics of class and gender transpiring from female's independent economic activities, starting in the very beginning of the 1990s, mushrooming all over Mezhdurechensk during next decade. Gradually, by the time I was finishing my secondary school, my mother already rented a place for her office, and had almost every evening business-events for women who want to join their business or for those who need support in their cosmetics businesses. In my childhood imaginary, the office of my mother and her own room at our apartment was a mysterious place where great ambitions and dreams can come true if a woman works hard for it, despite the objections of her husband. My mum – and she was not the only one – wanted to educate their daughters and to show them the example of alternative living for women in industrial regions like Kuzbass.

The primary resource of access to the interviewees was my mother, who initially contacted her friends and former colleagues of hers, who are or were involved in self-employment. There were four people who agreed to be interviewed by me. I considered snowballing as an effective strategy considering the nature of female entrepreneurship: many women who run their businesses have many female colleagues who have been involved in small entrepreneurship. However, only one person shared a further contact of one of her friends, agreed in advance with her too. Additionally, I have contacted one mother of my former classmate, who as far as I knew, was in trade for her entire life. Thus, eventually I have conducted seven interviews, including one with my mother. All the meeting was easy to arrange: after a phone call from me, we usually agreed to meet the same or next day. One person straightforwardly rejected the invitation for the interview by saying that “she does not feel like talking about her work experience at all”. As far as I know, she goes through a very tough period with her cosmetics business right now, as many other entrepreneurs recently. However, the collection of contacts built before going to the field by my mother worked perfectly. Another surprise I have received while being in the field is to what extent motherhood intervened in their life, and how my positionality was crucial at this research. Since initially I introduced my research interests as “female entrepreneurs in Mezhdurechensk, started in the 1990s”, my interviewees purified their life stories as entrepreneurial and genderless. When I tried to gender it by asking about combining their paid and domestic lives, they were offended

if I doubt their abilities to do both types of work. However, towards the end of the more formalized part of the interviews, my interviewees were curious about my life in Budapest, my education, my life as a daughter of their friend. They started to compare and judged their motherhood with motherhood of my mother, and how (not) maturely they structured their family and entrepreneurial lives from their current perspective, which shed another light on their life which is an intersection of their individual desires, family constraints and structural context. This might respond on the scholarship in oral history which draws attention to inter-subjectivity – especially in terms of the relationship between the researcher and the interviewee. This approach highlights that scholars frame their understanding of their own work, especially by borrowing from theoretical and methodological developments in a number of fields (Sarkar 2012) and claims for a partial knowledge only (Collins 1989). All the interviewees were asked to read and sign the Consent letter, where they agreed to participate at the research, to share their individual data with me for this study. Within this Consent form, they also were asked about the usage of their real or pseudonym names. There are different responses. So, some women have their real names, while others – pseudonym ones.

While being in Mezhdurechensk, I also visited the local library where I researched local newspapers and magazines from 1991 to nowadays related to small businesses. I attended Local History & Geography Department where I could gather data about changes in labour market in Mezhdurechensk. Unfortunately, there is no separate gendered data according small business owners in Mezhdurechensk. The quantitative gendered data about enterprises' owners in the entire Kemerovo region might be found in Kemerovo Statistic Office.

CHAPTER 2 – GENDERED ROADS TOWARDS SMALL ENTREPRENEURSHIP (1990S)

In this chapter I introduce women's marginalization in labour market in the post-socialist Mezhdurechensk as a gendered effect of post-1991 transformations. Women, especially in such industrial settlements, were exposed to lack of formal employment, mostly due to the collapse of the socialist welfare system and because employers preferred to keep formal employment for males. In the first part of this chapter I elaborate on how the female entrepreneurs in Mezhdurechensk being marginalized and excluded by structural practices from the access to different sorts of capital, especially financial, used other sorts of capitals to establish their own way of living in entrepreneurship. In the second part, I overview the conceptual discussion over motivations of women to be self-employed in the early post-socialism. By using the empirical material, I show what driven young mothers to become an entrepreneurial subject while putting their working decisions not only in the context of dramatic political and economic changes but also in the context of their individual lives: their age, marital status and their personal working history. My findings show that the women's decision to be self-employed in de-industrializing Mezhdurechensk in early 1990s is influenced by both their individual live-circle, their view on women's concerns over family as well as by limits of Mezhdurechensk labour market.

2.1. Becoming an entrepreneur: The intersection of obstacles and resources

In this part I introduce the interviewed women and elaborate on the resources and constraints they experienced in early post-Soviet time. Within the lack of opportunities to monetize their professional skills in Mezhdurechensk, they turned for self-employment in 'feminised' spheres such as cosmetics, female and children's clothes, beauty services. Experiencing the lack of financial capital, many of them used working experience at stores as well as social relationships as resource for starting their businesses. The great resource is gendered skills such as practice of juggling multiple responsibilities gained through combining paid and domestic work. Emotional labour which was source of profit especially at trade for building long-term relationships with customers.

In post-1991 Mezhdurechensk, many women and men faced a harsh economic situation, where any lost or could not inquire the formal employment; women were seen by employers in the least favourable positions due to their reproduction burdens. The situation with money, goods, social institutions, accommodation and working places was ever changing and no clear future was expected. The seven women I had an opportunity to talk to are residents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and other Russia's regions. Some of them have found themselves in a heavily-industrial city with poor urban infrastructure exactly on the eve of post-Soviet transformation. Thus, they did not have relatives or friends yet, but at the same time were pregnant or had small children. They admit it was terrifying. As one of the interviewees laughed: "To say that it was hard, - I will not say so. Why would I? It was unbearable." (Interview Elena, 17th April 2019). Elena (born 1965) moved from Bishkek to Mezhdurechensk in the late 1980s, following her husband, who got a prestigious job at the one of the biggest coal mines in the USSR. Having a university degree in engineering and corresponding working experience in a Bishkek factory, she was employed in one of Mezhdurechensk factories corresponding to her profession. In 1990, she went for her first maternity leave and could never come back because the factory was privatized and did not operate anymore at the same scale. Maternity benefits were rock-bottom. Her husband did not have a regular salary and also tried to secretly trade outside of work. Elena was concerned for her family and children. Mass unemployment in Mezhdurechensk, unstable economic and financial situations with ever changing systems of coupons – cash and scarce supply of goods (Revinskaya 2013) led to feelings of uncertainty and to a lack of image about possible futures, all experienced by the women interviewed. For them, who were starting a family life with small children in these circumstances, self-employment also meant access to instant money. Thus, when she was introduced to a woman who sold American high-quality cosmetics, Elena agreed to be toughed in details of this business, as she says, out of boredom of being locked in a corporate dormitory with many domestic tasks and feeling of being useless and undervaluated. In a while, Elena started to sell by herself the cosmetics to her neighbours, acquaintances from kindergarten and children's playgrounds, appearing friends. In the 1990s this informal economic activity led her to bring cash to her family and made her afford elite cosmetics as well as enriched her connections. Elena highlighted that not everyone was allowed to sell this brand of cosmetics, but needed to pass an exam, where mostly communication skills were checked.

