

Cooperative Borderlands: Trafficking Values and Waste Across Nesting
Boundaries in Russian Karelia

by

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Abstract

In my dissertation, I explore the sense of place and the local identity in Petrozavodsk, the capital city of the Republic of Karelia, Russian Federation. We are aware of the geographical and political borders, of those visible dividing lines on the map that insulate ethnic groups and nation states. At the same time, the social and cultural boundaries are harder to notice – they emerge through the sense of discomfort of conflict which signals that an invisible boundary has been crossed. In my research, I address the instances of such boundary crossings in a larger context of local urban life through the ethnographic approach of *flânerie* as well as through a case study of a joint Russian-Finnish project supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers, *W.A.S.T.E.: Waste Awareness, Treatment, Education* that was realized in Petrozavodsk from 2011 to 2013. I build a dialogue between social spaces divided by ‘nesting’ (Russian doll-like) borders that are in/congruent with territorial/political borderlines. I attempt to bring together the two approaches to the study of contemporary borders: the more traditional geographical and political approach to borders and an anthropological perspective that stresses the dynamic nature of the border.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Kateryna Pashkovska. Field research required for this project received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “International Cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region through Joint Social Programs Targeted at Karelian Youth,” study ID Pro00014993, last renewed on 13 October 2015.

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Table of Contents

Cooperative Borderlands: Trafficking Values and Waste Across Nesting Boundaries in Russian Karelia	i
Abstract	ii
Preface.....	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
List of Figures	x
PART I.....	1
Introduction.	1
Chapter 1.....	2
Researchers’ identity: half-native mother-anthropologist with a baby in the field.....	2
1.1. Mothering, getting data, getting pregnant: juggling field identities.	2
1.2. Going native to some degree: a Ukrainian citizen in the postsocialist Russian Karelia.	11
Chapter 2.....	17
Conceptual frames and contribution to the field.....	17
2.1. Through the lens of postsocialism.	18
2.2. Making sense of borders, boundaries, borderscapes and borderlands.....	20
2.3. A fractals/nesting concept in Anthropology.....	23
2.4. Spatiality and the sense of place.	26
2.5. The gender lenses.	27
2.6. Why waste? The change of my initially intended target group.....	28
PART II.....	33
Visible PTZ.....	33
Chapter 3.....	34
Exploring urban social spaces.....	34
Chapter 4. <i>Flâneuring</i> Petrozavodsk streets.	48
4.1. Introduction.....	48
4.2. The female ethnographer as a <i>flâneur</i>	53
4.3. Petrozavodsk people walking, strolling, and... <i>flâneuring</i> ?	56
4.4. The “Sur of our lives.”	59
4.5. The postsocialist <i>flâneurs</i>	62
Chapter 5.....	73
Learning to be a local consumer: from women’s agency to a firmer social fabric.....	73
5.1. Introduction.....	73

5.2. Postsocialist consumption caught between the center and the periphery.	75
5.3. Learning to be a local consumer through making choices.	79
5.4. So, what do the second-hand and online shopping solidify?	93
Chapter 6.....	97
Petrozavodsk in its sculptures and monuments.	97
6.1. Local monumental landscape.	97
6.2. Onega Lake Quay sculptures.	106
6.3. Soviet-era monuments.....	118
6.4. Concluding remarks.	121
PART III.....	128
Macro-scale borders, local identity and networking.....	128
Chapter 7.....	129
Behind the line on the map.....	129
7.1. Preamble.	129
7.2. More than just a dividing line.	133
Chapter 8.....	136
Scope of international cooperation in Karelia.	136
8.1. Karelian crossroads.	136
8.2. Platforms for international cooperation in Karelia.....	137
8.3. Local perspectives on partnership with Nordic neighbors: for better, or for worse.	145
8.4. <i>Karhako</i> s enterprise as a case of positively viewed Karelian-Finnish cooperation.	149
8.5. The “invisible divider” that ruins cooperation: the case of IKEA.	150
Chapter 9.....	157
Patterns of migration and settlement in the Russian part of the Barents region from early times to the 1990s.....	157
9.1. Who is <i>mestnyi</i> (native) in Karelia?.....	157
9.2. The romantic North and its iconography.	163
Chapter 10.....	168
Navigating geographical borders.....	168
10.1. Migration and settlement in the Soviet period.	168
10.2. Outmigration.	171
10.3. Migration patterns and ethnic composition of migrants.	173
10.4. Migration today: local ways of crossing the Karelian-Finnish border. Visa regimes.	176
Chapter 11.....	184

The BEAR as a region and organization.	184
.....	184
Chapter 12.....	192
The regional identity: is there such a thing for the Barents Region?	192
12.1. ‘Glue for the region’: construction of the sense of community.	192
Chapter 13.....	199
Personal contacts and professional networking as a driving force for cooperation.	199
13.1. “We all stay in touch,” or do you have your own “open sesame” magic formula?.....	199
13.2. The drinking aspect of networking.	209
13.3. A lyric digression: <i>krugovaya poruka</i> and the Russian rock as a cultural phenomenon.	212
13.3.2. <i>Krugovaya poruka</i> and the Russian rock.	215
<i>Part IV.</i>	221
<i>Recycling waste and trafficking values in the Karelian periphery.</i>	221
Chapter 14.....	222
Waste recycling as a case of Karelian-Nordic cooperation.	222
14.1. The pilot project: introduction of domestic waste sorting in Petrozavodsk (January 2009 – January 2010).	222
14.2. The follow-up project W.A.S.T.E.: Waste Awareness, Sorting, Treatment, Education (September 2011 – October 2013).	232
14.3. Youth involvement: educational component and my role of a volunteer in the project.	237
Chapter 15. Crossing micro-borders: translation/adaptation of values across the social boundaries.	244
15.1. Importing values.	244
15.2. Petrozavodsk as a gateway to the West.....	246
15.3. Selecting imported values.	247
15.4. Distant learning.....	249
15.5. Early ecological education.....	251
15.6. Encouragement of volunteering.....	255
15.7. Encouragement of eco-sustainable behavior of adults.....	262
Chapter 16. Bordering through othering and entitlement to power.	272
16.1. Preamble.	272
16.2. Russian professionals vs. Nordic experts: drawing cross-regional boundaries.	276
16.1.1. Unrecognized Russian educators.	276
16.2. Insider othering: breakable wires of (mis)communication on the Russian side.....	283

16.3. Power imbalance between institutions: schools, kindergartens, city administration, Avtospetstrans and homeowners' associations.	295
Chapter 17.....	300
Representation of the project W.A.S.T.E. in the online mediascape.	300
<i>Part I V.</i>	315
<i>Final remarks</i>	315
Chapter 18.....	316
In place of a conclusion.....	316
Bibliography	326

List of Figures

Figure 1 - A polyhedron that ideally illustrates my inner perception of my field experience. Photo credit: https://www.sciencenews.org/article/polyhedron-hole	2
Figure 2 - The building of Petrozavodsk railway station with the name of the city on top: in Russian on the left and in Karelian/Finnish on the right. Photo credit: KP, 2009.	34
Figure 3 - My first Petrozavodsk informant Viktor at the Onega Lake Quay. June 28, 2010. Photo credit: KP.	59
Figure 4 - Kukkovka city district of Petrozavodsk and some of the typical houses on the outskirts of Ptz. On the far right you can see the house in which I lived. Photo credit: KP.	66
Figure 5 - View from my window to the ring road and a road to another district, Perevalka. Photo credit: KP.	67
Figure 6 - Young mother with a baby in a stroller at the Onega Lake Quay. Petrozavodsk, October 2010. Photo credit: KP.....	68
Figure 7 - Myself, with my son Natan (in stroller) and my daughter, Azalia (in a sling) in Lenin Park. Odessa, September 2012. Photo credit: Pashkovska Zh. F.	69
Figure 8 - Photo meme. Photo credit: www.bugaga.ru	78
Figure 9 - Goods from Finland for All" online community, Petrozavodsk. Source: https://vk.com/club28824927	89
Figure 10 - 'Enculturated boulders.' Photo Credit: http://dmitriy-k.livejournal.com/1492.html	103
Figure 11 - Fishermen. Photo credit: http://dmitriy-k.livejournal.com/1492.html	106
Figure 12 - Wish Tree. Photo credit: http://skbic.ru/en/4581/5099.html	110
Figure 13 - Sleeping Beauty. Photo credit: http://dmitriy-k.livejournal.com/1492.html	113
Figure 14 - Tübingen panel. Photo credit: http://7constantine7.livejournal.com/90674.html	115
Figure 15 - Wave of Friendship. Photo credit: http://7constantine7.livejournal.com/90674.html	117
Figure 16 - Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Petrozavodsk.	124
Figure 17 - Distance between the towns of Kostomuksha, Segezha and Tikhvin. Map source: google maps.	152
Figure 18 - The Barents Euro-Arctic Region with Petrozavodsk in a red box at the center, below. Map source: https://cryopolitics.com/arctic-maps/	157
Figure 19 - Solovetsky Monastery (Friary). Photo credit: http://solovki-monastyr.ru/	162
Figure 20 - Elijah the prophet in the Desert, icon (comes from the village Pyalma, Pudozhje, Karelia; currently is exhibited in the Museum of Fine Arts of Karelia in Petrozavodsk.) Photo credit: http://to-world-travel.ru/img/%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B0/2688/26	166
Figure 21 - The Barents Region. Map source: http://www.barentscooperation.org/en/About/Barents-region	184
Figure 22 - Organizational chart of the administrative structure of the BEAR. Source credit: http://www.beac.st/en/About/Organisational-chart	187
Figure 23 - Organizational chart of the administrative structure of the BEAR. Source credit: http://www.beac.st/en/About/Organisational-chart	187

Figure 24 - Organizational chart of the administrative structure of the BEAR. Source credit:
<http://www.beac.st/en/About/Organisational-chart> 187

Figure 25 - Organizational chart of the administrative structure of the BEAR. Source credit:
<http://www.beac.st/en/About/Organisational-chart> 187

Figure 26 - “Let’s Become the First in Waste Sorting!” (brochure cover page issued by the Petrozavodsk City Administration to target tenants of homeowners’ associations.) Photo credit: KP. 228

Figure 27 - Recycling station/enclosure in the yard of the model condominiums with overflowing garbage due to unstable waste removal schedule. Photo credit: KP. 263

PART I.

Introduction.

Chapter 1.

Researchers' identity: half-native mother-anthropologist with a baby in the field.

1.1. Mothering, getting data, getting pregnant: juggling field identities.

Reminiscing about my field experience in Russian Karelia from October 2010 through April 2012, I am playing with a polyhedron of all its aspects that amalgamated into one clear focus of me. Me, who have come to ask questions of locals in various circumstances. The biggest and brightest faces of this polyhedron are local men and women who were genuinely doing their best to improve the ecological situation in their region, at the same time straddling the territorial borders and social boundaries, the language in which we were communicating, and, my repetitive efforts to keep legal status in Karelia for myself, my husband and our baby son. The background color of this polyhedron stands for my personal position as a researcher, and a woman who gathered about 90% of my data with a baby in my arms – one who transformed, in no time, into a lively toddler attempting to explore (or,



Figure 1 - A polyhedron that ideally illustrates my inner perception of my field experience. Photo credit: <https://www.sciencenews.org/article/polyhedron-hole>

destroy?) everything that he could get his hands on in my informants' apartments but who was welcomed and given the best possible treatment that I could have hoped for. Later, I started to show up to my talk appointments (instead of 'interviews,' somehow this phrasing seems to be more adequate to the local communicative context) with a toddler

and another growing baby in my belly. The question that I kept asking myself was how my little helpers influenced my data through evoking a particular type of response in my informants by their mere presence as well as by altering the dynamics of our conversations. When I was re-listening to the audio recordings of these talks, I realized how much was going on besides the adults talking: baby Natan's babbling, his attempts to get attention, and my interlocutors' responses to him, such as offering him another toy, another cup of tea, another cookie, after which the direction of the conversation would shift. When I came to Petrozavodsk for the third time in June 2014 with my both children, I took them to nine of the twelve formal meetings that I scheduled. We stayed with my friend who lived with her husband and their three children, in a two-bedroom apartment.¹

I changed the topic of my doctoral research at least four times after I first went to Petrozavodsk, until finally it felt right to focus on the study of shifting borders and emerging boundaries in the Karelian capital through exploration of the cross-border cooperation with the adjacent Nordic countries. The way I was envisioning my data brought me to seek meetings, first, with government, municipal and the Petrozavodsk State University officials – men and women with firm social standing. Later, I found out that a relatively successful career often meant firmly established viewpoints on every little bit of life around them, including their treatment of graduate students asking questions, young and/or pregnant women, toddlers, etc. Approaching my position consciously, I was curiously observing the way in which these markers of the visitor (me) played together to produce a specific way of responding from my interlocutors.

¹ I am very grateful to Maria for her invaluable friendship and hospitality. We met through a local online moms' forum when I posted an ad about borrowing a humidifier for some charge; the air in the apartment where we were living was very dry but I could not afford to buy a humidifier, even a used one. She responded, and ended up lending it to me for free.

After careful selection of projects to focus on, I chose two. Both of them were international projects supported by the Northern Council of Ministers: *W.A.S.T.E.: Waste Awareness: Sorting, Treatment, Education and Development of Youth Entrepreneurship through Creation of the Partner Network of Northwest Russia and the countries of Northern Europe*.² The vast majority of key informants in both projects were women-officials or women-educators; among them, I found a variety of attitudes towards me as an inquisitive PhD student/young mother who was asking for information and for their time. I was curious to find out whether I was going to have a more understanding approach from these women, a kind of sisterhood from those who were, like me, trying to juggle their family life and social fulfillment. In her insightful study *Living Gender after Communism*, devoted to the question whether female legislators as members of Parliament in Russia, are generally more likely to promote women's concerns and conduct more women-friendly politics than male legislators, Iulia Shevchenko (2007) concludes that this is not the case at all. Such factors as legislative context, issue profile, party loyalty, gratitude to the governor who promoted her, etc., affect the relevance of gender to legislative voting. She found that "increasing the number of women in the legislature is unlikely to have positive effects on women's issues unless women politicians' policy priorities are indeed women-friendly" (Johnson, J. & J. Robinson 2007:129). Another case study regarding the treatment of women by women was done by Susan Polouski and Lawrence Benito (2007).

"When asked [some potential voters] if she [governor of St. Petersburg] would succeed at seeking higher office, the answer was a decisive 'no.' This was not the answer of men, but of other Russian women. The women we asked said they believed it was not only an issue of whether men would vote

² However, in this doctoral thesis, I ended up writing about only one of them, the W.A.S.T.E. project. The youth entrepreneurship is saved for future research and publications.

for a woman, but also that they believed women would not vote for another woman” (Polouski, S. & Benito, L. 2007; p. 81).

I was well familiar with the Russian cultural context prior to my trip and realized that I could expect varying responses to my bringing a baby to the meetings, and I fully respected the right of my interlocutors to respond in a way they found appropriate. Usually, bringing my son along was not my first choice. The truth is that he was restless without me by his side and the longest time I could leave him with his father was no more than two hours. So, often it was a compromise between an ongoing distraction during the conversation, or necessity to cut it off because of the need to run home. As a rule, I would ask people who I was meeting if it would be okay if I came with a baby. I did not get a single refusal.

Many of my interviewees were not MPs or city governors but were nevertheless important women-officials such as the head of the Federal Migration Services of Karelia, heads of departments at the Petrozavodsk city administration and other female officials such as heads and office workers at the local executive branches, principals of educational establishments, etc. Overall, my experience conforms to Shevchenko’s conclusions: my respondent-officials held a gender-neutral position, never raising a concern about women’s matters in the Republic. I strongly believe that despite efforts of Russian feminists or guests from abroad, the gender aspect of the local reality is not on the social radar. And, in general, the topic of gender issues or gender identities as such were never brought up by any of my informants during my fieldwork. At the same time, a particular aspect of identity of womanhood, motherhood, is strong, and enjoys respect and special treatment in Russian society. In this regard, Meri Kulmala’s research is illuminating. She did her doctoral research in the Karelian border town of Sortavala, studying the level of activity of the civil society through local NGOs. She found that many NGOs were organized and populated by women who identified strongly with mothers. For

example, there was a local branch of the Mothers of the Veterans Organization, where one member once told Meri about her plans to go to a Sortavala municipal official for funding: “Who can say ‘no’ to a mother?” The female member of those NGOs did not find a common language with the Finnish feminists who came to visit; however, they did connect well with Finnish mothers’ organizations (Kulmala, 2013). As Suvi Salmenniemi notices, “in Russian culture, womanhood is strongly defined in the framework of motherhood” (Salmenniemi, Karhunen, Kosonen, 2011, p.82). At present, not only culturally but with the help of legislature and executive decrees, women’s reproductive roles are constructed as crucial to the survival of the whole society.

The topic of motherhood had spontaneously come up in my conversations with women much more often than in those with men. If it came up with a man, it was because he wanted to know more about me and asked about my personal and professional life. Another trigger was when I mentioned my son during our conversation and my male interlocutor would also have a child and was prone to talk about him/her. With women, the types of response that I came across after mentioning my little son ranged from nice, compassionate, friendly or curious, to disapproving or indifferent. Yet, the overtly disapproving attitude towards my “not doing things at a right time” was observed only once. My first highly ranking woman-interlocutor reproached me for not being well-prepared for my fieldwork because I did not bring my parents to the city to help me with the baby, or did not send him away – the two options that I had to choose from, if I was to have done it ‘the right way.’ She considered herself a model to follow in this regard: as she told me, when she had her daughter, she was just starting her career, so she sent her daughter away to her parents who were taking care of her. She said, “Now look at me. I’m a successful, well-paid woman. You should learn to make compromises in your life.”

At my candidacy exam, one of the examiners assured me that I would be given “special treatment” during my fieldwork, as a mother with a baby. I indeed found attention and support, but from a specific group of women who I can categorize as “kind in a motherly way,” who were usually older or of my age but who did not occupy a particularly high position.

All in all, I can say that my personal experience was in line with the general attitude toward women in Russian society with the common perception of their roles and responsibilities. As Bienefeld (2007, p.392) points out, the paternalistic ideology has deep roots in Russia; the ‘double burden’ of double work for women – home and job – is perceived there as natural and normal. However, one of the major consequences it has is that according to common perception, this impedes women’s ability to work as efficiently as men, and that is why there are lower salaries for women doing the same job as men, and why this is justified by the society. Bienefeld’s women-interviewees as well as my Petrozavodian female friends and acquaintances supported this idea, agreeing that their performance at work would have been much more successful had they been able to delegate more of their housework responsibilities that it was already the case. However, I need to mention that quite often the ‘double-burden’ hit women not because their men were lazy, uncaring, or unwilling to help, but because the men were off at several jobs, working, on average, 3-4 hours a day more to provide financial support for their families.

However frustrating and limiting gender stereotypes may be, sometimes they come in handy. As soon as my high-positioned respondents learned that I had a baby or noticed that I was pregnant, their initial suspicion of me as an inquisitive visitor of unclear status was abandoned and they seemed more relaxed, as if suddenly having realized that I was a ‘normal’ woman who was doing ‘normal’ things like starting a family while not being able to give up her studies. In the local socio-cultural context, my motherhood implied

that, most probably, my doctoral research was a mere formality, a way to get my 'wallpaper degree' to join the ranks of other women aspiring for a decently-paid office job. This assumption made sense to some of my interviewees, and they were willing to help by talking to me and sharing their perspectives and information about the projects that I was interested in. The fact that I was a mother by the time I arrived in my field, in a finger snap, made my questions and inquires unthreatening and easy, my work in general was imagined to be insubstantial and lost in the archives even before it was done. Through the construction of me in this way, they found it easier to relate to me, to be open and helpful, however paradoxical this may sound. Many of my female contacts who were not high officials, were very sympathetic and consistently offered me favors such as coming to my place (for my convenience) and accommodating the time for our meetings according to the sleeping schedule of my baby, while others would invite both of us over, treating us to dinner and giving a gift to Natan when we were leaving. He made a particularly sweet baby and toddler (and now, a no less sweet, inquisitive and intelligent young man of six): I do believe that his cute appearance and easy-going personality had something to do with this hospitality from people we barely knew at the time; some of them became dear friends.

Another question that I was asking myself was how I could compare the outcomes of bringing a baby/toddler and a baby yet to be born (my daughter Azalia), to the interview. How are these situations different? One of the unexpected lessons that I learned from my 'pregnant' communication was a skill to quickly come up with a specific answer to the question from my informants: "When would you like to meet?" A response like 'whatever is good for you' proved to be disappointing because they sincerely wanted to do whatever was good *for me*, trying to be nice and at the same time wanting their effort to be noticed and appreciated. A pregnant woman has an almost saint-like aura of Motherhood, and

indeed, nobody says ‘no’ to a mother-to-be. Yet, when the baby is born, the women loses a special status and privileges that she enjoyed while being pregnant. In my experience, when the first culturally appropriate (and often sincere) admiring responses to the present baby fade, it takes about seven minutes (my counting!) for the person who I came to interview, to suddenly realize that having a baby in the office, especially under conditions when several officials are sharing the same room, is probably not the best idea. It becomes clear that he is not only a ‘cute little creature’ but a little *person* with his own, objective and individual, needs, behaviours and schedule, all of which might not fit so well in the professional environment.

Another quite real challenge was that my interviewees became witnesses to personal relations between me and my baby, my individual responses to his needs, and at times, this was becoming, gradually, more and more uncomfortable for all participants, especially if it was in a big office, at a first meeting. Uncomfortable for me, because of restrictions put on my behaviour by the location and the context of interview (I was shy to breastfeed right there but the problem was that there was no other working way to pacify my baby when he was becoming grumpy); uncomfortable for Natan, because of impossibility to get his needs met (through breastfeeding or his preference for crawling around instead of sitting quietly on my lap); uncomfortable for the interviewee, because of distraction and the shifted center of attention. When Natan became a toddler, he still required close watching at any given minute. I had to pick up signs of his boredom to offer another book, another toy, another piece of food to distract him from opening drawers in my respondent’s apartment, and from breaking furniture there. This close supervision could not but distracted from the topic of the interview, and upon returning home I used to realize that important follow-up questions were not asked; the direction of the conversation was not turned at a good moment because I was too busy showing my

kid what interesting pictures that book had to distract him from suspicious activities with the apartment owner's stuff.

And yet... I must say that some of my richest conversations were so successful precisely because of the vivid participation of my son, when his presence created a sense of a team between me and my female interlocutor. A unique situation happened with a male Federal Migration officer who demonstrated good will and helped me with resolving an issue of my legal status in Russia which otherwise could have taken weeks. He did this clearly on the sole ground of a special 'alliance' between us as parents (his third child was born a week before our encounter).

Doing fieldwork with a baby in my arms, or in my belly, taught me lessons that served me throughout later stages of my studies: I learned phenomenal flexibility and spontaneity that beat my every expectation of myself. My motherhood challenged my cognitive image of 'the perfect me in the field': in business attire, with a careful hairdo and make-up, always on time, young researcher. Quite magically, I transformed into a mom, forever agitated and running from place to place, who had to get back home exactly in time, to breastfeed her baby and let her husband get back to work, or die. My hair got used to be hardly touched by a comb, and my look was screaming out loud that I was terribly sleep-deprived. First, I was a mom, real and expectant, who had to arrange for two interviews for my fieldwork and squeeze a prenatal doctor appointment in between. By seeing me first, as a mom, and only after that, as a doctoral student, the people I met would open to me more quickly and very often, would divert from the initial topic of the conversation to talk to me about something else, providing me with some of my most insightful data.

At the same time, my role as a mother did not stop influencing my research after I was done with the fieldwork. Only when I was finishing writing the last part did I realize that this thesis turned into a therapeutic device for myself in the situation when my children are far away from me and when our meetings are so short and scarce. I ended up going very different directions with my data than I initially intended. Thus, the *Flâneur* and Consuming Mothers sections to follow would not have been born at all, if not for my current life situation. Having gathered much more material than I would be able to write about in this thesis, I chose to select the data that had to do with motherhood, children and borders.

1.2. Going native to some degree: a Ukrainian citizen in the postsocialist Russian Karelia.

Besides my clear gender identity and its effects on my data collection, as discussed in the previous section, here, I suggest that my distinct cultural position allowed me to identify with an insider position. I offer my reflections on my degree of ‘nativeness’ in the Karelian context and the consequences that it had for my access to governmental bodies, educational establishments and ordinary Petrozavodsk residents.

By definition, a native ethnographer is the one who studies their own culture. Native ethnography has been well established in anthropological theory (Jones, 1970, Hastrup, 1999, Mitra, 2010, Kempny, 2012 and others) reflected in all degrees and shades of nativeness (Abu-Lughod, 1991, Bruner, 1993, Narayan, 1993). With the postmodern turn in anthropology, reflexivity became an inherent part of the fieldwork, or rather, writing about fieldwork, to “maintain continual questioning as to where the information has been created” (Hertz, 1997). The researcher’s identity was made subject to fracturing in ever smaller pieces: the “halfies,” the identities of nativeness split in half, as distinguished by

Abu-Lughod (1991), seemed too limiting to Narayan (1993) who effectively argued that German, American, Indian, etc., identities are just “broad labels deriving from modern nation-states” (Narayan, 1993, p. 671) while in real life, they mean so much more if dissected to their specific constituents.

The question of who is native, and in what setting, has its own flavor in the postsocialist studies. Western anthropologists, coming from outsider positions, produced high-quality ethnographies that had indeed influenced the postsocialist world. I find them truly inspirational: on Russia (the work on Nancy Ries (1997), Dale Pesmen (2000), Caroline Humphrey’s works on Siberia and Ukraine (1983, 1992, 2001, 2002, 2004), Naobe Thompson’s works on Siberia and Russian Arctic (2002, 2003, 2004, 2009, 2014); Elizabeth Dunn’s work on Poland (2004), Daphne Berdahl’s work on Eastern Germany (1997, 1999, 2009); and finally, Katherine Verdery’s work on Romania (1991, 1996, 1999, 2003). At the same time, Russian anthropologists, ethnologists, and especially, sociologists (whose area of interests and methods seem to come closest to the North American version of anthropology) have been busy deciphering the underpinnings of the social catastrophe that hit Russia with the dissolution of the Soviet Union as well as investigating multiple social topics that begged for attention. In this, I relate to the research works of scholars affiliated with the Higher School of Economics, Moscow (E. Polukhina on online communities and exchange, *dachas* and memorials, V. Abashkin on regionalism) and the Center of Independent Sociological Studies St. Petersburg (E. Nikiforova, on Soviet identity politics and local identity, O. Brednikova and O. Zaporozhets on migration, borders, boundaries and how to cope with them). Also, Petrozavodsk State University and the Karelian branch of the National Academy of Science, two competitive regional scientific centers, have been home to innovative

research on European and Karelian regionalism (G. Yarovoy, E. Belokurova, political sciences), local regional identity (A. Rogova, sociology), Karelian folklore and literature.

Indeed, identification of a researcher consists of multiple strands. In his chapter on fieldwork dilemmas, Marko Zivkovic, who did his fieldwork research on the stories that Serbs tell about themselves, to themselves and to others, revealed “carrying the ‘native’ anthropologist role to its logical extreme” by staying with his parents in his native city of Belgrade (Zivkovic 2000, p.50). And yet, he successfully claims to be an outsider in the context of rapid change and war turmoil in Serbia when even local people lost clues to what was going on, and why.

I found my own position in the Russian Karelia as somewhat in-between: clearly not a westerner, but at the same time, not quite native Russian, culturally, socially, or academically speaking. I grew up in Odessa: formerly, an important Soviet southern seaport (which made it the most cosmopolitan city in the whole of Ukraine), built by the Russian empress of German origin, Katherine the Great, Russian-speaking and well-known outside of Ukraine for its rich and distinctive cultural flavor.³ Unlike English dialects within Great Britain or the US, the Russian language is very much standardised, so its regional dialects are not markedly different, except for minor diversions in pronunciation of vowels /a/, /o/, and some slang words. This means that in speaking Russian as my native language, I did not anticipate any difficulties in mingling with the local crowd and being perceived as a ‘native.’

It was important for me to be perceived as an insider, for several reasons. First, I was still recovering from the trauma of forced Ukrainization that started in the late 1990s

³ For more, see an anthropological study of Odessa by Tanya Richardson (2008): *Kaleidoscopic Odessa*.

when the Russian language, the native language of about 49% of the Ukrainian population at that time, was cast out. In the southern and eastern parts of Ukraine, for historical and socio-cultural reasons, the majority of the people spoke Russian as their native language, but their cultural identities were diverse. No call for separation from the center has arisen in the south and it hardly would have in the east, but for the Orange Revolution and its aftermath. I have not felt nostalgia for the Soviet times since I was only nine years old when the USSR dissolved. But, by the second year of my doctoral studies in Canada (after receiving my MA in Folklore from Utah State University), I was already nostalgic for speaking Russian as a part of my everyday life. This meant an absolute, uninterrupted freedom of expression with people of my kind, speaking Russian as their first language, and, perhaps, even more importantly, freedom of communication in the language that was powerful and respected, not an outlaw, nor scapegoat of the new political elites of Kiev.

These language considerations played a visible role in my choice of the fieldwork site. However, they were surely not the main ones. I was particularly drawn to the north, with its romanticized noble aura, the stark beauty of its landscape. Thanks to an enlightening course on Circumpolar North led by Dr. Mark Nuttall (University of Alberta, Department of Anthropology), my interest in this area developed, and finally, acquired a shape through my choice of Karelia as my field site, which seemed a perfect match for me. I planned to study international projects and aspects of cross-border cooperation with Nordic countries, so the Russian territory that has the longest border with a European country (Finland) offered a rich field for research. As to my legal status, as Ukrainian citizens, my husband and I, and our son, had the right to stay in Russia for three months after having registered with the Federal Migration Service. In so far we needed to stay longer (we planned a minimum stay for eight months but ended up staying for seventeen

months), we had to obtain an official letter that would allow us to stay for this period. The process though was far from easy and straightforward and included qualifying interviews with the head of the Federal Migration Service in Petrozavodsk, with her deputy and other staff, fingerprint records and a pile of supporting documentation that I prudently solicited from my supervisor and from the Circumpolar Institute, which partially funded a year of my fieldwork research. Yet, these papers were not sufficient: the requirement of the head of the Federal Migration Service was a letter of formal affiliation with a Karelian research/educational establishment. Without this, my research and my position would have been considered invalid. I did receive such a letter from the North Center at the Karelian branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The head of the North Center (an NGO involved with research cooperation with the Nordic countries) became my first contact in Petrozavodsk; he invited me to take part in the international conference, *Harmony of the North* (November 2010), to which I gladly agreed.

In western-originated anthropological reflections about the ethics of the fieldwork and the commitment to informants, one can find a wide spread call to be conscious of our privilege as anthropologists receiving education in western universities. It is often assumed that we have higher status and more power than our research participants. Perhaps this is true for tenured professors with secure incomes. However, in my case, I was the one with a relatively lower level of power (if one must weigh it somehow): a graduate student, without a full funding for my trip, living in one of the most affordable apartments that we could find, with furniture at least fifteen years old, I was far from facing a problem of a power imbalance with my informants.

My somewhat native position in Petrozavodsk (and I liked to believe it was as close to native as it possibly could be), the fact that the Russian language was my mother tongue, my inclusion in the Russian cultural context (since my home city of Odessa is not only a

Russian-speaking city but at least was, a Russian culture-oriented space, and what is important, it has actively contributed to Russian classical literature, music and art), helped me feel at home in Petrozavodsk. Due to my position, there were visibly fewer chances for cultural miscommunication and misinterpretation of my data. I claim to have an intimate native knowledge in Karelia due to my background and, not the least, loving attitude to my fieldwork site. As Kirsten Hastrup points out, “All of us are natives in some world. In spite of the obvious globalisation, there are still parts of the world where people are at home, in the sense that they know the social space – if they do not actually understand it. And that is the point; the difference between ‘knowing’ and ‘understanding’ (Vendler 1984) amounts to a difference between an intimate and implicit ‘native’ knowledge, and an external and explicit ‘expert’ understanding” (Hastrup 1993:175).

This introductory chapter aimed to set up the scene for my research, to reflect on my multiple identities, as a doctoral student in the field, as a mother, as a foreign citizen with intimate knowledge and appreciation of Russian culture. I also discussed how my other commitments such as being a mother with a baby on the field site affected the kind of data that I was getting from my informants as well as the kind of relationships that were built with them.

Chapter 2.

Conceptual frames and contribution to the field.

This thesis is an anthropological study of emergent social and cultural boundaries. In it, I explore the practices and processes of the local game of dividing that becomes perceptible through visible feeling of discomfort signaling that an in/visible border is crossed.

As informed by the spatial, geographical and historical characteristics of my field site (Petrozavodsk, Karelia) and the data that I collected, I see my thesis as contributing to the theoretical frameworks of postsocialism, border studies (through engagement with the concept of a border, boundary and borderscape), fractals in anthropology and even to gender studies (albeit indirectly). Also, I am contributing to the studies of interconnections between environment (waste) and youth as agents contributing to the development of the civil society in Russia; and finally, I am in dialogue with the literature on spatiality and the sense of place. Contrary to what could be expected in social sciences, I deliberately do not include a separate methods chapter. Instead, the text tells the story of my research and my data, and I discuss possible conclusions and the bigger picture of the processes and practices as each are considered individually. I grouped my chapters to five sections that provide the overarching structure of my approach, as a dialogue between social spaces divided by nesting borders that are in/congruent with territorial/political borderlines, diffusion and stratification of in/visible salient borders, the ethnography of performative practices such as *flânerie*, zoomed out by the macro context of regional cooperation – and all shaped by my attempts at experimental writing, which has become an established tradition in anthropology over the last three decades.

Devoid of a single methodology, this thesis is rather a constellation of themes, a polyphony of voices, and is seen through many lenses.

2.1. Through the lens of postsocialism.

Postsocialism as an analytical concept has proved to be very inclusive, and has been spread by anthropologists to other disciplines. C. Borelli and F. Mattioli (2013) note the plural form of postsocialism(s) as referring to particular historical, geographical and cultural traits of the former republics of the Socialist Block and consequently, pointing to those different paths that they went. *Laboratorium: Russian Review of Social Research* invited C. Borelli and F. Mattioli to be the guest editors for the special issue discussing the utility of postsocialism as a framework, to provide the conclusion. Specifically, the editors as well as contributing authors contend that postsocialism continues to be a prolific umbrella frame for the studies done in the former socialist republics. An important reasoning for this is the proven and established continuity between the socialist past and yet uncertain present of these spaces. The topics of memory, informal networks, subjectivity and consumption, civil society development and gender representations have been addressed by anthropologists in their attempts to understand the kind of social lives that the postsocialism as a historical process imposed. It is clear now that the ‘transition’ that was studied by the first wave of postsocialist scholars in 1990s (predominantly, British and American) did not mean the transition from the Soviet-style state socialism to the western-style neoliberal democracy through the economic “shock-therapy.”

At the Summer School of Postsocialist Studies in St. Petersburg that I attended in July 2014, Katherine Verdery, as a renowned guest speaker, talked to us about her

research in Romania from late 1980s and those insights that she had along the way. One of them was the realization that perhaps, the very concept of ‘transition’ was false (which does not undermine the validity of the postsocialism as a frame) due to the implication of a linear progression if not to the capitalism than to some other uncertain reality – uncertain even for those who had studied socialist, and later, postsocialist, societies for decades. Echoing the same idea, an anthropologist M. Buyandelgeriyn (2008) argues for the understanding of the modern state of societies in the former socialist republics as uncertainty that is “a state of dynamic being” (Buyandelgeriyn, 2008, p.235). In one of the most influential works on postsocialist paradigm by Michael Bukowski (2006), the author points to the lack of dialogue between western and eastern anthropologists, stating that the latter “started nesting” an orientalist perspective which they took beyond the meaning of ‘orientalism,’ as elaborated by E. Said. Speaking to this, my thesis can serve as one of those bridges that have been recently built by anthropologists who are in the same position as I: (half)native in our field sites, born in the USSR, grown up after its dissolution, educated in western universities. One of the most pervasive critiques of the early wave of the postsocialist research done by western anthropologists, expressed by their eastern colleagues was the ‘othering’ of the Eastern and Southern European societies in the chronic pursuit of exoticisms (Borelli and Mattioli, 2013, p.5). My present work is an attempt to ‘normalize’ the Russian-Finnish borderland, to find a proper, dignified place for it within the larger context of European regionalism, through illustrating the dialogue that Petrozavodsk carries on with its northern neighbors on the spatial plane of urban development and beautifying through monuments and sculptures and the practices of *flâneuring*. Recent studies under the conceptual frame of postsocialism have been addressing the interrelated and interdependent relations between the East and the West, contrary to the idea of these two as binary oppositions of

essentialist entities (the same perspective earlier was masterfully rendered by Nancy Ries in her *Russian Talk* (1997), one of the few books about Russia written by a western anthropologist that has been well accepted by the local ‘native’ scholars). Here, I strive to show the social lives of international cooperative projects that unfold within several frameworks (in the case of the W.A.S.T.E. project, under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers) and the dynamics of relations between the project participants as persons and as professionals. Pure geographical consideration does not suffice for a study to be considered a ‘postsocialist.’ In this thesis, I argue about continuity and change. For example, transformation of the Soviet informal networking category of *blat* (for a discussion of *blat* and related issues see chapters 5 and 13) into a different kind of informal networks, spatial coexistence of the Soviet monuments and new ‘modern’ sculptures on the Onega Lake quay, the changing face of recycling through the involvement of local business, emerging civil society and even children): cultural and social values and symbols continue their existence to the present day, serving the current needs of their practitioners.