Ludmila (Interview date April 22, 2019, born 1961), an art school teacher with university education, with a corresponding experience in Kazakhstan in the late 1980s, was also affected

by the lack of demand for her profession on the labour market of Mezhdurechensk in the early 1990s. She was surprised how little a teacher's salary was in Mezhdurechensk, and so turned out to work at a store. In the 1995-, her wage and her husband's were held back by the company they worked for, where they were only paid in kind (food and household products) for a long period of time. Thus, in order to pay for kindergarten of the children, she decided to work for another store, where she was paid daily in cash. After a while, she started to think that she can make business on her own. She invited her sister to help her, and in 1998, right before the New Year's Eve, she borrowed 15,000 rubbles from their parents. They invested in renting a store on the main avenue of the city, *Kommunisticheskij*, in acquiring basic show-cases, and in buying the toys from Novosibirsk wholesale dealers. In a month, they managed to pay back the debt to their parents.

Neither of Vera's experience in a textile factory and in a bank in one of the biggest Kazakhstan's city could be commercialized in the post-1990 transition in Mezhdurechensk. Vera (born 1973) left for Mezhdurechensk in 1994, together with her husband, while being pregnant. He was planning to sew car-clothes with his companions, but like many of my interviewees recalled the 1995-1996, he also had not been receiving any salaries for more than a year. According to GosKomStat, the greatest fall in real wages occurred in 1995 and 1998, and the longest period when the salaries were held match the time mentioned by my interview. The total wage arrears at the beginning of 1997 (according to GosKomStat) was about 50 trillion rubles (Antosenkov, Kokin 1997; Materials of the Petersburg Economic Forum. 2000). She was gaining experience, observing the work of suppliers and in a while decided to do it on her own. She decided to choose the outerwear: "I took a loan with interest from people, 5000 rubles, and went to Novosibirsk for outwear." (Interview date April 24, 2019).

When engineering, teaching, financing and other work-qualifications of these women became not capitalizable, they have not looked for commercializing their hobbies or interests. Nor they were stuck to their education or previous experience to make it as a linear change. They were driven to search for something on the market what could be profitable. Thus, we can see that that within the lack of opportunities to monetize their professional skills along with economic instability experienced in their household, women were kept adapting to the systemic change and its aftermath. They looked for informal working opportunities, and eventually turned for self-employment. Ashwin (2000) and Fodor (2005) explain women's practice of juggling

multiple responsibilities, reacting flexibly to changing and unstable circumstances due to every day's combination of paid work and family duties.

Experiencing the lack of financial capital, the female entrepreneurs used social relationships as one of resource for starting their businesses. All, Elena, Vera and Ludmila got to know other women who were in trade, and through them started to explore the market. The social ties of the individual are here as mediating structures for the process of various types of capital conversion (Lin: 2001; Cucu 2008: 4). Olga (Interview date April 19, 2019, born 1964), looked for social support by herself. She had to stopped studying medicine due to family reasons and came back to her home-town Mezhdurechensk in 1989. Working in a store as a seller, she found herself in a very lucky position, since she got access to many consumer goods during these times of scarcity. She became pregnant in March 1990, just one month before her husband being diagnosed with a tuberculoma. He needed to go on sick leave for one year, and afterwards his sickness interrupted time by time all his working life at the biggest mine factory of Mezhdurechensk, *Raspadskaya*. Being on maternity leave in 1991, Olga started undergoing often trips to a textile factory in a city nearby in order to sell them in Mezhdurechensk. Since the trip from Abakan to Mezhdurechensk lasted for more than twelve hours and arrived when it was already dark, she asked her neighbour to accompany her, out of fear being rubbed on her way back. During the day, she sold bags full of clothes in kindergartens.

Through formal or informal involvement, in a similar sector of the market before becoming self-employed, women managed to understand a market, got to know suppliers and logistic issues et cetera. A great example of using this knowledge is Larisa (born 1961), who is originally from Mezhdurechensk. She was first practicing trade in a North Russian village, where she was living with her husband and two daughters between the late 1980s and 1995 (Interview Larisa, date May 10, 2014). She worked as a librarian, but sometimes she flew to Moscow where her brother lived. His wife worked as the main designer of a textile factory of high-quality women's clothes, which Larisa considered to be „very sellable goods”. She explained: „I knew that people would buy it instead of this Chinese trash. <...> Imagine, I put all these female clothes in a pile of height of 20 meters. Three days – everything is sold out. Maybe that is how I realized that trade is money”. After her arrival to Mezhdurechensk, she also learned about the miserable salaries for white-collar workers. Thus, she kept flying to Moscow for clothes, but started to focus on children's clothes only. Having different working and life experience, these women kept up with changing circumstances, took decisions on how

they could make money, which products they could trade with whom, who the suppliers would be, and how much risk and investments they could afford. The accumulation of different types of knowledge along the professional trajectory of the individuals, as well as the accumulation of social capital represented the two main resources for entrepreneurial action, which successfully replaced initial financial capital or facilitated the access to it (Cucu 2008: 3).

There plenty of research about the post-socialist conditions (Zhurzhenko 1999, 2001, Aswin 2000, Bruno 1997, Engel 2002) which note that entrepreneurship is coded as 'male' and widely considered to be masculine occupation. There is more research needed to understand attitude towards female entrepreneurship in Mezhdurechensk. Based on the interviewees I conducted and my observations, a woman is expected to be flexible, reinventing herself and managing her own life as enterprise for the sake of wealth of a household. Exactly as one of my interviewee Vera pointed out that "women essentially, being created to do more tasks and be flexible". In case she would like to build her own career, she is allowed to make it with no expense for the family and preferably in certain frames: until she 'plays' in her female games such as cosmetics, children's toys or blouses. Within these conditions, women cannot count on social support at their working activities (Utkina 2017). However, some of them received support from other women in the very beginning of their entrepreneurial actions.

Women in Mezhdurechensk started to monetize exactly the 'womanly' spheres, the spheres where they were supposed to have skills, such as female clothing, cosmetics, hairdressing et cetera. This was a way to surpass the tension between 'doing business' which is coded to be male (Connell 2005, Engel 2002) and 'doing gender' (Bruni et al 2004), so the social construction of being a woman and entrepreneurship would not be so conflicted. Perez-Quintana et al. (2017) demonstrate that enforcing more stereotypically feminine features to the entrepreneurial model, such as being modest, and sensitive to the needs of others, could help women to identify with their business career options. Another but connected reason can be the easier access to female clientele.

The context of female entrepreneurship resources can be also embedded within a woman's normative gender roles (DeTienne and Chandler, 2007; Brush, 1992), allowing her to draw from values and knowledge associated with those roles (Leung 2011). One of the concepts that has emerged from this work is "mumpreneurship". Ekinsmyth (2013) proposes that women organize their time-space routines around motherhood using the same spaces for work as well as "reproductive" activity. In trying to reconcile their identities as mothers

and business-owners, they organize their work around their role as main family care providers. Under market conditions, the special position of women in the sphere of production and households becomes a resource of survival and a source of profit. (Yaroshenko 2013: 22). The emotional connections with customers allowed them to maintain long-term relationships with permanent customers and their families, about which each interviewee of mine talked with pride. Love for working with people extended to the suppliers, which also helped women to maintain their businesses. These gendered skills became commercialized in the collapse of industrial positions in Mezhdurechensk.

2.2. Motivations of working mothers to be self-employed

In this subchapter I examine how self-employment is seen by the women as opportunity to overcome spatial and temporal limits of employment.

While there is limited research on female entrepreneurship in general, there is even less that explores the subject outside of the USA and the UK. That is, few studies explore small female businesses in post-socialist societies (Welter et al 2006, Zhurzhenko 2001, Aidis et al 2007, Utkina 2017, Akulai 1999, Bruno 1997). Self-employment, mostly in trade and service sector became one of the most used ways of adaptation to the new social and economic environment in the post-1991 aftermath (Ashwin 2006; Mukhina 2014) which many women and men were quickly entering for different reasons. Some scholars explored cases in which entrepreneurship can be understood as the result of structural constraints and illustrated this idea pointing towards the post-socialist countries where starting a business constitutes a refuge from poverty (Laki 1996, Hanley 2000, Stoica 2004). Cucu argues that in the years immediately following the change of the socialist regime in Romania, entrepreneurship was not only a way of avoiding downward mobility but one of the solutions social actors found for being able to exercise their profession and to adapt their skills to new conditions. The decision of founding an enterprise appears to be an encounter between the accumulation of knowledge resources, the presence of strategic ties, and the materialization of a certain structural constraint. (Cucu 2008: 42-42).

It is well documented that one of the main reasons working mothers choose self-employment over salaried employment is because they want the flexibility to be able to attend to family responsibilities (Scott 1986; Brush 1992; Buttner 1993; Mattis, 2004; DeMartino and Barbato, 2003), which still are considered to be women's concerns. Scott (1996) suggests that for women desire for a work that provides flexibility for family responsibilities contributes to their

decision to become business owners. They could choose time when they work outside home and/or combine it with work inside such as selling cosmetics at their own place (Interview Elena, date April 17, 2019). Svetlana Yaroshenko argues that the globalization of market relations, the restructuring of the economy, and the curtailing social guarantees, amplified the social dimension of exclusion for the post-socialist gender regimes. In the Soviet times, special support for women stimulated their inclusion in the field of employment and was minimizing the influence of gender differences on their working career. At the same time, there was gender when social reproduction and the responsibility of women was concerned, and they had exclusivity over the responsibility for the domestic maintaining of the households. (Yaroshenko 2013: 22). Meanwhile, no clear alternative discourse of how gender relations should look like emerged over first decade after the collapse of the USSR (Ashwin 2000: 18). Within this 'void', a de-facto neoliberal gendered regime emerged, where social support became scarce and responsibility over life and work became own's own. Feminist historian Barbara Engel (2002) emphasizes how the deterioration of state child care social service and drastically increasing in price private institution became a dramatic obstacle for women's working position in post-Soviet period. In 1993 when Olga started to work in the open-air market in Mezhdurechensk, her son was younger than not three-years old, so was not allowed in kindergarten. That time her husband did work at a mine and often had shift during day-time. Thus, she had to leave him alone at home, but "it was good that we lived nearby so if I felt that something is wrong with my son, I run and check", - remembers Olga. Vera recalls a similar obstacle of having an infant in the beginning of 1990s, and she was leaving her son with another woman, who stayed at home with her children, and was going through many enterprises with a small rollaway. Elena also was selling cosmetics, yet she did so by inviting other interested women to her place since she had to stay at home with one small child and one infant. It is obvious that deterioration of social services influenced working opportunities of women severely.

The social landscape in early post-Soviet Russia was not welcoming women's independence. Changes in social policy like extending the paid maternity leave with insignificant benefits) (Ashwin 2000, 2006), accompanied the political patriarchal rhetoric suggesting that paid jobs should first be offered to men whilst women should return to 'purely womanly mission', that is, domesticity (Ashwin & Bowers, 1997). Although the market-revolutionaries of the 1990s did not have a strict particular agenda with regard to gender relations, since then, it became to be considered to be a matter for the individual rather than the state (Kibitskaya 2000). A

significant decrease in the amount of affordable childcare places made it harder to balance paid work with family life, which was still considered to be female responsibility. Abandoned by social support system, women eagerly did not want to return to home (Ashwin 2006: 32). While most men did not want to risk their formal job positions, women were confronted with a generalized lack of access to formal white- and blue-collar jobs according to their education and professional experience. Thus, they had to look for opportunities to find income-generating activity. While both Ludmila and her husband worked for the same company, it was Ludmila who quitted “with no further social support” and started to work informally at a store for cash to pay for kindergarten. Her husband stayed to work there as a driver, which allowed the family to use his corporate car to shop for toys in Novosibirsk until they could afford to buy their own car. Ludmila’s husband left his job as a driver only when Ludmila has registered her company, employed him, and paid for his contribution to the social insurance pension fund. My empirical material shows that the interviewed women needed a foot in the door to start working on improving the quality of their lives to which they were almost suddenly exposed to. They were driven by their responsibility to the family and their vision of what family life should be like. This was the female breadwinner’s prime motivation in the early post-socialist time (Kiblitckaya 2000: 57). Being socialized in late socialism as emancipated but family-oriented women they tried to avoid downgrading mobility and worked hard, determined by desire to make some clarity at home for the children.