2.2. Making sense of borders, boundaries, borderscapes and borderlands.

Studying contemporary borders, I am bringing together two approaches: the more traditional geographical/political, and, anthropological perspectives on dynamic, processual borders. A prolific field of border studies has been enriched by the critical exploration and application of the term ‘borderscape’ reflecting the processual shift from borders understood as territorial dividing lines and political institutions, to focus on the dynamic nature of the border that involves the ‘re/doing’ of border practices by local people (Cf. Brambilla 2015a, b). In this thesis, among other themes, I explore the

processes of importing values and knowledge and how this happens in day-to-day life through different practices resulting in part in the perpetuation of cultural cross-border stereotypes and considering ways in which the construction of the border is intersected with the construction of 'the Other.' Finally, I consider the in/visible borders and the ways in which they relate to subjectivity. The rich conceptual repertoire of border studies is insightfully explored by R. Shields in his *Boundary-Thinking in Theories of the Present* (2006) and in his paper *Land, Line, Locus: How a Line Becomes a Border* (2002); as well as Fassin (2011), on policing borders; F. Barth (1969) on ethnic groups and boundaries; Das V., Poole D. (2004), on the borderlands anthropology. On border identities, see Brambilla (2007) and Cohen (2000).

Although my anthropological research focused mostly on social and cultural borders, I do not turn my back on the fact that the Russian-Karelian border is perforated by political and economic relations that trigger the construction of social and cultural boundaries between the two countries. Exploring the local identity, I conclude that *Gemeinschaft*, or the sense of belonging, has not unified Karelia and Finland, and that local people's affiliation with the state is much stronger than allegiance to the Barents Region or Euroregion Karelia.

From the functionalist perspective (D. Mitrany, 1965), the 'softening' of the border results from the ties between people living on the both sides of it, their social and business contacts. Bottom-up processes are seen essential for the integration, to which my research concurs: the regional formations that started as top-to-bottom initiatives, are not the primary point of reference for Karelians. At the same time, the scope of international cooperation with Finland and other Nordic countries has been active and prolific, which contributes to good neighborly relations. Strong legal, cultural and social affiliation of Karelians with the Russian state, on the one hand, and apparently, similar

attitudes of state affiliation on the Finnish side of the border contribute to competitiveness in business and trade between the regions as well as between their capital cities. Similar to other cities and contrary to national affairs, Petrozavodsk is quite limited in its self-government, which means, in words of Peterson that the interaction between individual cities across the border becomes “issueless politics” (Peterson, 1981, p.115).

The anthropological perspective on borders simultaneously zooms in to consider individual cases and processes of border crossing (by everything which can be mobile: people, merchandise, ideas, values and projects) and expands the bi-dimensional geopolitical treatment of the border as a concept. Recent proliferation of studies that rely on newly understood concepts of border, boundary, frontier, borderland and borderscape speaks to the diverse and complex relations that develop in the borderlands as well as theoretical tools that allow to problematize and analyze these relations (Krasteva in Brambilla, 2016, p.14).

In my empirical chapters about the dynamics of the international cooperative project W.A.S.T.E. I am exploring the practical application of Anssi Paasi’s idea that boundaries are not exclusive to geographical border areas but can be found in “wider social practices and discourses all around societies.” He continues, “Boundaries are part of the material and discursive practices/processes by which the territorialities of societies are produced and reproduced” (Paasi, 2005, p.669). In my analysis of the processual and power dynamics within the project team in Petrozavodsk, I deeply relate to Van Hotum punch line, “Borders are not imagined or real, but rather imagined and *therefore real*” (van Hotum 2012, p.34, cursive mine). Cooperative projects in business and healthcare, projects concerned with social and cultural exchange and events are the important domain and day-to-day activity in the Ministry of Economic development of Karelia, in

Petrozavodsk municipality and in the Petrozavodsk State University. Essential part of these projects are efforts made to overcome the social and cultural barriers between the project participants on the two sides of the state border, which is at the same time, the state border and a separation line between the two cultures, languages, political and social systems as well as religious/secular traditions. However, what is fundamental for my perspective is that even within a seemingly homogeneous group of the project participants from the Russian side, invisible (and imagined) boundaries evolved that were far more subtle than political boundaries. This interest in discursive processes and practices is a result of the research shift in border studies that can be succinctly described as the “transition from the concept of border to that of bordering” (Brambilla, 2015, p.15).

2.3. A fractals/nesting concept in Anthropology

As distinguished from geographical and political frontiers, less tangible borders emerged between the Russian participants of the project W.A.S.T.E. that was my case study. It kept peeping out on different levels, which led me to the idea that fractals, or the ‘nesting’ concept was a perfect lens to understanding the social and class boundaries within the supposedly homogeneous group of Petrozavodsk citizens involved in the same cross-border project. In this context, the construction of the Other, marking home from foreign, are reproduced on ever smaller scales. The anthropological application of the idea of fractals, the ‘nesting’ concept and recursiveness are insightfully developed in works by Susan Gal, Milica Bakic-Hayden and James W. Fernandez. However, my research has its limits in terms of class and class lifestyle as well as status contradictions. I did my fieldwork with more highly educated people who were also well integrated and professionally employed in positions who were adding value to society. However,

my data might have been very different had I focused on less educated lower-class respondents. It is worth to note that higher education in the present-day Russia does not automatically imply a decent income; in fact, school teachers whom I interviewed, are among the less fortunate professionals who experience budget cuts and lower salaries.

Susan Gal in her article *Bartok's Funeral: Representations of Europe in Hungarian Political Rhetoric* (1991) develops the idea of recursiveness, and the uses of fractals as originally developed in mathematics, applying them to social sciences, to describe how a society-originated opposition splits into ever smaller units. She explains, "The dichotomy has a recursive quality, being reproducible on each side of the opposition and in ever-smaller social units" (Gal 1991:444.) By this, she refers to the opposition between Europe-oriented Hungarians and Hungarian nationalists. However, the situation became complicated because within the group of Hungarian nationalists there were those who were considered 'more nationalist' as well as those who were 'less nationalist'. The author argues that this kind of recursiveness touches smaller and smaller units within the nationalist group and finally ends as a set of oppositions within one Individual who is drawn toward Europe and feels sympathy to nationalistic ideas, all at the same time.

Milica Bakic-Hayden in *Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia* (1995), skillfully applies the concepts of cultural constructions, traditional dichotomies and ultimately, the 'nesting' concept that resembles of Russian dolls and which is very similar to 'fractals' within the nationalistic ideology as analyzed by Susan Gal. In Bakic-Hayden's approach, Serbia can be viewed as a southern part of Europe; however, within Serbia, the division to the imagined north and south are further replicated, accompanied by stereotypes of northerness and southerness. On a larger scale, the same kind of cultural

stereotypical opposition regarding the position on the map of Europe, characterizes Italy vs. Norway, for example. Zooming in, within the tiny local 'south' within Serbia we can find yet another stereotypical division into even smaller 'south' and 'north' with the same kinds of prejudice regarding northern practicality in opposition to southern laziness, even where the distance between these two locations is no more than one hundred kilometers.

And finally, James W. Fernandez in his *Andalusia on our Minds: Two Contrasting Places in Spain as Seen in a Vernacular Poetic Duel of the Later 19th Century* (1988) demonstrates a similar treatment of the same idea of fractals. However, he does this through different ethnographic materials: the poetry produced in Andalusia and Asturias, the local 'north' and 'south' are constructed by the local people as possessing predetermined contrasting qualities.

Through my own research, I observed fascinating processes with respect to the borderlines within Karelian society's shifting, stretching and shrinking frames depending on the context. The borderlines proved to be extremely flexible, expanding and contracting on multiple, fractal, scales: from the construction of 'the Other' across the border between the nation states and cooperative regions, to less visible borderlands between individuals who share the same nationality and cultural background, which happened in the cooperative project W.A.S.T.E. The nesting concept/approach is applicable on several layers, from geopolitical macro borders to the tiniest boundaries reproduced on a flowerbed to delineate the 'control zones' of the flower planters. Karelia is a part of several international cooperative regions such as Euroregion Karelia, the Barents Euro Arctic Region, and the Baltic Sea Region. On a smaller scale, Karelia is an active member of twofold cooperation with Nordic countries, especially Finland, while Petrozavodsk has friendly social and business relations with multiple sister cities around the world. The theoretical potential of the nesting concept makes us realize that

cooperation (and sometimes conflicts) occur and reproduce themselves on different scales, from national to social.

2.4. Spatiality and the sense of place.

In Part II, I take my reader for a walk. I take them to explore with me the social urban space populated and performed by postsocialist *flâneurs*; the space marked by central shopping malls and (not so humble anymore) second-hand stores; the space claimed and transformed by the border location of Karelia and the multiple identities of its people who actively manipulate the vectors of the crossing powers of European integration and regionalism, the federal centers in Moscow and St. Petersburg cultural and scientific tides. The spatialization of the border manifests itself in monuments and gendered practices of consumption, in local social practices of dividing and differentiating along the nesting borders within the geographical and political borderland. The space here goes far beyond the capitalist cost of square meters; engaging other parameters such as bodies and objects, the local space produces a particular sense of belonging and identity (Cf. L. Martin and A. Paasi on spatialities of transnational lived citizenship; A. Paasi and K. Zimmerbauer on penumbral borders and planning paradoxes, 2016; R. Shields on spatialization and reflective modernity, 2006).

Although Petrozavodsk is not a border town per se (being located within 200 km from the Russian-Finnish border), as the capital of the *border entity*, the Republic of Karelia, it is simultaneously an object and a subject of active place-making from the grassroots and marketing from the top. The 'borderland' can hardly be perceived as an objective spatial category but rather as a fluid one, and "fundamentally relational" (Scott 2010, p.125). At the same time, without borders there is no territory, and the place would not emerge, as a scene of cooperation, contestation, and appropriation. Through my involvedness in the

local life, I am exploring the cultural and social values that are attached to a place(s), social meanings that point at the appropriation of space by different categories of citizens. Besides the place identities as perceived by the local people, I employ the concept of peripherality as analyzed by Paasi in his article *The Social Construction of Peripherality: The Case of Finland and the Finnish-Russian border area* (1995). Paasi warns against understanding peripherality and its conceptual counterpart, center, as a taken for granted dichotomy but instead, he advocates for extending this conceptual field to realize that a geographical periphery is not necessarily an economically weak region but can enjoy vibrant development. The nesting concept is applicable here as well, as far as the center-periphery dialectic relation can be reproduced on different spatial scales.

2.5. The gender lenses.

The well-developed accounts of the difference in experience of transformations by men and women have been documented, among others, by Bloch 2004, Humphry 1998, Gal & Kligman 2000 and Brednikova 2009, 2010, Kulmala 2010. In this thesis, I provided a gendered lens to track down the everyday strategies and cultural values of different types of women: unemployed mothers, school and kindergarten teachers, government and municipal officials. However, it was not my intention to focus on women's experiences more than those of men. While about thirty percent of my informants or liaisons were men, during my field work, it happened that the professionals who were engaged in the international projects that I was interested in were mostly women. Insofar as I preserved a balance in the involvement of both genders in my overall exploration of the local life, I did not focus on women exclusively and did not come to the field with a strong feminist position, my thesis does not fall under the formal category of feminist ethnography.

Nevertheless, my involvement in networking through online women's forums revealed that these online community members shared a strong common motherhood identification; this realization gave me an impetus to explore this area of women's interactions more deeply, which was not planned beforehand.

2.6. Why waste? The change of my initially intended target group.

After I first arrived to the field, I changed both the topic and the framing of my research four times, based on the data I was finding and the directions in which my understanding of the local realities took me. At the time of my candidacy exam, I planned to research the cooperative international projects in Karelia that targeted families and aimed to solidify them as units as well as empowering individual members. With a strong focus of the federal government on family policies in 2009-2011, I expected to find an abundance of various projects developed together with Karelia's northern neighbors, but I did not find any. After I met with several officials from the Ministry of the Economic Development of Karelia and the Ministry of Health, I found out that families as such were not targeted by either the official ministerial policies, or by the cross-border cooperative programs and projects. As was explained to me, only 'problematic' families were on the ministerial and municipal radar (while specific inner problems were dealt with individually), and not the 'ordinary' families whose lives I hoped to learn more about, through the magnifying glass of transboundary cooperation.

What did not change from my original plan was my strong interest in 'average' Russian people. With the classical urge in anthropology to study the exotic Other, marginalized groups, all kinds of minorities, and in the Russian context, the preference of the western anthropologist of remote peripheral locations, the places of compact

residence of ethnic minorities, I sensed that the ‘average’ Russians are underrepresented and even silenced. I assumed that this category of the Russian population, whose ‘powerful’ position has been taken for granted because of their being the titular ethnic group, this mainstream Russian population – was carrying out its own battle whose story is rarely told.

Thanks to the generous help from the analysts at the Ministry of Economic Development of Karelia, I received the lists of all international projects carried out in Karelia in the years 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013, along with information about partners and funding. Here are the areas of cooperation between Karelian and foreign partners: agriculture, health (control of smoking, alcohol and drug abuse among young people, HIV/AIDS awareness programs), projects on “development of entrepreneurship culture in education,” projects supporting small business, emergency response, environmental protection, culture and tourism, science and education, organization of festivals and festive events, and so on. After careful review of all these projects, I chose two to focus on. The first project was W.A.S.T.E., which stands for Waste Awareness: Sorting, Treatment, Education, while the second one aimed to promote and develop entrepreneurship among students of the Pedagogical College in Petrozavodsk. While I carefully collected the rich data for both projects, for this thesis, I decided to focus on the W.A.S.T.E. project, mainly, from feasibility considerations.

So, why waste? Out of all available projects that were planned for 2011, I found the project W.A.S.T.E. to be the most appealing for several reasons. First, it spoke to my deep and long-standing interest in children (as one of the targeted groups of the project). Second, it addressed the revival of recycling which presented a clear continuity of the formerly wide-spread Soviet tradition of collecting paper, cardboard, glass and metal for post-consumer recycling that was lost in the transition after the dissolution of the Soviet

Union. Third, the project was big enough for me to observe various kinds of relations and dynamics within it. Fourth, when I met with the project manager, she was just about to start the application process to get funding; the previous pilot project on the introduction of recycling in two model condominiums was successful, which let us believe that an extended follow-up project would be a significant step forward in the changing of the situation with waste management in Petrozavodsk. She and I connected quite well; she was very positive about my research and my role of a volunteer, so it seemed like a good start. And finally, the timing was perfect: after the project was successfully accepted and funded, I was able to start following it from different angles: observing, interviewing and analyzing documents from the very start without missing any stages.

Apart from these practical considerations, the topic of waste/ garbage/ rubbish/ litter is important for anthropology, and, it spoke well to my purpose of exploring the borders and boundaries emergent in the Karelian society. Garbage serves as a perfect spatial marker that divides home from foreign, inside from outside, and effectively signals, by provoking uneasiness or conflict (and this is exactly what happened during the project W.A.S.T.E. regarding some adults' opposition to the idea of sorting school/kindergarten waste "with children's hands") – when some invisible cultural boundary was crossed. In her seminal work, *Purity and Danger* (1966), Mary Douglas stated that elimination of dirt reflects our constructive aspiration to order and organize the world around us. By reordering, reshaping, reconfiguring our environment, we translate it in accordance with our concept concerning it. Environmental initiatives – whether from Petrozavodsk municipality, or pushed by the local environmentally-oriented political party *Yabloko* [Apple], or developed through the international cooperation, or coming from the grassroots – have been unwinding with fascinating vigor and enthusiasm. I was fortunate enough to witness, observe and contribute to one of the first official attempts to

reorganize the urban landscape, and along with it, to reorder (or make emerge) local in/visible cultural and social values that became salient.

'Waste' has also been used as a productive metaphor in anthropology. In the edited volume, *Breaching Borders: Art, Migrants and the Metaphor of Waste*, waste is explored as a metaphor for migrant identity. The idea of waste is applied allegorically as "the traces of debris left behind by the logic of mobility" (Nadja Stamselberg and Juliet Steyn 2016). Zigmunt Bauman, contributing to this volume, starts his exploration of the analytical potential of this concept with reference to the tragic death of Walter Benjamin, who was just one day away from safely escaping across the border, a powerful illustration of a prominent scholar as a refugee, a human. His work on Parisian arcades became an inspiration for my walking tour of Petrozavodsk, the *flânerie*, that I offer to my reader in Chapter 4. Concerned with the production of "wasted humans" and the "compulsive and obsessive" modernization responsible for never-ending generations of heaps of garbage (in direct sense) shipped to the global south, Bauman reminds us that today's economic and social processes are inseparable from the environmental problems that mount up rapidly. As long as the irresponsible and implacable consumption continues in its current pattern, the problem of waste/garbage will be acute, and thus, anthropological studies of waste recycling practices and people's responses to recycling and other waste management initiatives will occupy their steady niche, to which I have contributed as well. Another study that comes from the *Breaching Borders* volume that I find particularly relevant to my work, was done by Peter Mörtenböck. In his article, *Network Economy of Waste* (2016), the author analyzes the developing informal network of waste producers and waste utilizers that bypasses the formal authorities and institutions. Informal networks and the use of connections are tokens of post/socialist societies; with no signs of dying out, informal networking has transformed and modified during the last

couple of decades, yet keeping its function of solidifying the social fabric (see chapter 13). Summarizing the critical and innovative contribution of this anthology, in her review of the *Breaching Borders*, Chiara Brambilla points out that it adds to “the problematizing of the intersection between processes and practices of b/ordering and othering, and what can be defined as processes of in/visibilization” (Brambilla 2016:273). In this thesis, I have tried to show how similar processes and practices can emerge and become salient in the Russian-Finnish borderland.

PART II.

Visible PTZ.

Chapter 3.

Exploring urban social spaces.

In a small peripheral town,
Where spring smells of gas,
All quiet and calm around,
Sweet dreams to you, jaded folk.⁴



Figure 2 - The building of Petrozavodsk railway station with the name of the city on top: in Russian on the left and in Karelian/Finnish on the right. Photo credit: KP, 2009.

⁴ First stanza of the song “S dobrym utrom, lyubimaya!/[Good morning, my darling!] by Oleg Mityaev, a Russian singer-songwriter; album *Summer is a Little Life* (1996).

Петрозаводск in Russian, transcribed as *Petrozavodsk* in English, or *Petroskoi* in Karelian and Finnish, emerges before a traveler's eyes as a transitory junction of the October Railway or RZhD ('Russian Railway') with connections to Moscow, St. Petersburg, Murmansk and domestic Karelian Kostomuksha in the north and Sortavala in the east. A regular train has been running from the Petrozavodsk station to Joensuu, Finland, since 2012. Arrival by train continues to be the most common way of crossing regional or state borders; even if one travels by bus, they are dropped off at the railway station. The name of the city in three languages (Russian, Karelian and Finnish) becomes the first visible marker of political affiliation and ethnic/cultural identity (-ies). The very pass-through position of the station – as opposed to the final stop of the train at the physical dead-end in larger cities like St. Petersburg, Murmansk or even smaller Yaroslavl' – suggests the medium level of strategic importance of this place as well as its perceived peripherality and provinciality. These latter two attributes are addressed and contested in settings as diverse as the local parliament hearing, as when a question of position of Karelia within the Russian Federation is brought up, and in as private a space as one's kitchen. Intended to sketch the scene, this introductory piece offers a quick sense-induced walk along the city streets. It relies more on perceptions of sight, hearing and (occasionally) smell than on any background information or preconceived knowledge. The most vivid encounters that occurred during this *flânerie*⁵ shape the bulk of this introduction.

⁵ My use of the notion of the *flâneur* alludes to works of the French poet and essayist Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) and a German Jewish thinker, philosopher and cultural critic Walter Benjamin (1892-1940). C. Baudelaire is credited for the and invention of the terms *flâneur* and *flânerie* which basically mean "a wandering observer" and "a stroll for pleasure without any specific aim." W. Benjamin picked up these terms for discussion of contemporary urban experiences and their impacts on human psyche and behavior. As Franz Hessel put it, "*Flanerie* is a kind of reading of the street, in which faces, shop fronts, shop windows, cafes, terraces, street cars, automobiles and trees become a wealth of equally valid letters of the alphabet that together result in words, sentences and pages of an ever-new book. To engage in *flânerie*, one must not have anything too definite in mind" (David Frisby "The Flâneur in Social Theory", citation of Franz Hessel, p.81, in "The Flaneur", edited by Keith Tester.) Later, these concepts proved to be

Toponyms in both Petrozavodsk and Karelia seem to be designed to puzzle a newcomer, to challenge their sense of identity. Newcomers claiming good communicative competence in the local context and attempting to pronounce Karelian place names in one breath are bound to provoke a patronizing smile from a taxi driver, the self-ratified wheeled connoisseur of city streets. Spelled out in Cyrillic to produce a standardized look and be intuitively understandable to Russian speakers, historic Karelian place names are tricky in terms of syllabic stress. It follows different logic than its Russian counterpart, making it virtually impossible to get right on the first try for native Russian speakers (not to mention foreigners). One of the most notable cases of place names that are mispronounced consistently is that of the island of **Kizhi** [kizhi] which Russian-speaking tourists are tempted to call **Kizhi** [kizhì]. Saying it correctly, without it grating on local ears, grants one the title of the insider in the community. People say that some twenty years ago, the plates on houses with street names and shop signs were dubbed in Karelian and Finnish which added a special 'European' flavor to this place and boosted the local pride; later, the signs were removed. "Not sure why... those higher up were concerned about the rise of nationalism and separatism back in the nineties... It still feels as if my eyes were stripped of something dear to them and I lost something."⁶ Looking with fresh eyes and tenaciously absorbing every detail, I was not aware something important was missing from the local landscape. Walking along the main

productive for theorizing urban life in anthropology, sociology, urban studies and urban art (like photography), architecture, literature, philosophy, etc. I find these terms useful for understanding and constructing my own experience as an ethnographer. I like to think that I was first exploring my field site in a similar way as *flâneurs* did, strolling and roaming around the city, attentive to details and the spirit of place that would reveal itself. The concept of *flânerie* is quite elusive; I use the idea of it in the next chapter. There is no equivalent to this word/concept in the English language, and that is why the French original is used.

⁶ Alexander L., about 40 years old, my incident acquaintance from a local marketplace; I was buying vegetables from him on regular basis for several months.

street in Petrozavodsk (which still preserves its Soviet name of *Lenin Street*) as it runs from the railway station down to the Onega quay, it is easy to marvel at the monumental Stalinist architecture of social realism – solemn, spacious and prestigious residential houses. Wooden homes have survived on smaller streets – all equipped to fulfill the demands of everyday life - with electric heating and running water. When looking for an apartment to rent, I considered a wooden house for a while: I was lured by its reduced price. It looked quite old and most authentic with spots of paint peeling off the walls and antique furniture, suggesting a rich past, which excited me. My new local acquaintances talked me out of it, pointing to unreliable heating and accidents involving gas leakages, as reasons for me to make another choice. Other options for a residential dwelling included apartment houses made of concrete blocks from the 1980s, as well as quite new buildings, only about ten years old, and even more recent constructions. However, in all types of residential houses one can find a specific type of remodeling, the one that acquired the name of *evroremont* (which is a European-type interior design). One of its key features is the integration of the kitchen and the living room into one space.

Krisztina Fehérváry, an American anthropologist of Hungarian origin, did compelling research on the interconnections between the political agenda and changing material culture of domestic space in Soviet Hungary that transformed into new aesthetics of the emerged modern middle class. She explored homes, their interior designs (prevailing materials and colors) during and after the ‘system change.’ This term was used in Hungary instead, of Russian term ‘transition’ pertaining to the 1990s. Her fieldwork data suggests that the shift in design to the opening of space between the kitchen and living area ‘in the American fashion’ (as referred to by Hungarians) was welcomed and praised by locals. She concludes that this design-architectural change was beneficial for family life “allowing the mother/wife to be engaged with the family while she cooked, even if this

meant watching television” (Fehérváry 2013, p. 236). The Euro-style, or the American-style open space of united kitchens and living rooms with a broken wall between them marched through the postsocialist Eastern European countries with their Soviet legacy of typical apartment buildings. At the same time, the local perspectives on such redesigning are not uniform and are subject to change, once experienced. Like Hungarians, many Petrozavodsk citizens longed for the larger living space that can be created through breaking the dividing wall between the two areas. I remember shiny interior design magazines displayed in windows of Petrozavodsk kiosks, with the same titles as in my home city of Odessa, Ukraine: *Design & Interior*, *Interior & Décor*, *House & Interior*, etc. The early ‘fat zeros’ became the time when western concepts of an ideal home congested Russian print media met the local people’s financial possibility to actually recreate them. Anastasiya, 50 years old, showed me stacks of interior design magazines from late 1990s that she was saving, in hopes to use them when the time comes to remodel her apartment. From time to time, she would go back to look through her most cherished pictures. She has never had the means to actually remodel her apartment, so it was her daughter who achieved this ambition with her own apartment after she got married and moved out.

Despite striving for redesigning homes and transforming the same number of square meters into the seemingly bigger living space, I noticed much nostalgia among those Petrozavodians whose living conditions considerably improved – nostalgia for the old-fashioned, detached kitchens. While “American kitchens and renovated bathrooms... incorporate Hungarians into an imagined world and lifestyle beyond Hungary’s borders” (ibid.: 237), the remodeled space helped Hungarians fit in the larger European context and have a ‘normal’ life (although the ‘normalcy’ repeatedly came up in her interviews, it had a distinct meaning for different people. ‘Normal’ life has been an important concept

for the Russian people as well: see Ledeneva 1998, 2006.) The imagined connection between a removed wall and a step towards Europe can be traced in Karelia as well. At the same time, it clearly comes into conflict with other established values concerning organized domestic space and family life.

After having a family dinner at my friend's apartment in one of those new houses with *evroremont* where her family moved about a month ago, children drifted away into the two bedrooms to play with toy cars and watch TV. Her husband occupied a sofa in front of the 'adult TV' in the living room, so Olya and I were left to each other's company to chat. We sat at a bar stand in the kitchen and tried to talk but it was virtually impossible because of the noise from both TVs, children's voices and her husband's request for yet another cup of tea. There was no privacy for us and she lamented, "It's great to have this new apartment, you know it's bigger than the old one, you've been there... and it looks cool with all this Euro-style, and the breakfast bar... no one of my friends has such a thing (chuckles). But I miss my tiny private kitchen so much! Remember how we used to close the door and enjoy talking as if the clock stopped. Here I feel like an orphan, or like I was fooled and tricked, and will never have even a *corner* for myself anymore." Another friend, Sofia, a mother of three, was a journalist who worked from home at that time to take care of her children, just moved to the downtown. Her husband, a programmer, was remotely employed in a Moscow firm and was getting Moscow-rate wages. She shared, "We moved here to be closer to the kids' schools and kindergarten. Yes, they all are in a walking distance, but when you must take multiple trips, it all adds up, and I get very tired at the end of the day." She and I used to spend quite a lot of time in her 'normal' and quite spacious kitchen (which was a separate room with a door) talking about all kinds of things, doing other activities at the same time – cooking dinner, feeding our children, her husband, washing the dishes, drinking tea and looking out of the window.

We never closed the door as there was no point in doing so: every minute someone was wanting to break in. My other male friends also preferred the kitchen for intimate talking “about life, not sausages” – and, for having more or less uninterrupted conversations, as kids tend to bug their mothers instead of fathers.

It seems like the ‘American-style’ for Hungarians (as researched by K. Fehérváry), or ‘Euro-style’ for Russians, open kitchen (sometimes called a kitchen-studio) did not quite connect with postsocialist homes and transgressed the borders to conquer Mediterranean ones. David Sutton, who conducted studies of the everyday life on the small Greek island of Kalymnos, noticed that in recent years, new homes have been constructed with a new design where “this area [the living room] also opened directly onto the kitchen, which is how kitchens tend to be incorporated into homes in more recent times (in the past kitchens being a separate room outside of the main house), with a corridor leading to an indoor bathroom.” (Sutton 2008, p. 96). The redesigned home space led to changes in family dynamics, especially between generations, that was more about separation than dependence and reliance on each other.

Krisztina Fehérváry expressly denounces Soviet kitchen design for its far-reaching implications for healthy family life as experienced in these spaces: “Socialist-era apartments had long been criticised for destroying the extended family, while small kitchens discouraged practices like family meals where everyone can sit down at once” (ibid.: 211). She further develops this idea to suggest that the Soviet system at large devalued large families and the spending of time collectively with one’s family members. However, I would be cautious with judgements like that, possibly limiting them to specific Hungarian communist party policies. I would first argue that these ‘tiny kitchens’ should be regarded as only one point on the timescale of ever-changing living conditions in socialist, and later, postsocialist cities. Fehérváry does not really give the context of

dwelling standards specific to kitchens in urban spaces *prior* to the time when the Soviet regime came to Hungary. In fact, the very city that she chose to be her main field site was very young and did not exist before the Soviet times, being one of the construction projects of the Hungarian Communist Party. For Russia, and Karelia in particular, the harsh reality of communal apartments was an indispensable part of everyday life, or *byt*, which became a widely-known term in Russian socialist and postsocialist studies. The ups and downs of living in a Soviet-style *communalka* (a commonly accepted shortened way of saying ‘communal apartment’ in Russian)⁷ was addressed in a number of literary works by Soviet poets, essayists and novelists like Ilf and Petrov in their famous novel *The Twelve Chairs* (1928). Later, a few screen versions of it were made, including the American one in 1970. Thus, acquisition of a private kitchen in a private apartment was a definitive step forward in relation to communal lives in communal kitchens which started to gradually disappear in 1980s. As one of Svitlana Alexievich’s interlocutors shared, “Russian kitchen... Shabby *khruschob*⁸ kitchen of nine to twelve (oh blessing!)

⁷ A communal apartment is an apartment shared by several families, each of them occupying one of more rooms. Communal apartments were privatized during the *Perestroika* (the transition period of 1990s) with tenants moving out to other living places, houses or apartments, through all kinds of arrangements. However, a number of communal apartments survived well through 2000s all around Russia as well as in some cities in Ukraine (I can speak safely about Odessa) for different reasons. For example, when a communal apartment was occupied by separate individuals who after privatization could not afford their own, even small, apartment, they would continue to share their apartment, all being official owners of it with equal or different shares. Another case that I witnessed in Petrozavodsk was a communal apartment in a Stalin-era house, with high ceilings (that was and still is considered a luxury – when someone tells you that they bought an apartment, you are expected to ask what the height of the ceilings are), five spacious rooms, a large bathroom, and a huge kitchen. Four families shared it back in 2011, with the corridor/hall used as a common storage space and a parking lot for baby strollers, bikes, and scooters.

⁸ A compound word (lingv.) made up of two roots, *khrusch* (comes from the name of Nikita Khrushchov, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union after Josef Stalin’s death in 1953 until his removal from the office in 1964). The second root *schob* comes from the word *truschoby*, or slums. This compound is a word play meaning cramped conditions of the new apartments engineered for Soviet citizens during the time of Khrushchov’s being in power. Another meaning of *truschoby* refers to the fact that these apartments were initially designed and built as temporary dwelling for 25 years at most, but then the time of their service was repeatedly prolonged until they decayed completely. In 1980s, *khrushchovki* (another way of naming the same type of apartments, without any negative connotation, refers only to Khrushchov’s initiative to build

square meters, toilet over a thin wall. Soviet design. On the windowsill – growing green onion in a mayonnaise can, in a pot – aloe for colds. For us, kitchen is not only the place for cooking food but also a dining room, a living room, an office and a tribune. Place for collective psychotherapeutic sessions. Thank you Khrushchov! It was during his rule that we came out of communal apartments, acquired personal kitchens, where we could scold the regime, and most important – not to be scared to do it, because in the kitchen there are only ‘us’, the insiders” (Alexievich 2013:13)⁹.

The other factor to consider when evaluating impacts of apartment designs on daily family life in the Soviet and postsoviet context is the ideological distinction between different home spaces in different epochs. A clash between bourgeois beliefs about the designation of each room in a house and post-Revolutionary reality of the housing shortage (which existed before the 1917 Revolution but became more acute with industrialization that followed the sharp increase in urban population) is well illustrated in the novel by Michael Bulgakov, *The Heart of a Dog* (1925). A world class neurosurgeon and professor is having a heated debate with the head of a new house management committee member who tries to expropriate several rooms of his apartment in accordance

them) were modified to have separate bedrooms in two-bedroom apartments, separate bathrooms (small closed sections – one with a toilet and one with a sink and a tub), and bigger kitchens.

⁹ Svetlana Alexievich is a contemporary Ukrainian-Belorussian non-fiction writer who writes in the Russian language, a Noble prize winner in Literature in 2015. She is the author of books about the Great Patriotic War (Eastern Front of World War II), Chernobyl, Afghanistan war, and lately – about Russian love. To me, her books are touchy, sensual and almost heartbreaking due to the style that she developed after her Belorussian predecessor and teacher, a writer Ales Adamovich. He has been calling this peculiar style different names trying to convey its essence as precise as possible and came up with ‘composite/inclusive novel’, ‘novel-oratorio’, ‘novel-witness’, ‘people speaking for themselves,’ and so on. The idea is to capture reality the way people perceive it, through their stories and confessions; it is a genre of human voices, ‘documents of human soul.’ Alexievich does not use her own voice as a writer almost at all, compiling a mosaic of voices she heard in her extended journeys around the former USSR. Her official website called *Voices of the Utopia Country* can be found here <http://www.alexievich.info/> (last accessed on January 12, 2017).

with the party agenda of reallocation of living space in houses of former nobility to those in need.

“The professor turns to the committee poignantly, “To partake of food in the bedroom,” he began in slightly muffled voice, “to read in the consulting room, to get dressed in the reception room, to perform operations in the maid’s room and to examine patients in the dining room. I can well believe that Isadora Duncan does so [His adversary just mentioned that even Isadora Duncan has fewer rooms than the professor does]. Possibly she has dinner in the study and dissects rabbits in the bathroom. But I am not Isadora Duncan!” – he roared suddenly, and the crimson turned yellow. “I will continue to dine in the dining room and operate in the operating theatre. Inform the general meeting of this and I would humbly request you to get back to your own business and leave me to go on partaking of my meals where all *normal* people do so, that is in the dining room and not in the hall and not in the nursery” (Bulgakov 1990: 15).

Indeed, even though apartments in the years to follow were lacking specially designated dining-rooms, in case the kitchen was tiny, it was common to dine in the living-room and to set up a big table that would fit the whole family at least once a day, usually for dinner.¹⁰ When set against the background of specific historical reality, I regard private kitchens in private apartments, however small, as a step forward in the development of living conditions, rather than them being a sign of stagnation as suggested by Fehérváry. Most people have never reached the standards of living of pre-Revolutionary nobility; so, *gostinaya*, or living room/sitting room/reception room, often came to be called nothing other than ‘a big room,’ the name devoid of any upper-class connotations. At the same

¹⁰ This data comes from my fieldwork in Petrozavodsk in 2009, 2010-2012, and 2014, somewhat in Moscow in 2007, 2009, 2010, 2012 and 2014, as well as personal memories from my childhood in the Russian-speaking Odessa, Ukraine.

time, it implied its multi-functionality – often, living rooms were turned into bedrooms at night for some of the family members.

The epitome, the heart of the sacred domestic space – the traditional kitchen – is a place where “the soul rests and the body relaxes” (in the words of Boris, a Petrozavodian, 52 y.o.) It is still true for contemporary Russia that it is the kitchen where one invites good friends and people with whom one is comfortable; it is the living room that is reserved to host all the rest. It is the place where laments and grievances are shared over infinite cups of tea, the most painful worries aired, inter-couple problems get voiced and advice is sought.

“For as long as I remember, everyone in my family were calling the rooms in our apartment a ‘big room’ and a ‘small room.’ And we indeed were receiving guests, like friends, in the kitchen, you’re right! [addressing my previous comment]. But now the times changed, and the big room is now a living room because it’s not used as a bedroom at night anymore... Or perhaps... it’s not the times but my family – after my mom died I live here alone. But, you know what – I still receive my welcome guests in the kitchen!” (Olga, 45 y.o.)