While there is a wide scholarship argues that working mothers choose self-employment over being employed due to their desire and need to have flexibility at working hours, my findings show that in de-industrializing Mezhdurechensk women also experienced heavy constraints at employment due to mass cut-layoffs along with lack of access to cash. These constraints of economic and political situations in Mezhdurechensk led young mothers to look for informal working opportunities. Although most of them did not have a registered company, all found themselves being self-employed. All seven women I interviewed work or worked in segment, that are socially assigned to women – such as cosmetics at Elena’s case, female and children’s clothes like Vera and Olga, beauty services like Svetlana who is a hairdresser (Interview date April 22, 2019, born 1962), or children’s toys, what Ludmila successfully has done for twenty years. These choices of spheres can be a way to overcome a tension of doing male work such as doing business. Social relations worked as a support as well as a source of knowledge for maintaining the business for women who were under a pile of domestic duties. Social ties as a resource of entrepreneurial action we can see thanks to Ludmila’s sister with whom they started

the business with children's toys, as Elena's stranger, who came over Elena's place to tell her more about elite cosmetics and Vera's colleague at motherhood who babysitted her son. The habits of these women to do an enormous amount of the quotidian activities for oneself and for the household members, including cooking, maintenance, caring, and nurturing, were just extended to a couple of tasks more connected to their business. Thus, they kept combining paid and domestic work going through different challenges they were exposed to, both from macro-changes and family responsibilities.

CHAPTER 3 – LIFE-TRAJECTORIES OF SMALL BUSINESSES IN DE-INDUSTRIALIZING MEZHDURECHENSK (2000 – 2018)

In this chapter I address how Mezhdurechensk's configurations of macro-changes, continuing since 2000s until nowadays affected the women's businesses. The institutionalization of small trade and the state's control over enterprises via local legislation, growing taxes first from municipalities and later from the federal budget, along with rising rent – all of this made women to adjust the way they did their business in the early transformational period. They changed metal kiosks for bright plastic pavilions, registered companies and regularly paid taxes to the Tax Office. Gentrification came to Mezhdurechensk in the end of 2010s and brought with it the appearance of malls on the former market's spaces, and cafes / entertainment spaces instead of ground-floor stores. It was also happening at the time when the financial crisis of 2008 started to have a drastic effect on the women's business, especially the indebted ones. In the following I will show how the female entrepreneurs I interviewed were keeping up with these changes until they closed their enterprises or changed its way significantly. By the time, when these mounting difficulties appeared for the female businesses, they were at the age of around 50, half of them had become grandmothers, most of them had no children living in the small Siberian city anymore, and they did not see options for development of their business anymore. All of the women but one closed their businesses within the period 2013 – 2018. My findings also show that neoliberal changes divided female entrepreneurs and made them face struggles individually rather than united.

In the middle 1990s two of my interviewees were requested to come to a police office due to "violence in designing price-lists". They claimed that the final goal of this visit was asking for a bribe, which they rejected to pay. However, as the interviewees stated, they got a feeling by the late 2000s that it can be too risky to be in conflict with the police. By the 2000s, both women have registered their own company, because the local Tax Office checked the accounting quite carefully to avoid bureaucratic issues.

There also many other traders who used to have little street trade disappearing from the streets. There are many articles devoted to this phenomenon in local newspapers. While reading the articles I have also learned that in the beginning of 2000s a number of new legal regulations

were issued¹ with the intention to institutionalize the trade spaces (given in *Kontakt*. no. 53, 15 July 2003). This transition from informal trade to formal trade was a path to capital formation in the region for many (small) entrepreneurs including the registration of companies, reporting to Tax Office, and gradually paying social fees such as insurance and pensions for their employees.

3.1. Flourishing Mezhdurechensk, and Growing Competition (2000s)

The political stability and rising oil prices generated economic growth at the beginning of the 2000's in Russia, and significantly increased customers' purchasing power. The labour market in Mezhdurechensk also was stabilizing. The market became attractive, and in frames of rising competition for a customer, and pushed female entrepreneurs to invest more in their businesses such as expensive pavilions and more selling spots, as well as in other growth-related costs. The empirical data of my research shows that women were investing heavily into their household: apartments' renovation, furniture's enrichment, children's education, health and good-looking. The women kept their businesses from growing but made them stable.

The most flourishing period of the female businesses in Mezhdurechensk occurred to happen at the time the women were in their 40s, and their children were studying in school as well as at the period of advanced neoliberalism in Russia. Between 2001 and 2006, Putin succeeded in accomplishing a degree of liberalization that his predecessors had only dreamed of, passing a series of liberal-oriented reforms to pensions and social benefits that had been blocked during the 1990s (Chandler 2004; Cook 2007). Simultaneously, he also advanced certain benefits and greatly increased state spending on "maternity capital" and youth projects, among others (Hemment 2009). In this part I describe the urban restructuring of the town with regards to business rub by interviewed women. I illustrate how the female entrepreneurs kept up with ever-changing economic conditions and kept investing in their household, supporting their family members and educational future of their children even when the business-maintaining expenses were growing up.

¹"Requirements for the organization of the trade process" of the Rules for the Work of Markets in the Territory of the City of Mezhdurechensk No. 198, approved on January 24, 2001 by the Council of People's Deputies. This decree regulates a trading spot, which must be strictly fixed under a specific name or organization. There is also a law of the Kemerovskaja Region No. 52 of July 15, 2002 which controls the diverse and shipped trade outside the markets, which is prohibited and may be fined.

As every settlement got exposed to the dogma of the free market after the dissolution of the Soviet State and pushed to obtain a new niche in the nexus of global and local capitalist flows, Mezhdurechensk too was redefining its identity. Since 2000s Mezhdurechensk has been experiencing reconstruction of public infrastructures and services: new housing buildings started to appear, and the city was getting beautified. The Central Park was being slowly renovated, the biggest streets were accessorized with decorative tiles and small geometric sculptures. The main avenue, Kommunisticheskij Avenue, was reconstructed in 2005 – 2007; a beautiful light-music fountain in front of the headquarter of the main mine of *Raspadskaya* located on the main street as well as are a lot of benches, equipped with trash cans made this avenue the favourite recreation area of the townspeople.