Besides, kitchen is an escape place, almost as good as bathroom. Pavel, 77 y.o., confides,

“When I got married back in 1971, I was all excited. But soon I realized that I didn’t have my own space anywhere, anymore. It was tough. I needed to be able to be on my own without offending my wife who thought that from now on we must’ve been inseparable. She changed that perspective over time but it took a while. So, I would retreat to the bathroom with newspapers or a book, and would sit there as long as I could, having a good excuse for being on my own without arousing suspicion – it’s a bathroom, after all. We lived together with my parents, so I didn’t want to make people line up behind the door. When things were settling down for the night, I could have some quiet moments in the kitchen.”

The kitchen has been a special, functional place in a postsocialist home, and I suggest that it continues to be that way, although the function and use of it may change. It is fascinating how the kitchen is approached from different perspectives such as that of gender (where the kitchen is viewed as a women's place of power, and as a tool)¹¹, a food-making place, and a memory. David Sutton's study of everyday life on a Greek island (2008), although does not target the kitchen specifically, goes on to theorize deep links between food, memory, and nostalgia. Meah and Jackson (2016), Jerram (2006), Floyd (2004), Buckley (1996) and others produced engaging studies of the kitchen in different contexts. Meah and Jackson view the kitchen as a memory site that can be understood "as a kind of private museum" that "clearly blurs the line between public and private" (Meah and Jackson 2016: 514). Their take on kitchens as tunnels through which the family memory is channeled considers these "intensely personal spaces in which encounters with food and other objects play a role in mobilizing the sensory, haptic and kinetic dimensions of memory" (ibid.: 514), is applicable to Karelian context and would be an interesting study to undertake. As a final remark regarding domestic spaces, I want to point out that postsocialist kitchens have a history of helping generations of anthropologists collect their data. Such core researchers of postsocialist Russia (and what is important here, of mainstream Russians) as Nancy Ries and Dale Pesmen appreciated the kitchen as ideal space created for intimate conversations, fieldworker's insights and bonding friendships. In the foreword to the Russian edition of her classical study *Russian Talk: Culture and Conversation During Perestroika* (1997), Nancy Ries

¹¹ For more research on kitchens, women, cooking and kitchens' manifestations in daily life see the following articles published in the special issue of *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, 2006. 13(6): Maria Elisa Christie *Kitchenspace: Gendered Territory in Central Mexico* (pp.653-661); *A Feminist Explanation of Community Kitchens in Peru and Bolivia* by Kathleen Schroeder (pp.663-668); and *The 'Kitchen' as a Women's Space in Rural Hausaland, Northern Nigeria* by Elsbeth Robson (pp.669-676).

writes, “My special thanks go to N.N. Kulakova, with whom I discussed my work a lot. I was in Moscow in 1997 when my book saw the light [in the USA, K.P.] and I received my first copies in the mail. Natasha and I were sitting in her *kitchen* when the postman brought them, and this was a happy moment that summoned our cooperative work” (Ries 2004, Russian edition of the *Russian Talk*, emphasis mine). Mentioning kitchens is common in Dale Pesmen’s *Russia and Soul: An Exploration* (2004). This is how she describes the context of talks with one of her key informants, “Anna Viktorovna, a small, modest, spirited woman in whose kitchen I spent days, if not weeks, and whom I almost never saw outside that *kitchen*...” (Pesmen, 2000, p.22).

I devote Part II of this thesis to spatialization and sense of place in Petrozavodsk. On the city scale, I explore what it means to be a Petrozavodian, to live a life of a local, and more so, a female local. I weave it together using three major threads of different colors: the act, or performance, of walking (*flâneuring*) the streets of Petrozavodsk, networking through consumption practices, and active participation of seemingly still objects like sculptures and monuments, in everyday life of Petrozavodians.

In Chapter 5, I discuss the concept of *flâneur* and *flânerie* in terms of their applicability to the modern postsocialist realm of Petrozavodsk. I approach the *flâneur* as an ethnographer, an urban detective, seeing myself in this role. I also offer a somewhat unexpected interpretation of who might be considered the true local postsocialist *flâneurs* – the counterparts of Baudelairian strollers.

Suddenly discovered through revelatory incidents during my fieldwork, online consumption practices of local mothers open the window to deeper layers of social life. Being part of the local landscape, second-hand stores try to compete with the sometimes-unaffordable malls and stores for children’s clothes. However, a more successful scheme of personalized buying and selling of used apparel is to be found online. Connections

established through participation in online shopping communities prove to be an effective means for women's networking, helping with the exchange of gifts and favors, finding a job, swapping places in kindergartens, etc. (Chapter 6).

Finally, landmarks like sculptures and monuments are a notable part of local everyday life and local landscape. While Henry Lefebvre viewed monuments from a semiotic perspective - rather as alienated signs than objects, I suggest that sculptures in Petrozavodsk reach out to viewers, providing a means of active engagement for people in their daily spatial practices. At the same time, the monuments that are left as a legacy of the Soviet era also find their niche and work as a part of organic whole: the sculpture-monumental landscape of the city (See chapter 7).

Chapter 4. *Flâneuring* Petrozavodsk streets.

4.1. Introduction.

“Take it, take it in, take in more every weekend, every day, and quickly it becomes the theater that intrigues, relaxes, fascinates, seduces, and above all expands any mind focused on it. Outside lies utterly ordinary space open to any casual explorer willing to find the extraordinary. Outside lies unprogrammed awareness that at times becomes directed serendipity. Outside lies magic...”

(John R. Stilgoe, *Outside Lies Magic: Regaining History And Awareness in Everyday Places.*)

My research agenda includes joint international projects, local sense of identity, regional cooperation, sustainability, translation and transplantation of Nordic values to Karelian grounds and most importantly, crossing micro- and macro boundaries and borders. It started to evolve and take shape only after I had spent considerable time in Petrozavodsk. However, I fell for this place the moment I got off the train on my first pilot research trip there back in the summer of 2009. My enthusiastic inquiry into the sense of place and those small topics that revolve around the local everyday life was the first thing on my list, and on my mind. I was fascinated with the northern ‘white nights’ (when the dusk lasts for the whole night till morning) that invited people out for long walks along the city streets almost around the clock. Sensual breezes from the lake, soft, natural light and smellscapes of exquisite cuisine – Karelian, Russian, French... and Mexican (for some reason, there is a flourishing Mexican restaurant at the core of the Lenin street). Hilly wide and narrow boulevards take you through the downtown straight to water and the quay – in June, Petrozavodsk turns into the most cordial host that can compete with southern resorts. Warm weather, welcoming landscape and the familiar street logic of a postsocialist city transfigured my extended walks into strolls, and strolls – into what I

liked to think of as *flânerie*, an activity (in its familiar guise) of supposedly French origin, named with a French loan word, partially adapted in Russian language and pronounced as /flan'irovanie/. The concept of *flâneur* and *flânerie* inspired a body of analytic literature in social sciences and literary studies, in Western and Russian academic spaces, proving to be both charming and productive. Born in the poetic and essayistic writings of Charles Baudelaire and further developed by Walter Benjamin, the figure of the *flâneur* since then has been scrutinized and interpreted in creative and sometimes contrasting ways from multidisciplinary perspectives. I find it to be a refreshing lens through which to look at the routine situations that involve urban mobility outside one's home, starting with the situating of a contemporary urban ethnographer, and even more so, a 'native,' or 'half-native' ethnographer, which is directly relatable to my own position in Petrozavodsk. Urban anthropologists and sociologists framed re-interpretation as well as re-planting of the *flâneur* in the foreign cityscapes of London, Berlin, Los Angeles, and even Las Vegas.¹² Analytic approaches, diverse in terms of geography and the treatment of this concept, made me wonder whether the *flâneur* is translatable to the contemporary Russian field, and whether his/her counterpart – although clearly not a twin – can be found there. Russian literary critiques and social scientists seem to have fallen under the spell of Baudelaire's *flâneur* spell nearly as much as had their western colleagues,¹³ albeit their approach is analytic and retrospective (historic) rather than ethnographic.

¹²On application of the *flâneur* as a methodological concept efficient for American and European grounds, see, for example, Andrew F. Wood. 2005 "What happens [in Vegas]": Performing the PostTourist Flâneur in "New York" and "Paris", *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 25(4), 315-333 and McLaren, Peter. 1997. The Ethnographer as Postmodern *Flâneur*: Critical Reflexivity and Posthybridity as Narrative Engagement: In *Representation and the Text: Re-Framing the Narrative Voice* (W.G. Tierney and Y.S. Lincoln). The field data for his book chapter comes from Los Angeles and Berlin.

¹³ For the discussions of *flâneur* in Russian social critique, see Markov 2014 (invention of the Everyday), Porvin 2014 (Reflections on the novel by Nikolay Kononov "*Flâneur*"), etc.

The figure of the *flâneur* has an expressive romantic tint. I would agree with Alexey Porvin who, along with some other researchers, considers the modernist *flâneurie* of the times of Baudelaire as a continuation of the old motif of pilgrimage (Porvin 2014). Keith Tester in his Introduction, follows Baudelaire in his approach to the *flâneur* as a noble male urban explorer: “the observer is a prince enjoying his incognito position wherever he goes... Baudelaire’s poet claims to possess nobility in relation to all the other members of the metropolitan crowd” (Tester 1994: 4). The “Prince” can be interpreted not only as a metaphor for an individual who feels himself superior for some objective or subjective reasons, it can also be a direct allusion to the real prince (or rather, a calif), one of possible prototypes of the French *flâneur* – one of the characters of “The Arabian Nights”, who had a habit of solitarily wandering the streets of Baghdad at night, covered with a common people’s cloak, unrecognized by his subjects, a silent observer, a witness to the night life of Baghdad. The calif could have been the classical *flâneur*, a social investigator and possibly a philosopher who uses his observations for the “production of texts” (Frisby, 1994, 82) – in this case, ‘the texts of the daytime,’ or lawsuits, that the calif had to hear and resolve as a part of his duties. A possible near-equivalent of the image of the *flâneur* in the Russian culture is illustrated by A. Pushkin’s dandy Evgeny Onegin¹⁴ from the early nineteenth century (Pushkin 1825). The habit of solitary pensive strolls in the downtown or in other places of attraction seems to be a custom that has survived from the Soviet times to the present day. Even now, in the time of wide-scale consumption, it is not necessarily tied to shopping. ‘Nobility’ of the western *flâneur* gets translated into the Soviet (and its modern version) *intelligentsia*, a class of people who usually acquired more than one diploma of higher education, have agreeable manners, philosophic minds,

¹⁴ “Evgeny Onegin” is a novel in verse written by probably the most famous Russian poet Alexander Pushkin. It is interesting to note that Evgeny’s last name, Onegin, originates from the lake Onega, by which Petrozavodsk is located.

particular sensitivity and empathy and yet, who rarely produced influential texts beyond literary ones.

So, is the western concept of the *flâneur* transplantable to the postsocialist urban reality? I am inclined to suggest three focal points, or three social categories which are possible to interpret as *flâneur*'s local counterparts. First, I will think of the "assemblage point" of ethnographer and of *flâneur*. Rob Shields calls the *flâneur* "a mythological ideal-type found more in discourse than in everyday life" (Shields, in Tester 1994:67). Even if so, I will try on his mask and assume an identity of a half-native urban ethnographer who may qualify as a *flâneur*, and as such, I will walk the familiar streets again by re-addressing my fieldnotes and old memories to re-conceptualize the local everyday events (or "non-events") that escaped my due attention. After all, "... there is a vivid poetics to be revealed, such should better have been born of the fieldnotes than *a posteriori*, in the published text" (Jenks, in Tester 1994: 68). The second way of reading the *flâneur* may be to assume that some local citizens exhibit the *flâneur-like* behavior, some more than others, in their inclination to spending leisure time strolling, under specific circumstances and in a definite state of mind. In Soviet as well as contemporary Russia, *flânerie* in its simpler manifestation of the habit of strolling, has been and, to my mind, continues to be a ubiquitous custom in average-size cities like Petrozavodsk. And finally, I will argue for a special category of local urbanites to be the most vivid manifestation of the concept of the *flâneur* in contemporary Petrozavodsk.

The phenomenon of wandering by foot along city streets, as an analytical tool and research method, is more productive if not wrenched out of the context or treated as a system of its own. Instead, it works as an integral feature of the postmodern paradigm, along with hypertext, hybridity, and montage. Attention, floating from one object to another, gaze drifting and gliding between words, hyperlinks, and people's faces, are

relatable to seemingly aimless but creatively charged agency of the *flâneur*. Central built-up areas that respond to the needs of mercantile businesses become one of the readily recognizable features of the urban postmodernism, a space of sweeping consumerism. Shopping, real-time and online, proves to be essential to weaving the social fabric and enhanced agency of local women and is covered in the next chapter. Framed in the postmodernist paradigm, the city is far from being perceived as discrete and orderly entity of spatial geography of specific objects; rather, its image mingles with subjectively derived space, seen from within oneself, mixed with the stream of consciousness.

Free movement through the city, exploration of streets and everyday incidents echo another postmodern concept of hypertext as a “mode of associative/ concomitant communication of ideas and passing of information” (Chilingir 2011). In a way, any academic text is hypertext, with a set of footnotes and comments that refer to the “pre-texts.” It is essential to be familiar with them in order to make sense of the “main text,” or the main body of what the author is trying to convey. Such a text becomes a postmodern one when an element of the game is created, when notes on notes, and comments on comments run in absurdist circles. Mike Featherstone explains hypertext as “the text divided to chunks, bite-sized pieces which are designed to stay alone” (Featherstone, in Tester, 1994, 909). He calls hyperlinks the “new styles of writing instead of linear narratives and essays with beginning, middle and end” (ibid.) With rushed and harried lifestyles, short attention spans and the evolved habit of taking initiative in information consumption, there is hardly any patience left to follow a lengthy coherent story and be focused on its details. Instead, small chunks, intuitive navigation and facilitated jumps from one point to the next become a preferred style.

“Russian soul” (as explored by Dale Pesmen, 2000) and magical realism in literature (heavily based on hypertext) have been living in a weird kind of symbiosis. The well-

known and most tenderly loved Latin American authors (Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and Julio Cortázar); European/ Serbian (Milorad Pavic), and domestic (Mikhail Bulgakov and Daniil Harms) somehow capture the essence of the *sur* (see 4.4. of this thesis) and absurdity that often come up in Russian talks (inside and outside of the kitchen) to refer to their lives. *The Dictionary of the Khazars: A Lexicon Novel* by Milorad Pavic (1983) became a big cultural event in then-Soviet Russia. The author insists that parts of this novel can be read in any sequence, while the reader is supposed to have gathered their own unique ‘necklace’ out of the provided beads. The overarching idea is that hypertext is more productive, creative and empowering than linear text. What converges with this text and the *flâneur* as a modernist and postmodernist cultural pattern is that the *Dictionary* is about pilgrimage, both exploratory and idealistic. Meanwhile, hybridity is “represented in the blurred boundaries of space in postmodern culture” and “hybrid cultural identities” (Soukup, 2013, 232). It finds its realization in Chapter 12 of this thesis on Barents regional identity as it becomes mixed with other ways of self-construction.

4.2. The female ethnographer as a *flâneur*.

Flânerie as a quality of the ethnographer is quite a developed idea in literature (see McLaren, 1997, Soukup, 2013, Frisby, 1994, Jenks, 2000). He is called an “urban detective” (Shields, 1994, p.61), a “journalist” (Benjamin, 1989, p.463, Frisby, 1994, p.92) possessing “special purity of mind” (Frisby, 1994, p.96) being a kind of an “urban native” (Shields, 1994, p.61) who “come to grips with urban life and sees the city anew” (Jenks, 2000, p.3). Equally, the reverse relation is true: ethnographer in the quality of *flânerie* can be a productive approach, a research instrument for making inquiries into

the local everyday urban practices and appropriation of the urban space. In my own position of a 'half-native' researcher in Karelia that performs a "dual role of *flâneuse* and critical theorist" (McLaren, in Tierney 1997, p.144), I am using *flânerie* as ethnographic method, besides the usual participant observation, interviews and written primary sources. Explaining how flâneuring/walking/strolling is a tool, McLaren states,

"Walking is not merely a practical activity. Part of the value of the *flâneur* as a theoretical tool is the foregrounding of the inherent meaningfulness of quotidian mobility. It gets on from A to B, but that is not all it does. Beliefs, values, and feeling get attached to mobility. Walking is a practice associated with particular social roles. Moreover, mobility is embodied. It is a method of knowing urban space" (McLaren, in Tierney 1997:162).

Engaging in this quotidian mobility and opening to perception of the life around through senses thus enriches the ethnographer's experience and helps identify routes and research through the local topography.

Flâneur, although elusive and multidimensional, serves well if taken as an instructive metaphor, or lens, when it comes to the attempts to extrapolate this western-rooted concept to a postsocialist context. However, I believe that the endeavor of its direct replanting to new grounds would be doomed as no exact counterparts can be found there. Rather, I maintain that there is a specific social group that in its everyday mobility through the city exhibits symptoms, or features, of the classical Baudelairian *flâneur*. At the same time, I realize that with the development of this concept by Walter Benjamin followed by generations of scholars, the range of features of the *flâneur* expanded significantly, and if I am to use this concept both as a tool, and as a metaphor, I need to narrow it down to serve my purposes of learning about Petrozavodsk everyday life and "coming to grips with the city." Put in the context of the western metropolitan cities, the Karelian *flâneur* may now feel out of place, and in fact, not even be aware of being

categorized as such. So, who is he? Or maybe, she? Here and there, people engage in pensive walks or strolls, but I argue that some group of locals comes closest to represent a local version of *flânerie*. The ethnographically-driven, conscious walks of the researcher are extended through everyday walking activities by locals who have never dreamed about calling them by any special fancy name. However, this does not undermine their “pedestrian connoisseurship and consumption of the urban environment” (Shields, in Tester 1994, p.61).

Researchers noted the explicitly male gender of Baudelaire’s *flâneur* (see essays by Tester and Shields; in Tester (ed.), 1994). At the same time, there are reasons to believe that the *flâneur* as a broader social and literary type was represented, since the mid-nineteenth century, by women as well.¹⁵ It is very likely that women were not as invisible in public life as is generally believed. After all, they populated liminal public spaces of that time, including tea rooms and cafes, hotels and galleries. Some of them undertook charity work which “took them out of the private sphere into more dangerous lower-class urban spaces” (Featherstone 1998, p.915). I would suppose that even if women’s presence in those liminal public places was accepted, it does not necessarily mean that they could have been *flâneurs* in the most genuine meaning of this concept. *Flâneurs* as urban detectives, journalists, and urban natives attentive to details that escaped the eyes of others, as unprejudiced and open-minded researchers – which is the list of all the best qualities of an anthropologist in the field! – often require unaccompanied solitary strolling which for middle-class women of the nineteenth century France seemed to be questionable. It is known that George Sand had to disguise herself in men’s clothing to *flâneur* Parisian streets alone.