The many ground-floor stores still coexisted with the open-air market as in Kommunisticheskij Avenue became the main shopping area in the city. Vera, who works at the one of the most expensive segments of retails – seasonal outerwear, has bought a two-rooms flat in 2006 on this main avenue of Kommunisticheskij, with the intention to transform it into a store. Ludmila, who worked with children's toys has rented a big store there, too. By the middle of the 2000s, both women found themselves with many selling spots and recalled big investments into this expansion. Vera recalls that the design-made pavilion of 80m² which she ordered to stay at the market was very expensive, because “everyone wanted a new pavilion”, according to her knowledge. Ludmila remembered this period as economic flourishing: “Trade was going fine. Everyone had many selling spots already. It was crazy back then! Rent was growing up, show-cases cost crazy money, because they were in demand. We could spend 100,000 rubles (around 3500 Euro) just for the necessary equipment. Now this stuff is not worth it. We wasted money because we had them. Once you see a free spot, you have to get it, so that a competitor does not stay there!” Ludmila and Elena mentioned that traders from bigger cities nearby also started to do business in Mezhdurechensk, which made it harder for them. So, Elena had to adjust her business upon new trends: rent an office for providing workshops more often, be more pro-active with searching for customers and keeping them, as well as register the company. But, anyway, this was period of flourishing for them. Elena did manage to install new five windows at her family's apartment and buy a new kitchen by 2007, as well as she was buying all the shoes and clothes for herself for many years already. Ludmila and Olga have also made a renovation of their flats upon new trends. Vera and Larisa have invested in the business mostly by buying accommodation. However, they both found these investments for themselves when will be retired and/or for their children in late future.

The flourishing time of 2000s with its competition required more time to be invested in the business, but at the same time increased the level of profit, sometimes via loans though. Since women's children were teenagers, they did not need constant attention from their mother's site anymore. Those female entrepreneurs who had small children in 2000s like Olga, could rely on help from their older children. This profit from business was heavily invested into household needs, especially as the interviewed women clarified, to the education of their children. Most of the interviewed mothers did not believe that the education of local schools would be enough to attend a university at bigger city. Thus, they invested into private teachers of courses required to pass university exams, of language courses. These women were also initiators of travelling abroad with purpose their children to explore the world, which can be more than a factory-town (Interviews Elena, Ludmila, Vera).

Moreover, all the issues coming from household sites such as extra care for parents or parents-in-law also lie on the women's shoulders. This is caused mostly by their responsibility over family. Another example from my interviews of sacrificing business needs for care-work can be found at Olga's example. When a mother of her husband fell ill, she hired an employee at her store to spend for time with her mother-in-law. Since her husband was employed at factory, it was – she says –out of question that it is her duty to figure out how to take care about both, the mother-in-law and her business. Thus, we can see how any household difficulties lie on female shoulders, which affect both their business and their family relationships.

We can see, that the women spent a big amount of their earning on their children and in the household, while investing into business the needed minimum to adjust it upon changing conditions. It made the businesses of the interviewed women never changed their size but were kept on the level of small enterprises. Jennings and McDougald, relying on approaches developed in the “work-family interface” literature, explain how work-family interface experiences and how coping perspectives “can partially account for the smaller employment size, revenues, and income level of female-headed firms” (2007: 748). This work-family interface worked out well in the case of all of my interviewees until the crisis hit, which especially caused issues for indebted women, who could not pay their loans back eventually.

3.2. A Long Economic Remission After 2008 and Graduating Children (2010 – 2018)

The generated economic growth at the beginning of the 2000's pushed female entrepreneurs to invest more in their businesses such as expensive pavilions and more selling spots, as well as in other growth-related costs. As far as the economy and demand for products and services kept growing and their sales figure were increasing, they could finance their business' expansion as well as invest into their households, not without credits though. This circle was broken only later, when the economic crisis of 2008 hit Russia. The indebted female entrepreneurs were affected especially hard. During the field research female entrepreneurs interviewed confirmed with their own experience what economic data shows: Russia experienced a long economic recession – and not a sharp crisis – that only gradually started to negatively impact businesses. In this section I analyse the effect of growing taxes, which especially hit small-revenue businesses and impacted the gentrification of Mezhdurechensk, which meant the move of selling spot from Central market and the main avenue into the malls. The dramatic fall of ruble in 2014, which reminded to the interviewed the fall of ruble in 1998, was less noticeable in the series of difficulties for maintaining businesses. The growing difficulties, their children leaving the family, and no bright future for retirement did not provide a motivation or resources to fight for their enterprises.

The long economic recession happened at the time when franchise shops became active in Mezhdurechensk, and malls became part of the urban infrastructure, which further increased the crisis of small businesses. This beautification of the city and institutionalization of public space, described in first section of this chapter started in the beginning of 2000s, and only recently reached a new stage with the appearance of malls. The first big supermarkets appeared in Mezhdurechensk in the end of 2000s, but the malls where one can buy different types of goods as well as receive some services and get entertained at the meantime, appeared in Mezhdurechensk only in the beginning of the 2010s. The first one was built on the outskirts of the city. The main open-air market, located in the heart of the city, was also replaced by a mall in 2014 – 2015. Larisa, who for decades traded with children clothes, in 2000s invested in a flat in a smaller city nearby, where real estate was cheaper. She says that she feels herself especially lucky working at a smaller town: „There are no supermarkets in Myski yet, but in Mezhdurechensk and Novokuznetsk all small businessmen are closing. They sell their shops, or just leave them, they have no idea what to do next. There are almost no small ground-shops

in Mezhdurechensk anymore. Big entrepreneurs put their supermarkets, and how many places are left there for those like us?”

Olga, who traded with female clothes in the main open-air market, first in a metal kiosk and later in a pavilion, also tried to extend her business for one more selling spot in a store somewhere in the city, but it did not happen to be profitable. Olga had more family burdens than any other above-mentioned women since she was the main breadwinner in her family and her mother got seriously ill, which meant that all care work was done by Olga. How social burdens constrain women's working opportunities was explained by Yaroshenko (2013) and by many other researchers, who explore the tension at finding balance between work and family (Welter et al 2003, Fodor 2003). But, the real challenge for Olga appeared when all the traders were asked to leave the market due to the starting construction of a three-floor mall and a big grocery supermarket. Olga had been looking for a retail outlet for a long time but could not find something at an affordable price. Thus, Olga closed her company and lately she has been selling informally through a social media platform. The platform is called Odnoklassniki.ru and caters many different goods to her former regular customers. The closure of the market was not such a dramatic change for Vera, but no pleasure: “I did not want to sell the pavilion because it was so expensive. We took the pavilion and set it on a village road, nearby my dacha (‘dacha’ is a summer cottage in the countryside)”. Besides this selling spot, Vera has another one on the main avenue since she has bought a flat a decade earlier, but a rented one she has at another town's mall “Yuzhny” (means ‘in the South’). She acknowledges that it is not easy to work at the main avenue anymore: “Everything now is around malls. It is expensive to rent there. You do not see many people shopping on Kommunisticheskij anymore.” The appearance and popularity of malls multiplied the competition among renters and put the small-scale entrepreneurs – who are mostly female - due to little initial capital (Manolova and Yan 2002: 164) – in an extremely disadvantaged position compared to franchises and middle businesses.

According to the double movement theory developed by Karl Polanyi in his book *The Great Transformation*, the market has always been interwoven with political power, and the idea of a self-adjusting market, as ‘an economic system controlled, regulated and directed by market prices’ (1944: 71) is a utopia. Polanyi remarkably argued that ‘while laissez-faire economy was the product of deliberate state action, subsequent restrictions on laissez-faire started in a spontaneous way. Laissez-faire was planned; planning was not’ (1944: 147). His idea about the myth of self-regulation, which gives market the autonomy to rule over the societal relations is

a useful tool in this chapter. Market system expands its domination over social spheres by virtue of commodification and pricing without providing a common good for the whole of the society (1944: 138). This notion will be used here to explain the internalization of the modern Russia's gender regime which caused extra-tiredness and dissatisfaction of the interviewed women.

A single tax on imputed income ('*Edinyj Nalog na Vmenennyj Dohod*') was initially announced 1 April 1, 2000. The idea of the tax was that the entrepreneur does not pay a percent from profit, but – In the case of retail – the coefficient is counted for a square space. The idea is that the tax authorities should not look for hidden income, and entrepreneurs do not need to hide it (Given in *Kontakt*, no. 12, 15 February 2002;). The municipality of Mezhdurechensk added to the 15% of this tax another four so-called correction factors, which, according to the calculations of the local newspaper *The Miner's Flag in the New Generation* ('*Znamya shaktera v novom tysyacheletii*'), no. 36, 6 September 2001), doubled the actual payment. There are four municipal coefficients. The first reflects on the type of city, and in Mezhdurechensk everyone got 1.1. The second depends on the location: closer to the center or the periphery (can be from 0.6 to 1.6). The remaining two are set depending on the area and range of goods – this can vary significantly. Thus, the law does not reflect on a business income, but the increased coefficients increased payments significantly. This tax change pushed some entrepreneurs to organize a demonstration in front of the City Administration (given in *Kontakt*, no. 33, November 14, 2003), at which Olga participated since Central market where she had a selling spot is located in the city centre, so the second coefficient is 1.6. She had a big pavilion since it was shared with her companion. The variety of goods was wide. Thus, the tax was almost doubled for her, while her business of female clothes was a very low-revenue. (Interview, Olga, April 19, 2019) In a while, another monthly fee of 330 rubles was added to costs-budget of entrepreneurs (given in *Kontakt*, no. 44, 2 June 2003). However, all the interviewed women admitted that although it was hard to work, they could earn money: "It was very easy to work back then. In the 1990s we worked for ourselves basically, not counting bribery racket. They have collected just 10 rubles a week, and it was fine. When the taxes appeared, it was payable. We had enough profit." (Interview, Olga, April 19, 2019)

The Single Tax on Imputed Income became significant in Kemerovo region six-seven years ago. All the interviewees mentioned this tax as very important in terms of the performances of their enterprises. Larisa remembers, that at her own store of 60 square meters, she had to pay 17 thousand (235 Euro) monthly only for this Single Tax on Imputed Income:

„For what? Can I earn them or cannot? Nobody cared about this. Well... In addition, that is not all. You still pay salaries to sellers, deduct money to the pension fund for people, which is around 20%, plus social insurance, and income tax. Beautiful amount in the end! So eventually you get nothing. Eventually, there was simply no point in keeping this business. Every year they have been increasing and increasing fees and taxes, and over and over. As they say, one beats the bush, and seven others catch the bird. <...> I still have a registered company since I lend the store, but I left trade in 2013».

This particular tax has produced obstacles exactly to small business, especially to retail, which is predominantly “female” kind of occupation (Mukhina 2014). The introduction of the tax in this sense had deeply gendered consequences; however, more research needs to be done, including interviews with male small entrepreneurs, in order to establish, for instance, whether female and male small entrepreneurs reacted differently to these changes, and whether the crisis resulted in a masculinization of (small) entrepreneurship in the town. Larisa remembers the coming hard time in this way:

„When it became harder, my husband began to earn money with cargo hauling, now he is a fireman. <...> I don’t remember exact year when it started, but about 6 – 7 years ago... Smoothly, not noticeably... We were restrained, other structures were developed. <...> We were levied by fees, taxes, also rent went up. Our money, which we could earn, was taken by the state which is racket nowadays. If before the tax was on income, then this single tax on imputed income – you pay for quarter meter, regardless of how much revenue you have. You pay as much on what space you have. This tax is the most predatory tax. Every year, the coefficient rose higher and higher. That is what killed small trade.”

Ludmila has closed three selling spots, stopped renting a warehouse and had to dismiss all the sellers in the period since 2010s, but she managed to keep one small store, where she was both the owner and the only seller. However, Ludmila closed her business not voluntarily; she was suited due unappropriated usage of a logotype and spent a lot of money to protect herself: “Eventually, it took me 4000 Euro to pay for closing the case, and I closed the store”.

The significant fall of ruble in 2014 happened as a consequence of political-economic environment around Russia, which affected purchasing power, so all the entrepreneurs involved in trade and services. The price of 1EUR had been changing rapidly and with high fluctuation since July 2014 to March 2016 from 35 rub/ 1 EUR to 73 rub/ 1 EUR

correspondingly. Larisa is happy that she left trade in 2013: „Everyone tells me that I left on time. Because then another exchange rate crisis came. The dollar jumped sharply. It was a protracted crisis that still lasts. Again, they pulled all the money out of their pockets. Just pulled out. People had money, everything decreased three times again, and you start all over again”.