¹⁵ See, for example, works by feminists Wilson 1991, Friedberg 1994 and Nava 1997 who opposed Wolff’s (1985) argument about confinement of women to private sphere.

An optimistic view of the possible women's agency that can be expressed in activities of the *flâneur*, is expressed as follows, "It would, therefore, seem problematic to assume that the types of activity associated with the *flâneur* have been exclusively male and confined to a particular type of city. This suggests that facets of the *flâneur* live on and that the notions that the massification, democratization and feminization of the *flâneur* mean a decline, need revising" (Featherstone, 1998, p.915). Coming from my field research in present-day Russian Karelia, I could not agree more. In the sections to follow I argue that a distinct social group of Petrozavodsk women can be regarded true contemporary *flâneurs*, if any kind of the western counterpart is to be found at all. Although public spaces are rightly acknowledged to be "largely masculine, organized by the convenience and recreation of men" (McLaren, in Tierney, 1997, p.161), I hope to show that Petrozavodsk women are successful in claiming urban space and adapting it to their activities which at least partially can be categorized as those of a *flâneur*.

4.3. Petrozavodsk people walking, strolling, and... *flâneuring*?

Typically, western researchers who view the *flâneur* as a concept, or a literary gloss, or a social type position him in a contemporary western city, abstract or specific. Local specifics and conditions for *flâneuring* are taken in consideration. Sometimes busy traffic (public and private) is considered a factor responsible for the decline of true *flânerie*, along with constant modifications of roads that tend to get wider and wider and leave less and less space for walking. Petrozavodsk, although decisively urban, continues to enjoy moderately wide streets that theoretically, can be crossed at any point by running without bothering to walk to the next traffic light. This seems to be a common habit in all postsocialist cities of average size that I visited in Russia and Ukraine. Even the major

avenue, Lenin Street, is “runnable across,” unless it is a rush hour. As a rule, sidewalks in Petrozavodsk are quite wide and well suited for leisurely *flânerie*. Unlike Edmonton, for example, Petrozavodsk sidewalks can fit two people walking side by side with a little more space to let someone walking in the opposite direction pass without stepping into traffic.

“I often take a walk after work if I don’t have to run to a store to grab some groceries for a quick dinner,” says Masha, a cinema theatre administrator, sipping her tea at our casual meeting in *Parizhanka* (The Parisian, La Parisienne), one of the cafes most popular among Petrozavodsk professionals of both sexes.

“It is one of my favorite times of the day. Usually, I don’t know where I’m going before I’m already there. I’m enjoying my solitude in the sense that I don’t have to speak to anybody, the dusk, people walking beside me and the city, the city as it is, with its smells and sounds. Like now, in the Fall, I take time to collect fallen leaves, the ones I like – with uneven edges, little holes, bright colors...”

At the time of this informal interview, in 2011, I had not thought of connecting the joy of strolling that characterizes postsocialist places and their inhabitants, including Petrozavodsk, to the fancy western concept of *flânerie*. But I asked Masha more if she thought of her walks as *flanirovanie* when talking on Skype, in the spring of 2016. It turns out, that she did not. In her mind, *flanirovanie* is more about showing off, getting out there to impress – with a new dress, a haircut, to watch others and to be watched. In fact, the activity that she described was prominent in Soviet times and still is but mostly on festive occasions such as celebrations of the Day of Petrozavodsk (the last Saturday of June) and some statutory holidays and referred to as promenading.

As Rob Shields noted, the *flânerie* is a public activity, “The *flâneur* is out to see and be seen, and thus requires a crowd to be able to watch others and take in the bustle of the city in the security of his anonymous status as part of the metropolitan throng. The

crowd is also an audience. *Flânerie* is thus a crowd practice, a connoisseur's 'art of doing' crowd behavior" (Shields in Tester 1994: 65). I must confess that in Petrozavodsk, one can hardly encounter a more or less decent crowd at any time (except for the hustle of the rush hour). It implies that an important condition for the 'proper functioning' of the western *flâneur* is missing, but I suggest on the city streets, one can find local devoted *flâneurs*. Not of an urban ethnographer or a journalist type, however. At any time of the day, from early morning till night, you can see slowly and pensively strolling men and women, as solitary strollers, and in couples. Men can often be observed strolling with a beer in hand, or without it, watching others, daydreaming or focusing on some little objects in front of them. To be honest, solitary, slow-walking and pensive men under eighty are not observed very often in Petrozavodsk strolling places like the downtown, parks or the ever-popular Onega quay. The picture below is the result of an ethnographer's pure luck and serendipity. Walking along the Onega Quay on one of my first days in Petrozavodsk, not knowing a single person there, I sat to rest on one of the benches. Soon, in the spirit of Michael Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*,¹⁶ I was joined by Viktor (shown in photo below). This is what I wrote in my fieldnotes that day:

"It is surprising how soon and easy we started our conversation. He just asked me for a lighter (which I didn't have) and from there, he shared most incredible things to be talking about with a total stranger. He told me that the clouds were acting weird that day, not visibly moving although it was quite windy that afternoon. As a newcomer, I was asking stupid questions about those mind-blowing monuments and sculptures at the quay which seemed a totally weird combination of styles and epochs. We talked a bit,

¹⁶ Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita* starts with a chance meeting on a bench at the Patriarch Ponds in Moscow downtown, which became a starting point of the unfolding story of the travel of Devil and his 'team' to the Moscow of 1920s.

and then he said that he must leave to go pick up his daughter from kindergarten.”



Figure 3 - My first Petrozavodsk informant Viktor at the Onega Lake Quay. June 28, 2010. Photo credit: KP.

Victor became my first local informant and inspiration for thinking about ways of exploring one’s own city and being “an observer of city life, and moreover, a conscious observer” (Jones 2004, p.429). And as far as the *flâneur* “must listen carefully to sounds, stories, scraps of quotations” (Bauman, in Tester, 1994, p.93) I was becoming determined to incorporate all of that in my ethnographic methods.

4.4. The “Sur of our lives.”

Russians speak (and live, if we regard the Whorfian concept as true) in metaphors. Being highly metaphorical, the Russian language (and the whole cultural context) became a rich ground for the development of the Surrealist movement in art and

literature.¹⁷ Being “associated with urban experience,” Surrealism has its history of interconnections with the figure of the *flâneur* (coming from, at least in part, from Walter Benjamin’s works) when the *flâneur* is being interpreted as an inquisitive explorer of dead-end streets and flea-markets as spaces gleaming with some alternative type of urban reality (Sorfa, in Shiel, 2003, p.100).

A representative of a Petrozavodsk nongovernmental organization specializing in establishing strong networking with western partners in the fields that lie on the crossroads of science, social action and leadership: “We managed our organization on equal terms, with full consensus; we even didn’t need a head. But I took on responsibilities of an alternate.” This is an illustration of what on the post-Soviet space is called *sur* (whether conscious or not) and what seems so Russian to me – to take on a role of a substitute for someone in a position that does not even exist – in the country where the Cheshire Cat could be a national hero. Once in winter, I remember attending a children’s art center in Petrozavodsk when I was taken by a cardboard Cheshire cat’s smile (without a cat, of course) floating in the air over the exhibit items. No wonder *Alice in Wonderland*, along with English limericks, continues to be on top-ten reading lists for children and adults alike.

During the approximately two years that I spent in Petrozavodsk, I heard people mentioning *sur* often, in different settings, quite often as an exclamation: “It’s total *sur!*”, or “The *sur* of our everyday life.” “The alcohol is the accelerator of the next *sur* that’s gonna happen, you’ll see that soon;” “there’s no way I can get used to all that *sur* in my life.” Here, *sur* is used as a noun and basically meant something absurd, a paradox at

¹⁷ Metaphor is one of the central themes for Surrealists. As an example, see Breton’s 1937 essay *Gradyva* (The woman who walks), which used the mythological figure of Gradyva to explore the metamorphosis of life. Breton was not the only one who was fond of this image (originating from a novel by Wilhelm Jensen); other surrealists such as Salvador Dali made use of it, as well.

the core of the seemingly normal thing or event – something that just cannot be there, but is. *Sur* in this context is similar to, but not exactly the same as, *surrealism* as a movement in art and literature at the beginning of the twentieth century. *Sur* is a fancy word used by intelligentsia (very much like *flânerie* in this regard) that is used to mark the perceived absurdity of their lives.

Surrealism as an artistic and literary trend though, has deep roots in Russia and find itself in good company with black humor, paradox, absurdism and anarchy, reminiscent of the Bakhtinian carnival ridicule of the sacred and secular.¹⁸ The feeling of *sur*, to me, is close to what James Fernandez meant by “revelatory incidents:” those surprises that may be registered in the field; they can be found at the heart of every impossible fact of the everyday life. More to the point, this sense of a revelatory incident of a surrealist nature must have that sort of unique flavor of absurdist nature coupled with acute and unquestionable realism of the situation.

In one of his earliest notes on the Arcade Project from late 1920s, Benjamin associates the *flâneur* with contemporary manifestations of the city calling surrealism ‘the new art of *flânerie*’ (Frisby, in Tester, 1994, p.84). Frisby further maintains that surrealist urban dream world discloses its past through revelatory poetic works by French surrealists Louis Aragon and Andre Breton which were the “last chanters of evading forever arcades. However elusive the urban dream space is, the *flâneur* appears, strolling out of it, safe and sound like never before. The closer to the modern time we get, the clearer become the contours of a supplementary figure, that of a *flâneuse*” (ibid.) Similarly, Russian

¹⁸ Among precursors of the Russian surrealism can be named Nikolai Gogol, Fedor Dostoevsky, literary poetic groups “Gileya,” “OBERIU” (that consisted of Daniil Harms, Aleksandr Vvedenski, Nikolai Zabolotski), Russian avantguardists, Dadaists (such as the world-famous abstractionist artist Vasilii Kandinski), symbolists such as Andrey Belyi, Fedor Sologub, Nikolai Gumilev and futurists such as Vladimir Mayakovsky and Velimir Hlebnikov.

surrealists were poetically reflecting on local urban ‘dream world,’ whenever it might have taken them. Interestingly enough, Gavriil Romanovich Derzhavin (1743-1816), a statesman who served as Olonets governor (covering lands around Petrozavodsk) and who directly participated in publication of the first explanatory dictionary of the Russian language, at the same time was a nationally recognized poet (although not a surrealist of course). At some point, I became interested in local people’s mind maps and associations with their city. Along with more personalized family memories of relatives or buildings that bore particular significance (such as a hospital where my colleague’s mother was successfully treated after a bad accident that since then found its place in her mental image, or network, of the city), mentioning of historical figure of Derzhavin in his dual role of governor and poet came up consistently, as a reason for local pride.

4.5. The postsocialist *flâneurs*.

“To what extent trivial, everyday pursuits provoke thoughts about what people take for granted and consider to be normal and natural?” – ask Orvar and Ehn, the authors of the fine study “The Secret World of Doing Nothing” (2010:209). How much do we pay attention to the way in which passengers wait on the bus stop and then get on and off the bus; the way people behave in queues; strolling mothers with babies in baby carriages? All these ‘non-events’ are rarely noticed, almost never scrutinized. At the same time, they have a rich potential to sharpen our understanding of what is really happening when nothing of importance seems to be going on.

The western classic type of the *flâneur* depicted by Baudelaire and then analytically developed by Benjamin is quite well researched and presented from different angles in various fields including social studies, literature, philosophy and art. My own first

acquaintance and fascination with this figure started from my literary studies which was the first perspective on the *flâneur* that I became aware of. Having done much of my fieldwork in Petrozavodsk on foot, and later, when I became familiar with other approaches to conceptualizing the *flâneur*, I started to think about possible ways of marrying this European phenomenon, as David Morawski thought of it, to the postsocialist grounds of modern Petrozavodsk, however strange this attempt may seem at first glance. My goal was not to search for an exact counterpart, which would be impossible and pointless. However, I suggest that a particular social group that ended up being an important part of fieldwork research, closely correlates to the western concept of the *flâneur*, or rather, the *flâneuse*. This group is made up of (young) mothers strolling every day with their babies in carriages along Petrozavodsk streets and parks, taking new and beaten routes, reflecting on the city scapes with more vigor that could be expected of them. Critical thinkers of the figure of the *flâneur* focus on those characteristics of his that make sense for their larger argument; the all-encompassing portrait is beyond the scope of my inquiry. Instead, I find it informative to concentrate on distinct features of the *flâneur* that are naturally applicable to its female postsocialist correlate, without unnecessary stretching. My speculations are based on the consistent communication (in my role of a member of the group who is gradually becoming an insider) with seven young women in their late twenties-early thirties, three to four times a week, who became close members of my local network. Besides, about fifteen other women I was meeting occasionally on weekly basis, on and off, in public spaces such as a shops or children's playgrounds – we knew each other by face, not necessarily by names, and we were talking to each other each time we met. These encounters were taking place in several periods: November 2010 – June 2011, September 2011 – April 2012. When I visited Petrozavodsk for the last time in June 2014, I met again those women who became my

good friends; the primary reason for going back that time was collection of the final data regarding the project *WASTE* including interviews with project participants once the project was finalized. Let me take you on a short walk to follow that generalized character of *flâneuring* mother with a stroller – the trope that was born out of my observations and talks as well as my personal experience.

Perhaps, the intensive strolling that in some cases develops into *flânerie* has its roots in the cultural tradition of exposure of babies to the open air, rain or shine, from minus twenty to plus thirty Celsius in Petrozavodsk, same as in other postsocialist cities in Russia and Ukraine that I visited. This habit is incredibly widespread, has absolute credibility of a sacred teaching among mothers, and must have been around for at least forty years by now. I believe it to be a quite engaging case of mothers' ethnoscience at work which deserves a research of its own. In fact, grannies (or, inescapable *babushkas*, who find their way into ethnographic descriptions of postsocialist researchers from Nancy Ries to Dale Pesmen) can be found in vanguard of this movement.

10 a.m., December, Petrozavodsk. The remains of the quick breakfast for mom and a carefully prepared one for the baby, are scattered all around the kitchen and hurriedly cleaned up. Right on schedule. Time to rush out from a typical cramped apartment, after having an exhausting battle of putting a baby in multiple layers of clothes, putting little boots on kicking little feet, a blanket on top, two hats and mittens. Somehow to remember to dress herself. Slip an ever-present shopping list in the pocket of the stroller, take it down the stairs - oh, the elevator doesn't work today, again? Or maybe, the elevator is just too small for this fancy and comfy Chrysler she chose for her son. Looking around like an icebreaker captain in search for a walkable, strollable track in the snow paved by mothers and strollers that passed here before, an hour or two ago, outdoing her

in noble mothering sacrifice. Strong a resilient, passionately devoted to her baby's well-being in the way she doesn't question, this mother is fully committed to exposing her offspring to fresh air twice a day. Same ritual of dressing/undressing, taking the stroller down, pulling it again up the stairs of the hallway of her apartment building, until spring brings a little bit of relief. The feeling of guilt if the baby was on a walk only once that day, is sweeping. She would share with fellow mothers, in whisper, that actually, she was so swamped that she put her baby for a daytime nap on the balcony instead of giving him a 'proper joggle' in a stroller along the infamously broken Russian roads. My mom who still lives in Odessa, Ukraine, where I was born and raised, which is some 1700 km straight down to the south, used to tell me stories about putting me for a daytime nap on our balcony, in a suitcase (open, of course). The common idea was to do all it takes to pack the baby in a stroller and take him for a walk to the areas as far from traffic as possible (ideally), to "expose him to the fresh air that is crucial for health" (Olga, 26 y.o.)

During the whole period of my stay in Petrozavodsk (except for my pilot trip when I stayed in a hotel on water and the last trip in June 2014 when I stayed with my friend, a fellow mother), I lived with my husband and our son who was only four months old when we arrived in October 2010. We lived on the first floor of a high rise building erected in 1970s. Quite fortunate for my fieldwork, our kitchen window faced a sidewalk that went from the store on the picture above (having a sign with red letters *Магнит*, The Magnet) by apartment buildings, other shops and a market, a big children's playground and other amenities important for the residential area. From 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. in summer and till around 8 p.m. in winter time, we observed processions, or even streams of young mothers or grannies with baby strollers moving

past our window. Strollers of typical configurations and models, however having individual characters and of bright colors, varying heights and forms of handles, moving past our window.

On average, a mother's stroll follows the pattern of three phases. The first one marks the beginning of the walk when the baby is awake and the mother is usually headed to a shopping place first (a store, a local market, or a mall). The middle phase when they leave the shopping place with the baby finally asleep, is the most interesting for us in terms of the awakening of the *flâneuse*. The last phase starts when the baby wakes up again signaling the time to go home – to change him and to feed. During this walk, mother the stroller – or, that type of mother that I am inclined to call a *flâneuse*, undergoes some invisible transformations. When the baby in the stroller is still awake, or already awake, everything revolves around him, his needs and moods. However, when he falls asleep, a little space for mother's personal magic opens.



Figure 4 - Kukkovka city district of Petrozavodsk and some of the typical houses on the outskirts of Ptz. On the far right you can see the house in which I lived. Photo credit: KP.



Figure 5 - View from my window to the ring road and a road to another district, Perevalka. Photo credit: KP.

“The *flâneur* is out to see and be seen... the crowd is also an audience” (Shields, in Tester, 1994, p.66). Russian women are famous for taking a good care of themselves and striving to look good always, no matter the circumstances. Somehow managing to find time and energy for this, mothers with strollers, in carefully chosen outfits, go out for their everyday walk. They are prepared to be seen *and evaluated* by other moms, their strollers match their coats in color, and the stroller bag matches their hat. Performing a demanding, exhausting, yet fulfilling ‘mother’s dance with a stroller,’ they are fully conscious of critical or friendly glances. Like Parisian dandies, they are *flâneuring* Petrozavodsk streets, enjoying the city streets populated by members of their cohort.



Figure 6 - Young mother with a baby in a stroller at the Onega Lake Quay. Petrozavodsk, October 2010. Photo credit: KP.