This event reminded my interviewees of the fall of ruble in 1998, when one dollar's price changed from September 1998 to April 1999 from 6 rubles to 25 rubles which made it hard for many of my interviewees to maintain the same level of profitability they had in the 1990s. Elena remembered that the clientele she had built was lost since the money she received in the morning from customers had less value, then when a courier delivered them from Moscow. Larisa and Olga remember that the savings they had at that moment were rapidly devaluated. By 2014, three of them decided not to keep doing trade at the same scale anymore. Four other female entrepreneurs state that they felt the crisis, but by this period any crisis became part of their life.

The financial crisis of 2008 had long consequences in Russia due to heavy investments from the state. This long economic recession, gradually started to negatively impact businesses, as happened at the same time when franchise shops became active in Mezhdurechensk, and malls became part of the urban infrastructure, which further increased the crisis of small businesses. Least but last was all the growing taxes especially the Single tax for imputed income, which affected most of my interviewees. The 2010s, when all the female entrepreneurs experienced the growing financial difficulties, was also the time when their children were graduating from school. Most of the children already live in big cities of different distance from Mezhdurechensk, graduated or finishing university education. As empirical data shows, usually the children do not come back, which is considered to be a pride for their parents. Moreover, the women also experience the lack of resources, social and financial, to recover the business: they are tired of constant investment. Since the left-overs of maintaining businesses are educated children and renovated apartments, they also might have experienced a lack of motivation to fight for the survival of their businesses with the same intensive energy and time-consuming efforts but decide to be employed with stable, expected salaries with no further financial investments. However, I did not ask this question directly during the interviews. Thus, this statement is more an assumption. Many of my interviewees express desire for financial stability to care about themselves and talk about retirement with anxiety. Eventually, all the women who closed their businesses, voluntarily or not, express tiredness to fight for their

enterprises against external difficulties, named above, although self-realization from the working experience by itself.

CHAPTER 4 – ‘BEING NOT A GOOD ENOUGH MOTHER’ AND OTHER SETBACKS (1990 – THE BEGINNING OF 2010S)

In Chapter 2 I explored how the women’s decision to be self-employed was mostly motivated by their motherhood – the need and wish to control the timing and location of their work to be “available” or “accessible” to their children, both physically and emotionally. This decision is taken along with financial motivation not to downgrade their class (Cucu 2008) for the sake of their family and children which can be called as a family-driven entrepreneurship. In Chapter 3 I demonstrated how the de-industrialization of Mezhdurechensk since 2000s and women’s desire to invest into the household’s needs kept the women’s business being of small-sized. This made them more vulnerable and led to the closure of most of the female businesses, studied in this thesis.

In this concluding chapter I will explore how expectations from self-employment to be more available for the children are not always met. Flexibility of working hours took place at the expense of exceeding working time, which led to frustration and eventually regret of not spending enough time with their children. Moreover, in some cases women also expressed disappointment from their own life experience due to overwork and not enough leisure time for themselves. Although they value self-realization and self-development they have received from working with people and exploring a new field for them such as business, most of these female entrepreneurs turned for employment these days.

Authors coming from feminist perspective focus on gendered differentiation of entrepreneurs and draw attention to the relationship between paid labour and domestic labour and show that female success at business are measured in the same way as male although women have more tensions at combining work and family lives. They question if female entrepreneurs cope with “double day” in the same way as female employees or if entrepreneurship affects the gendered division of labour in the home (Brush 1992). The results of the research of modern Spanish’ businesswomen done by Gabaldon et al (2015) indicate that self-employed spend more time on remunerated work activities than salaried mothers while less on household activities, and a similar amount of time providing childcare. Although self-employment is a great adaptivity to manage priorities in structuring the workday, it often requires long workweeks it (Greer M. J. & Greene P. G. 2003).

“Entrepreneurs are the unhappiest people because they do not have opportunity to relax and rest. Always in stress because there are a lot of costs, tasks they change all the time. If I could change the time, I would not have chosen to do this work. If I could change the time, I would not have chosen to do this work but better stayed at home with my daughter.” (Interview Larisa, May 10, 2019)

This signified that post-socialist Russia’s gender regime with its “double burden”. On the one hand, my interviewees “choose” this form of flexible work not only because there was no other work, but also because it enabled the combination of paid and unpaid work. On the other hand, the flexibility, under the given condition of scarcity, turned into extreme long working hours along with continuing care work, which was still deemed to be women’s duty. Vera points out:

„Probably we are just created in a different way, we want to do more. Because we want to make this and that, and that and more, we have more things to do: family, household <...> It is fine, it is just that the most important thing is to plan and to schedule everything: time and money. You need to think a lot, really plan a lot.” (Interview Vera, data April 24, 2019)

The interviewed women denied any challenge in combining their work out of home and their domestic work. during the interviews they underlined that they are proud of being able to combine everything. Yet, at the same time, retrospectively looking, they are anxious that they have not been good-enough mothers. They did not compare the time spent by waged mothers with their own upbringing by their parents but expressed frustration that they were overworked and could not devote enough time and energy to their children as they wish. The research of Gabaldon et al (2015), devoted to Spanish working mothers for the period of 2009-2010, in the midst of the economic crisis shows that self-employed mothers tend to spend more time with their children than their waged equivalents, but less on the domestic tasks. On the other hand, the results indicate that self-employed mothers work longer hours than their waged equivalents. The data of the current research do not allow me to compare waged working mothers with self-employed mothers in Mezhdurechensk, but the empirical data indicate about frustration of self-employed mothers that they are not fulfilling the expectations of ‘ideal motherhood’. Ludmila reasons:

„When a woman works a lot, she will regret about it. I have understood it during the graduation ceremony of my daughter. <...> I was looking at her, and I felt

pain... Because I have not even seen when my child has grown up due to this work of mine... <...>If I could change the time, I would not have chosen to do this work. I would rather be with my children. It is a wasted time, but it is the most important resource as I can see now. My daughter does the same mistake. She does not understand that it is exactly now her son is in need of her. Soon he will be grown up and will leave her. This is the mistake of all women, I loved to earn money, worked with people, created something creative, interesting, but life is not waiting.”

Similar regret was expressed by all the women I talked to. Ludmila acknowledges that she has not noticed how the school she chooses for them put them down, and the atmosphere there was far behind friendly. Vera claims that she spoiled her son since she wanted to replace both father and mother for him, but there was no time, so she was buying everything he wanted.

Being grandmothers at the time of the interviews, many of the women, looking back at time when they were younger, regret about their own life time too. They find that they always were overworked and did not have time for themselves. “My friend always invited me for a holiday. I am always busy with work. First, the 1990s, I had to do it because children, now it is a grandson. My husband has a horribly little pension, none of us could predict it.” (Interview Olga, date April 19, 2019 Larisa also complains about the lack of personal life: “I am going to be 58 years old², it is an age. Although I do not feel so, but anyway. I need to live for myself. Travel around, at least to explore something... Cause how it was, I alive was buried under a pile of work.”³Not everyone talks about retirement with excitement, some ...with anxiety. The pension of all the interviewed entrepreneurs is very little, although includes the pension from care-work too. The women have desire for financial stability to care about themselves and prefer to go for formal employment last years exactly before retirement is a tactic used by Elena and other interviewees. Larisa insightfully clarifies this lack of state social guarantees for entrepreneurs during the active working life period and after: “Now I would choose to be an official, a deputy or working at police. They seem to live for themselves, they have vacations, subsidies and additional benefits, they have sick leave. We had none of it. They live much better than us. Now they also do, they definitely have better pensions.”

² The retirement age of women in Russia for a long time was 55 year old and was changed to 63 years in 2018.

³ Larisa used a saying „You do not see a bright world” (*Svetabelogo ne vidish*)

None of the interviewees mentioned dissatisfying relationships with their children now, neither they mentioned that they worked had a wrong influence on the children. However, the frustration is coming from regret not to have spent enough time with children when they were not grown-ups. Some women mentioned that they would be more attentive to psychological needs of children, and less worried about their working tasks every day, if they could turn back the clock. The empirical data from the interviews show that the female entrepreneurs did want and tended to care for children and family, they liked it and they reject the devaluation of this sphere. Not less they enjoyed the work they did with its challenges, communication and earning they had. However, as most of the children are gone away from the family, in five out of seven cases – from the town to pursue higher education. This is a proud for their families and is one of the remaining left-overs of maintained businesses along with renovated apartments, and rich working and living experience. By 2018 most of the interviewed female entrepreneurs are left in Mezhdurechensk without children and with the businesses they were involved into for 15 – 25 years.

EPILOGUE

Especially vulnerably of mono-industrial towns, built within and for planned economy, amplified the economic disaster the interviewed women were exposed to. In this study, I analysed female entrepreneurial activities in small Siberian town of Mezhdurechensk, which went through many economic and political changes after the dissolution of the USSR. De-industrialization of this settlement accompanied by massive cut-layers on the production sites and optimization of many factories and mines affected harshly the households. Many women and men faced the uselessness of professional skills they acquired in the socialist time and looked for different strategies of livelihood in expanding service sector. Some of the young women, who recently started a family life with little children, have chosen self-employment in the needs of income, additional or main, which have grown during the early post-socialist period. I have aimed to develop a holistic approach in the current research, adding family experiences, gendered skills, individual desires, motherhood. I extend the traditional male-oriented scholarship of entrepreneurial performance, which works mostly with such factors as markets and money, by working with the notions of gender, life-course and generation.

Self-employment as a working decision of young women can be seen as a consequence of late-Soviet gender order where all the responsibilities over the child is on the mother's shoulders (Ashwin 2006). Doing business allowed women to overcome social exclusion from post-Soviet labour market (Yaroshenko 2013, Kozina, Zhidkova 2006) as well as to schedule working hours flexibly. Since their professional skills and education were in no demand in emerging capitalist society, they monetized their gendered skills such as practice of emotional labour and juggling between different tasks in their enterprises. Their businesses kept being of small-sized during all the 15 to 25 years of its existence due to intensive women's investments into the household and children's education and well-being. This made the enterprises vulnerable under the financial crisis of 2008, and the state's pressure on small-revenue businesses. The enterprises were affected by enabled local configurations of macro-changes over last three decades and made women turn to close them. Eventually, the economic recession since 2008, accompanied by gentrification in Mezhdurechensk, led to the closure of most of the female businesses, studied in this thesis.

So far, I have been analyzing two processes that position self-employed women in this de-industrializing town. First, I have confirmed in my case that post-Soviet gender role model of

a worker-mother, inherited from Soviet legacy, left women with the legacy of being strong and independent but doing all the family work. Second, the cut of legal and institutional support towards women's emancipation along with highly-restricted labour market of heavy-industrial town results in women taking up different working activities that are suitable for flexible working hours and with relatively low growth opportunities. This lead eventually the overworking women with no social benefits by the age of retirement.

I have also argued, that women's entrance into self-employment can be traced back to a socialist legacy that have encouraged women to succeed and perform personally and professionally. During post-socialist period this voice is articulated in being a (super)woman doing "individualized entrepreneurial femininity" and be proud of this. I thus demonstrated that female entrepreneurs, being in a disadvantaged position vis-a-vis neoliberal logic of masculine (universal) working time and space turned for their gendered skills to monetize them in a market-economic system. The empirical data shows how the interviewed women juggled between the neoliberal ethics of work and their attachment to family responsibilities but remain ambivalent and anxious about some of implications of this new political order. This narrative also addresses produced expectations which are in tension with current order of social policies.

All of the women face retirement age and express dissatisfaction of social benefits they can count on. The impact of deindustrialization on jobs, livelihoods and demanded skills is linked to a broader overhauling of society. The state's abandonment created a crisis in reproduction, not only in terms of work and production, but also in terms of family ties and expectations from a life course. By the time of the interviews taken place (April 2019), most of the interviewed women but one, who were self-employed for most of the time closed their businesses and looked for other strategies of livelihood. Some of the women remarried and happy that their husbands release them from income-generating practices, while they are devoted to household work and enjoy leisure time (Interview Larisa, May 10 2019; Interview Vera, April 24, 2019). Other, especially those whose husbands are not alive, keep fighting for their well-beings at being formally employed to gain state's benefits.

By describing and analyzing processes of long-terms change through women's perspectives, belonging to 1960-1970s generation in this small post-Soviet town, I argue about rupture and continuity between socialist and post-socialist time on one hand, and a need to chart the importance of life-course analysis to understand entrepreneurial activities. In this, I follow the feminist scholarship that it is possible to understand the workings of social structures through

the study of women's practical, everyday experiences since gender intersects with other structures such as class, and sexuality to produce distinct perspectives that can serve as alternative ways of knowing (Collins 1989). In this understanding, women's points of view are privileged because, like any subaltern view. On another hand, I illustrate a lack of knowledge of generational change and gender regimes, enabled in Russia's settlements, exposed to de-industrialization and marketization.

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