Trained in close attention to details by their motherhood, these women are experts in “seeking clues [and]...reading people’s characters not only from the physiognomy of their faces but via a social physiognomy of the streets” (Shields, in Tester 1994:63). The context of a children’s playground where they come with their toddlers is a unique arena for exercising their detective skills in reading people and unfolding situation: is this new person without a child safe to be around? What can be expected from the older kids on the carousel – is the toddler close enough to get hurt? Can she trust the woman over there to keep an eye on her son while she runs to the washroom in the store nearby? I was impressed with the nature of conversations that could go on between mothers on a playground. Besides gossiping, discussions of movie series and usual mom’s ‘tips’ that they invented or read, one could hear utterances such as “You know that rose bush right beside the house #12? It’s just started blooming but a couple of branches are already broken... It must be those nasty kids who live in that house.” Or, “I saw Olga today, it

seemed like she washed her baby stroller... how stupid, it should rain tomorrow.” I truly believe that the observational power of this category of mothers is underestimated, or never recognized. They readily notice changes in natural environment, reflect on other people’s manners and words they hear by eavesdropping – all during their walks with babies/toddlers. Later on, they would discuss what they heard or saw with their female friends who would appreciate their sharp look and interpretative (or imaginative) abilities.

Close to the place where I lived in Petrozavodsk, near an open-air marketplace, there was a relatively small area of uncut fir trees with beaten paths (or stamped trails in winter) between them. It was calm and quiet – a perfect retreat for mothers with sleeping babies – when the second phase of the walk was on. We would arrange ourselves between the trees in a chessboard fashion sitting on stubs of logs that were scattered around. Far enough from each other to have some privacy, and close enough to the busy sidewalk to gaze at other people, to study them, day, after day, after day. It was impossible to predict whether you would get your own stub or a log, or all of them would be taken. So, some of



Figure 7 - Myself, with my son Natan (in stroller) and my daughter, Azalia (in a sling) in Lenin Park. Odessa, September 2012. Photo credit: Pashkovska Zh. F.

us would carry small foldable chairs to sit on for a bit and rest till our babies were breathing some preciously coniferous air instead of supposedly worse air of our apartments, or that of the marketplace. When she had enough of sitting, the foldable chair is folded and attached back to the stroller; the mother continues her walk: there is around half hour before her baby wakes up. Who is more attentive to details than a mother who is responsible for her baby 24/7? What 'urban philosopher' can compare with her in sharpness of the mind and vision when she sits on a stub, quiet and silent, valuing these moments of virtual solitude while her baby is asleep, pretending not noticing her peers, carefully watching little tiny leaves under her feet, gazing at the chains of other moms with strollers, all those people passing by? Who is more desperate for visual impressions of outer world after getting away from her daily routine in an apartment of a coffin size? Impressions that they can get remaining invisible observers? After the continuous need to act, to listen, to talk, to relate and attend to their babies, when they are finally asleep and mothers have a little bit of free time at the open air, they can enjoy silent and calm gazing.

She is present, absorbed in the moment; her full attention disperses in multiple directions – probing the pavement ahead, probing men and women passing by, probing her own memories of the same route yesterday and noticing small or big incongruities. It is amazing how ethnographically attentive mother with a stroller is. If a local form of “pedestrian connoisseurship” exists, it must be her who like a true *flâneur*, does not have a predefined aim of her walk while the baby is still asleep; she is the queen of her forty minutes. She is walking, or maybe *flâneuring*, slowly, hungry for her city, for its visions and sounds, taking in all she can. These impressions and imprints will be carried through the sensually deprived daily routine at home. Her slow pace is due to careful

steering of the stroller's handle; her mind-mapping registers every pit and even a little bump on the road that she needs to go around, not to wake up her baby.

Surely, not every walking mother with a stroller is a *flâneur*. And even those for whom *flâneuring* practices are common (without calling them so), experience different times. Nastya, 32 y.o., narrates, “Usually I like to look outwards, carefully observe people and just be in the streets when I walk with my toddler. It feels comforting and it is my source of new dynamic impressions. But it's not like that all the time. I have my own thoughts and problems and can be absorbed in them as much as I can be with the watching others. My husband drinks, and when he is drunk, I close up and watch inwards, in my own soul during these walks, looking for a solution, just feeling it.” Also, the northern climate, although relatively moderate, imposes its limitations on when you can be strolling and observing, and for how long. In winter, often, walks with strollers more resemble marathon runs from A to B. And finally, as another manifestation of the postmodernist world, hybrid practices and multitasking of mothers surely get in a way of slow-pace and pensive observations. Being commonly communication-deprived, some categories of mothers turn on all kind of technology at home that they have: TV, radio, music, and try to be on the phone in the loudspeaker mode as much as they can. Different behaviors around the use of technology when a small child is at home represent the clash not only between women's personalities as more inclined to find joy in communication with the child and be pleased with “looking for clues” and observing the cityscapes, once they escape their homes. At the same time, other women do not find the communication with their baby ‘a real communication’ and need adult-like conversations – even if virtual, like dialogues in a movie series, one after another, or having a player on and earbuds in when they are outside. This clash is also about the wars that mothers fight over the methods of upbringing which are a whole separate conceptual world, or

rather, a battlefield. In a highly simplistic way, one side is about close communication with a baby, direct attention and early development that includes sensory stimuli of mother-made toys and lullabies. The other side favors kids' cartoons, clockwork toys and other devices that help free extra minutes from direct baby care while speaking about communication deprivation and boredom at home. The last group of mothers hardly have anything *flâneuring* in them, so they fall under my exclusion criteria.

At the same time, the group of mothers to whom I devoted this chapter used to fascinate me with the high level of reflexivity and genuine inquisitiveness that characterized them more than some other categories of citizens. In this sense, this particular type of a Petrozavodsk mother with a stroller is a true Gradiva: she, who walks. Perhaps, grannies could be close to *flâneurs* but I do not have data on them. I should also mention that 2010-2011 were the pre-smartphone era in Petrozavodsk and probably, since then, the number of local *flâneuses* decreased since the new technology makes virtual reality more appealing and readily accessible, especially on the go (Pieterse 2001). Castells' statement on hybridity is well applicable to the context of Petrozavodsk *flâneuring* mothers and their use of technology, particularly their listening to music with earbuds and the use of Bluetooth, "People are here and there, in multiple heres and theres, in a relentless combination of places" (Castells et al. 2007: 172).

Chapter 5

Learning to be a local consumer: from women's agency to a firmer social fabric.

5.1. Introduction

- From the title of your book, what is the meaning of “second-hand?”
 - It means that all ideas, words – everything is passed on by someone, as if from yesterday, as if worn. Nobody knows how things should be, what will help us and everyone is using the knowledge they have formed long ago, that was lived by someone else, past experience. So far, unfortunately, it has been second-hand time. But we are starting to recover and recognize ourselves in the world. Nobody wants to live in the ruins forever; it feels like building something out of the wrecks (Svitlana Alexievich, interview, preface to her book *Second-Hand Time. An Oral History of the Fall of the Soviet Union*, 2013, translation by KP).

At approximately the same distance from downtown as the Mormon temple is, we start noticing small shops, some of them located in the basements of residential houses. Like local Karelian toponyms with unpredictable emphases, socialist-era street names, a variety of monuments and other types of architecture including wooden and new brick apartment buildings, second-hand stores are a visible part of Petrozavodsk landscape. In the first years after their emergence in the 1990s, second-hand stores modestly occupied back streets and did not boast catchy sign-plates. But in addition to being more conspicuous, and the last time I was in Petrozavodsk, in the summer of 2014, a second-hand store opened in the middle of Lenin Street, right next to a brand-new bright and loud shopping mall. It seemed a proud manifestation of the emergence of affordable

consumer offerings, a gauntlet thrown to challenge the capitalist economic order of supposedly implicit quality-price ratios. Is there not a delicate irony, - in the presence of a second-hand clothing store of used clothes from the capitalist West, right in the heart of Lenin Street? Does not the combined presence of a new shopping mall and a new store of previously worn apparel, particularly in such proximity, confirm the deepening social stratification as a result of the new capitalist reality? Two worlds, consumer offers – for those who can afford it, and a recycled reality for much less, for those who cannot. Second-hand stores are presently mushrooming in post-Soviet cities and they are taking up central locations in local landscapes. While these are features of ongoing visible transformations, the very spirit of “second-hand” as a way of life and mode of thinking (noted by Svetlana Alexievich in the epigraph above) seems to be historically rooted.

With the visible presence of second-hand consumption in Petrozavodsk as a starting point, I will consider functionally similar practices of second-hand apparel consumption and online shopping for clothes (both used and new). Apparel consumption practices are tiny but poignant windows to issues like modern postsocialist patterns of consumerism, which in turn contribute to community trust, women’s networks, personal and family social status construction and as a vantage point. Local mothers with small children are at the center of my inquiry into consumption practices. I became a member of a group quite naturally, due to my own social status at that time as a mother with a baby. On top of that, my mastery of the standard, “literary” form of the Russian language, opened doors to mothers belonging to the local intelligentsia. At the time of my fieldwork, I did not conduct separately formulated and structured research on consumption patterns; rather, it organically became a part of my adaptation to the local life. My arguments here are based on my experience as a full-fledged member of the community, including multiple informal talks (online and in person) with local mothers regarding their

consumption practices and their online social networks. Although my involvement in second-hand clothes consumption started out of necessity, I quickly realized its potential and turned it into what can be called netnographic research.¹⁹ As a part of my inquiry, I did research involving several online communities; these were shopping communities for second-hand and new apparel platform from the Russian online social network VKontakte (literally meaning “in contact”), analogous to Facebook. I feel comfortable naming the online groups, showing snapshots of their home pages and citing some of the messages, while concealing names, nick names, and avatars, which is in line with Kozinets’ take on the ethics of doing online research and securing anonymity.²⁰

5.2. Postsocialist consumption caught between the center and the periphery.

Revealing research done by native Russian ethnographers on postsocialist consumption (see, for example, a special issue of the *Labyrinth Journal for Socio-Humanistic Studies* printed in Moscow, issue #2, 2014) convincingly shows the changes that have been happening in the sphere of second-hand consumption in the last fifteen years. The clear ‘post-materialist’ turn that started in the West (Gurova & Tolkacheva, 2014) is steadily moving toward Russian ground. In the following chapters I hope to

¹⁹ The term ‘netnography’ that signifies application of ethnographic methods to the online communication environment, owes its origin to Robert Kozinets, a professor of Marketing at York University in Toronto (Kozinets 2010). His first textbook on netnography attempted to contextualize research methods in technologically-mediated space of social interactions. His next edited volume on “consumer tribes” (2007) seems to offer a useful frame for research of online communities.

²⁰ For Robert Kozinets’ ethical principles connected to online research see, for example, pp. 140-156 (Kozinets 2010), “netnographic researchers who ‘refrain from including not only the subject’s name or pseudonym but also any information that might identify an individual’ should be exempted from claims arising from invasion of privacy (Lipinsky Tomas, legal scholar, 2006 – p.146).

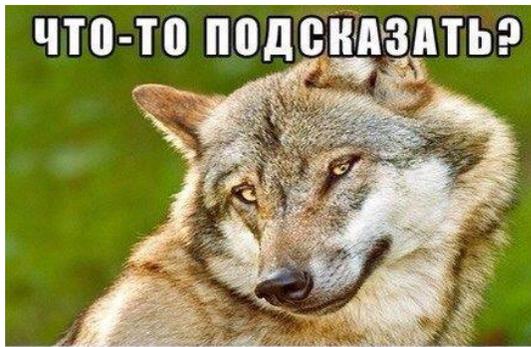
contribute my own field data to support that claim. However, I would like to note some differences in the consumption of clothes, including online tactics, that exist between large cosmopolitan cities like Moscow or Kiev, where my colleagues' field sites were and a city like Petrozavodsk which is much smaller and more isolated in terms of western influences. Throughout this chapter, I preserve my focus on mothers of small children as my case study of local community of consumers.

- Mango, Zara, H&M..., – is heard from one counter of a huge partially open-air market of an eastern-type bazaar.
- Polo, Versace, Armani..., – another monotonous female voice is calling for attention from the opposite corner. Voices from all over the place are overlapping and turning to a beehive-like buzz. Some clickers get creative and come up with rhymed slogans that make potential buyers smile and come closer.²¹ Piles of brand name (and generic label) clothes are in huge messy piles all over the tables. Clothes that look less worn and still preserve their original labels are hung on the racks, sometimes in some logical sequence – according to utility, or color, etc. Laid-back and heavy male supervisors, obviously from the former southern Soviet republics (the Caucasus), are slowly patrolling the rows or sitting on high chairs, observing from above. Young women of clearly Slavic origin are taking care of customers, serving as go-betweens and finding out whether the boss would approve a requested discount and when a transaction is complete, immediately handing over the gain from each one to a supervisor; all

²¹ For example, Tatyana Bulakh mentions the slogan “Your Gucci in our pile” which rhymes in Russian (“Vashi Gucci v nashei kuche”) heard in a Kiev second-hand market (Bulakh 2014: 110). I was witness of similar rhymed slogans in abundance in Moscow and Kiev second-hand markets but at that time, I was not interested in a research on this topic and did not write down any other examples.

transactions are in cash only. This is a common picture at tented second-hand markets in metropolitan Moscow and Kiev that I have been observing for the last fifteen years being a fan of the opportunities that such places offer. T. Bulakh adopted Olga Shevchenko's term, the *consumer safari* (Shevchenko, 2009) to denote the modern phenomenon of consumer chasing brands at second-hand markets (which are the *big game* and hence the reason for safari) in excellent condition for a ridiculously low price. Mike Featherstone depicts a modern Western shopping *flâneur* as "a consumer of experiences... who seeks out the stimuli and aesthetic sensations of urban spaces, enjoying the freedom of mingling in the crowd and mingling with the world of goods on display" (Featherston 2007, p.916). It is interesting to think about whether this freedom of experience actually exists, for a Western or a Russian consumer. Of all possible venues to exercise this kind of mingling in a postsocialist context (and more specifically in Russia), I see these huge tented second-hand bazaars as most suitable for a contemporary way of *flâneuring*; shopping for new experiences, with all the excitement, delight, chagrin and frustration that might beset a *flâneur* on safari.

True enough, *flâneuring* and mingling easily occur in this mixed setting; with the Asiatic way of organizing and managing a space combined with Western-brand commodities, and served by local young women. Huge retail space is not the major cause for free *flâneuring*. The very spirit of second-hand markets in postsocialist metropolitan areas somehow resonates with local shoppers who are not appreciative of the hyper attentive style, complete with broad 'American' smiles and sales assistants with irritating questions common in the West. A sales assistant–potential client relationship in a Russian store (of new clothes!) is nicely grasped by a dialogue on the photo meme below.



How can I help you?



Just browsing!

Figure 8 - Photo meme. Photo credit:
www.bugaga.ru

Those few second-hand stores in Petrozavodsk, unlike the ones in large cities, are located under a firm roof (not just a temporary tent) and New trends from Moscow and Saint Petersburg get to Petrozavodsk slowly. Contrary to the practice of chasing brands in a *consumer safari* by the middle-class trend-setters in second-hand markets in Kiev (Bulakh, 2014); the Petrozavodsk stores of used apparel still adhere to their original function of being a source of relatively cheap clothing of questionable quality (mostly due to wear) and styles (for local consumers' taste,) imported from Europe, mostly from Finland. However, in a situation where the local second-hand stores do not live up to customers' expectations and while the need for affordable but quality clothes exists, one wonders what other options are available?

5.3. Learning to be a local consumer through making choices.

I will not argue that having full research funding is not beneficial for a researcher, especially a doctoral student, and above all, that financial support, during the writing stage is not a great thing. However, I note that at the same time, financial constraints can become an empowering factor during one's fieldwork. A limited budget has the potential to bring about situations and revelations that would otherwise not happened. Hence, underfunding can be turned from a problem into an opportunity, and can be used as a research tool in its own right. Upon arriving in Petrozavodsk for my fieldwork and having a tight budget, I faced the need to learn how to save money within the local context. Having quite a positive experience with second-hand shopping for myself in large cities, nevertheless, I was highly reluctant to buy anything for my baby from local second-hand stores in Petrozavodsk. The reasons for this decision were, primarily, strong chemical smells (in many of the local stores the olfactory intensity of which was sometimes unbearable), the worn condition of the clothing, and the whole atmosphere of erosion and poverty – that prevailed – which for me was off-putting. In Petrozavodsk, it becomes chilly quite early in the fall. One October morning I woke up and saw hoarfrost on my window which signified an urgent, impending need for winter outfits; which was how my personal *survival safari* for used clothes procured from other moms began. By trial and error, I discovered the best-working second-hand consumption practices, which were not necessarily the most popular or the most initially evident. In short, I came upon a bonanza of social interactions through buying/ selling/ exchanging gently used children's clothes – first through paper ads, and then online. Some of these interactions involved money transactions, while others were free.

5.3.1. Locating clothes on a scale of personal values.

Before I continue with details on the shopping practices among local mothers, I would like to reflect a little on the weight that the purchasing of children's clothes has on mothers' scale of personal values. Clothes in general hold a prominent position in postsocialist people's consumption practices. As a rule, Russians are willing to pay a high price for their looks. First, it is a much more affordable way to claim a higher social status than buying one's own apartment or a car; second, fashionable, quality and *tasteful*²² clothes continue to be that visible representation of general well-being of the person who wears them, signaling the 'I'm okay' image. The official communist policy on consumption favored cultural and spiritual values over materialistic ones. But, by the end of the existence of the Soviet Union, it became evident that citizens aspired to material comfort and its aesthetic qualities. It can be argued that economic capital has been prevalent over cultural since then, and bodily beauty has been more desired and valued than 'the beauty of the soul' on the general scale of values in Russian society. If we agree that the purchase of clothes is a more affordable way to signal one's social status (by making it seem higher than the reality of status), then, children's clothes up to a certain age (about four years old) are an even more affordable means of raising one's social capital than adults' clothes. Categorization and theorization of *tasteful*, or *stylish* clothes, in the eyes of local consumers is another interesting category, a topic in its own

²² I am alluding to Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction: A Social Critique of Judgement of Taste* (1984). What was true for the French bourgeoisie, seems to be working for the modern Russian middle class as well: the sense of taste in clothes, choice of hairdo and make-up, etc. is wedded to social background and maintaining of existing power balance. Hence, Russian women's social, symbolic and cultural capitals are highly dependent on their appearance, and more specifically, on the degree of their 'cared-for' look. In fact, the Russian notion *ukhozhennost*, 'roughly translated into English as 'well-groomed' is an inextricable part of judgement about women. Speaking about appearance, it is not so much women's age, or weight, or facial features, but this subtle, elusive sense of decency coming from a *tasteful* combination of clothes, footwear, accessories and make-up that go well with one's stature, face type and even social position.

right. Following Anna Tihomirova (2007), I suggest that the top of the apparel hierarchy in postsocialist Russia is still occupied by Western brands. Back in 1990s, Sergey Ushakin (1999) did a captivating study on the perception of a new class of people after *Perestroika* – namely, the perception of new men, new women, new rich, and so on, all through the eyes of the then teenagers and young adults. He found that the difference between then and now, between Soviet and modern people, is manifested through quantitative consumption practices - which he called a “quantitative style.” Thus, new rich in the late 1990s were distinguished from old rich by the number of golden rings they wore and the weight (in grams) of golden chains on their necks. As one of Ushakin’s respondents’ put it, “It seems like if they could put on several expensive suits at the same time, they would do so” (Ushakin, 1999, p. 2009). The “fat zeros” differ from the “raucous 1990s” a lot. However, I am still finding remnants of “quantitative style” in contemporary Petrozavodsk, and not because of deficit of modalities to express one’s identity or individuality. Difficulty finding an adequate and fully satisfactory medium of self-expression through shopping seems not to have been gone completely.

5.3.2. *Consuming mothers.*

There is a Russian saying, [*po odezhke vstrechayut, po umu provozhayut*] which is analogous to “greet one according to his clothes, take leave according to what he knows.” Or, “a nice dress is like a business card, a good mind is a letter of recommendation” but very often the last part of it is forgotten while the first one is the focus, becoming something like “first impressions are half the battle.” However, a brand does not do it all:

“Yes, I like to dress my child in H&M, Zara²³ and Finnish brands, because it’s quality clothes and I can rely on them. But when I see a child in dirty brand clothes, *not cared-for enough*, the impression is lost. I feel like his or her mother does not respect us, society, [if the mother] does not make an effort to have her child appear on the street neat and tidy” (Irina, 29 years old, emphasis mine). A common reality for many Russian as well as Western mothers is that after childbirth, their usual social network shrinks for a while. At least for postsocialist mothers, shopping for nice clothes for their children serves as vantage point of aesthetically charged activity that reconnects them to women with the same social status – motherhood. Sure enough, there are variety of views I collected on the subject from different women; some of those whom I met were explicitly not interested in chasing brands, “I believe it’s stupid to spend a lot of money on brand-name clothing for children. I have three. I know that it’s cheaper to buy clothes made by *us* [Russian production] or to buy *their* clothes in second-hand stores (cursive is mine). Children grow up so quickly, so why complicate things instead of saving for other expenses” (Liza, 32 years old, cursive mine). I would add that as a rule, women who did not care about nice clothes for their children, did not follow fashion trends in their own clothing either, in addition the also disregard make-up – a kind of behavior that usually puts their social capital under risk.

The close and culturally ambivalent link between consumption and motherhood is carefully considered in the volume edited by Janelle Taylor et al., *Consuming Motherhood*. As J. Taylor put it at the beginning,

“Motherhood is supposed to be a special kind of human relationship, uniquely important because uniquely free of the kind of calculating instrumentality associated with the consumption of objects. It stands for “love,” in sharp contrast

²³ I should note here that while H&M and Zara are considered to be major brands for middle class consumers in Russia, it is not necessarily the case in the “West.”

to “money” – a simple but persistent opposition that structures American middle-class cultural values concerning family, parenthood, and child-rearing... Thus constructed, motherhood offers a powerful model for human relationship that stands in opposition to the logic of the marketplace. Deeply rooted in ideological oppositions between love and money, rouse cultural anxieties and provoke controversy” (Taylor et al., 2004, p.2-3).

What, above, is true for the American middle class, seems to be applicable to Russian postsocialist reality. Motherhood is no less constructed than childhood is. Modern Russian cities (not only major ones with million plus population) live according to a conglomerate of unspoken rules that embrace local values in their complex historical perspective as well as values imported from the “West,” both real and imagined (Yurchak, 2006). My own data on mothers’ consumption behaviors in Petrozavodsk echoes a study by Daniel Miller on the mother-child consumer relationship (and psychoanalytic interpretation of it) in north London. Remarks about (un-)tidy brand children’s clothes from my respondents that I cited above are strikingly reminiscent of observations made by Miller. He points to the status competition through children’s apparel between parents (and those who are mostly involved in this are mothers, not fathers). Also, there are parallels between what child project of their mother’s qualities and the ways a mother plays with this kind of projection, for example, engaging in the never-ending shopping for clothes for their children. This especially concerns daughters as “better versions of themselves, mothers” – before they aged and put on weight (Miller, 2004, p.31; in Taylor, 2004). In my chats with fellow mothers online and in person, this longing for dressing up their daughters as little princesses was often tainted with sadness, alluding to a deflated self-esteem and not liking nice clothes on themselves anymore, “I haven’t come back to my pre-pregnancy weight, ever. While shopping, I can admire nice and feminine clothes on the racks but when I try them on, I start hating myself” (Olga, 33 years old, two

children); “I’m as skinny as I was before, no problem with that... But I look at my tired facial skin, those bags under my eyes... and my arms are not as good-looking as they were ten years ago... I’m feeling my age... but on her [daughter], all these little dresses look adorable, it warms my heart shopping for them and dress her like that, it’s my joy and comfort” (Olesya, 34 years old, one child).

As children grow older, the satisfaction of their *needs* is intertwined with their *wishes* in quite a complex way, when fulfilled by mothers, increasingly it acquires a form of buying back the child. Miller’s remark that shopping “remains one of the most important mediums through which the parent-child relationship may be expressed and negotiated,” with “the strategy of buying back one’s children... sustained for a considerable period” is true for Karelia and is quite disturbing at the same time. Taking Miller’s study one step further, I would call the act of shopping an exercise in easing the suppressed needs, problems and traumas through shopping and spending money on brand clothes and toys for children, a strong tendency and strategy, with the outcome providing temporary relief.

5.3.3. Paper ads.

Back in 2010, when I had just arrived in Petrozavodsk, I had an assumption about a limited Internet connection being an inevitable consequence of the city’s location somewhere on the geographical and cultural periphery to such things. Hence, I supposed that there was a limited number of Internet users and the social activities that could be realized online. Which is why, when I faced with the necessity of buying things for my child at a reduced price, my first option was newspaper ads. I sifted through them, I called numbers, talked about products in details; when I liked what I heard, I would set up a meeting and would go to the seller. The seller was generally a mother selling her

child's clothes because he/she outgrew them or the item did not really fit. Such trips turned out to be a great ethnographic method to learn about people's homes, to which previously I had a limited access. At about the halfway point, about six homes, it occurred to me that, each of those homes were incredibly charismatic and very different from each other, so much so that I became truly fascinated with the diversity of the local families and their household routine. The experience made me appreciate my gender in a new way and the social role of being a mother: as a potential buyer, I was welcomed in these homes, I was seen as a safe guest and I could come at any time of the day without knowing the hosts beforehand. After realizing the benefits of this approach for my research, I went browsing for used clothes more conscientiously, jotting down my impressions, noting my conversations and experiences, all of which helped me learn firsthand about the *byt*²⁴ of Petrozavodsk. It is true, however, that during these explorative trips I accomplished more learning about local everyday life than I did in the actual acquisition of children's clothes, - which was my practical goal. I realized that I was spending much more time and money than I was saving. If I was invited to a home late in the evening (around 8 p.m.), the bus service in some parts of the city stopped till morning by the time I was done, so I had to call a taxi to get home. Finally, I decided to buy a winter overall for my baby from a local store, "by a domestic, Piter,²⁵ manufacturer" as I was informed proudly by the saleswoman. Vladimir Ilyin, a reputed Saint Petersburg

²⁴ Russian word *byt*, or everyday culture/routine is a powerful point of reference for scholars of postsocialism. Very close to such words as *byt'* (to be) an *bytie* (being, existence), it finds its way to virtually any research work on Soviet and post-Soviet culture including publications by Katherine Verdery, Caroline Humphry, Dale Pesmen and Svetlana Bym, to name a few. Distinguished linguist and literary critique, Roman Jakobson, considered this notion untranslatable due to a rich variety of connotations that it enjoys. Svetlana Boym put its contestable nature this way: "For many Russian and Soviet cultural critiques, the expression 'everyday culture' would appear problematic, if not oxymoronic, because culture in the Russian context, in the singular and with a capital 'C,' has been defined as a heroic battle against the 'everyday'" (Boym 1996, in Shalin, D. *Russian Culture at the Crossroads: Paradoxes of Postcommunist Consciousness.*)

²⁵ "Piter" is a common diminutive for Saint Petersburg.

sociologist with a major research interest in consumption, demonstrated the gradual growth of trust among postsocialist Russian consumers in domestic producers.²⁶ One of the reasons for this was the cheap and low quality Chinese clothes, and all kinds of accessories, that flooded the Russian market in 1990s. At roughly the same time, small clothing and tourist equipment production businesses started to spring up in large cities, the products of which were sold all over the Commonwealth of Independent States; some of them became recognizable brands that then charged prices comparable to competing Western labels.

Overall, paper ads did not work well for me due to lack of visual value: in a newspaper ad, the available space allows only for a couple of lines of description of what it is being sold and contact information, but do not have the space for pictures. So, the description of the item and its real appearance were often radically different; this included the extent of wear, color and textile. Mothers of small children are notoriously short on time, so making trips to take a look at clothes and not going ahead with a purchase, is an unaffordable luxury. Later on, in informal talks with other mothers, I found out that searching through paper ads was an activity for those families that had a limited Internet connection – most often by *choice* rather than unavailability. My assumption was that the lack of online presence was more often than not, associated with a lower level of education and/or lower incomes. The Internet in Petrozavodsk in 2010-2012 was not yet an unavoidable technology of everyday life.

²⁶ See, for example, his article “Duality of structures of individual consumption in historical dynamics: from soviet to post-soviet society”, 2014.

5.3.4. Going online.

In a situation when second-hand stores and paper ads do not fully satisfy consumer needs and are not optimal choices for either the quality, or the convenience of the consumers, what other options are there? The obvious answer would be to go online, but it as I have already noted, it took me a while to realize that. Today, there are five Internet providers in Karelia that offer an online connection for the home. At the time of my fieldwork in 2010, there were three; all of them covered Petrozavodsk, which created the basis for quite lively social online interactions among local people – and mothers of small children in particular. The only vibrant platform for buying/selling (as well giving away for free) online was a Russian social network Vkontakte, analogous to Facebook. All purchasing activities are realized through groups akin to those that exist on Facebook; every group has one or several administrators. In the case of items for children, the administrators are all mothers, being proactive and organizing the groups according to rules that regulate the buying and selling process. When these rules are violated, higher social status of the mother-administrators influences the way they do their work and the kinds of arguments that they put forth in order to take wrongdoers in hand. For example, “If you made a reservation [for an item of clothing] and can’t make it to pick it up at the time that you specified, just call me. We are all mothers, we have families just like you, and we can’t sit at home for the whole day and wait for you” (administrator’s message at the community dashboard, *Goods from Finland*).

The administrator’s work is done for free; the rewards won are of subtler nature: social capital. There are only seven groups focused on buying/selling new and used children’s clothes in the city, while administering a group is considered prestigious when mentioned online and sometimes in the real world. It also includes practical benefits of

being the first to see the ads and thus, able to contact the seller about the item before anyone else sees the ad; and finally, the power that stems from enforcing rules for the whole community and having the authority to ban the violators. The communities' population varies from about three hundred to eight thousand members. The biggest numbers are attracted by the online versions of physically present local stores of children's goods, including popular props and materials for children's early development. Two out of three such stores that I am aware of, were run by local women – all mothers.

There are two major groups that specialize in used goods, analogous to www.kijiji.ca, and two groups that focus on children's used goods. These groups call themselves a “flea market” or a “commission shop.” These groups are all-encompassing and have multiple categories of buy/sell products and, have more than one administrator. The undeniable advantages of an online community over paper ads are its well-organized structure of albums, visual accessibility of items, and an ability to start communication and negotiation with the seller through a more convenient message service versus a phone call.²⁷

The visual representation on the front page of a group depends on the choice and taste of administrators, but the image alludes to the target audience (photos of children) or a cultural representations of the country providing the goods (like the Moomins family, beloved characters in Russia, as on the picture of the front page of a *Goods from Finland*

²⁷ Ilana Gershon did an engaging study of preferred technical mediums for specific types of communication as well as their hierarchy, switching between them and perceived (implied) meaning of this switching among US undergrads (Gershon, Ilana. 2010. Breaking Up is Hard to Do: Media Switching and Media Ideologies. *Linguistic Anthropology* 20 (2).) Media ideologies exist among Karelian mothers as well including judgements of what medium of contacting a seller is more appropriate, initially, or as a follow-up.

for All community below: Every community is a separate world, with its own atmosphere, ways of providing goods for selection and sets of rules managing this kind of shopping.



Figure 9 - Goods from Finland for All" online community, Petrozavodsk. Source: <https://vk.com/club28824927>.

Community administrators exercise their power of enforcing rules with varying rigor – from posting banned-lists of rules violators to extensive files of those rules. For example, in the community *Petrozavodsk Flea Market*, you can see such a warning on its front page, “Buy/Sell/Give Away’ – pay attention to the title of the topic! Ads off topic will be deleted and their authors will be added to the banned-list. Commercial advertising of

unrelated goods, your own business, etc. is prohibited, your page will be blocked!”

However, in my experience, it was uncommon for nasty conflicts to unfold. As a rule, requirements and expectations of community members were justified and expected. Perhaps, the nature of the groups, being that of consumption, also helped to keep the passions low: members of the communities were united by a practical cause and joint accomplishment. In her study of online communities, however, Kristine de Valck (Cova et al, 2007) shows that social bonding and communal spirit are not the only (or most probable) outcomes of participation in communication among virtual community members. Referring to the low entry and exit barriers in such communities, de Valck points to the high probability of arousing tensions and conflicts among community members, even in such a seemingly peaceful environment such as culinary matters /recipe in a group targeted at women.

It is good to keep in mind that some of these virtual communities are in fact small online retail businesses owned by local women. It means that the administrator is the person who receives orders, manages them according to her own business strategy and then makes shopping trips to neighboring Finland to buy the clothing items for multiple people who made their orders through the community online chat or private messages. After that, these women finally come back with big checkered bags that have become a symbol of the new procurement type after the break-up of the Soviet Union. As with any business, this one is subject to risk as well, and this is where long lists of people banned and blacklists of ‘unscrupulous customers’ come from. Some large groups of several thousands of members, have multiple detailed steps for placing an order, and not abiding by these steps impedes the efficiency of the whole system. For example, last month (May 2016), the group *Little Owl: Procurement of Children’s Goods*, published a list of thirty-six

members (using their profiles from VKontakte) who broke the rules which resulted in financial losses for the group's owner.

A characteristic feature of online communities made up predominantly of moms is the readiness to engage in chatting about all sorts of things, from the latest fashion and weight loss solutions to politics. With relatively high levels of empathy towards other members and administrators, this tendency can also include free movement between locally centered online communities where one is looking for goods to purchase and finding "friends" within the same communities. This aspect plays a role in solidifying the networks, providing possibility for friendly communication outside of joint consumer practices.

5.3.5. Online shopping as a segment of informal economy.

Online shopping for new or used clothes and other goods in Russia, as a rule, lies outside of the formal law domain and as such, can be regarded as an agent of an informal economy. At the same time, 'informal' does not necessarily equal 'illegal'. As S. Barsukova, a Russian sociologist with a specialization in informal economies puts it, "the absence of regulating laws and contracts does not mean chaos... this type of economy has different mechanisms of regulation and rule enforcement... activity that is not regulated by the formal law does not violate anything because the law does not intrude into this field" (Barsukova 2012, p.31). Seeing this as an opportunity, a few 'normal' online stores that use quite 'formal' payment systems (money orders and bank transfers, credit cards) as well as less formal 'shopping webpages,' as discussed above, and communities such as VKontakte (webmoney or cash), have grown in numbers significantly.

The classic account of informal economic practices of all sorts, mostly focuses on one kind, known as *blat*, was offered by Alena Ledeneva in 1998. She defines *blat* as a phenomenon “aimed at obtaining desired commodities, arranging jobs and the outcomes of decisions, as well as solving all kinds of everyday problems – became a pervasive feature of public life” (Ledeneva, 1998, p.2.) It is assumed that *blat*, or the use of personal connections for the obtaining scarce commodities or the queue jumping during Soviet times, was both a way around and a way to personalize the faceless bureaucratic system. However, my take on this is that the most important aspect of *blat* was its moneyless nature and the strong rhetoric of mutual help based on friendship, or at least sympathy. A. Ledeneva attempted to trace the consequences and new guises of *blat* in the post-Soviet Russian society and had some revealing observations. Since her fieldwork was done almost twenty years ago, there appeared, to me, new forms of *blat* descendants. This was inevitable in my opinion because *blat* could not have disappeared completely with the end of the Soviet times, as the informality and the need to personalize the formal system even if it is no longer a necessity is ingrained in the Russian soul. In Kasianova’s study of the Russian character (1994, cited in Ledeneva, p.83) she states, “the formal relations are absolutely excluded in our consciousness from the sphere of ‘human’.”

My own observations support this view; in contemporary postsocialist Russia, consumer communities of mothers have become another venue for the establishment of connections and the development of one’s social (and sometimes professional) network. It is not a secret that if a woman had a job before her pregnancy, it is hard to keep her position through maternity leave, especially in the business sector. Starting with shopping, online groups transform into a playground of meaningful social interactions between members. An earned reputation, trust and support solidify women’s networks

which become platforms for seeking help in finding a job, swapping places in kindergarten and building budding friendships.

5.4. So, what do the second-hand and online shopping solidify?

First noted as a modest part of the local urban landscape, second-hand stores set up the context for postsocialist patterns of female consumption. Creeping into the very core of family relationships, shopping practices exercised by mothers for the sake of their small children distort the constructed image of motherhood as love that does not intersect with money matters. Shopping for brand clothes and associated goods, used or new, online or offline, serves the goal of constructing a certain type of self-identity – for instance, a modern mom who takes a good care of her child while also is *uhozhennaya* ('cared-for') herself. Psychoanalytic projection of a mother's self-image onto her child also finds its place in the range of motives for consumption practices as it does an inclination to buy dolly dresses for little girls. A taste for brand-name clothes and a proneness to differentiate and evaluate one's social status, social capital and the ability to compete in the never-ending status battle based on looks is substantial in Karelia, and most probably, in the rest of Russia. It is an arena for affordable and efficient manipulation of one's social status, self-image and self-identity. I fully relate to Miller's concluding remark that "contemporary shopping is better understood as a means for maintaining but also restructuring social relations than as either hedonistic or materialistic activity" (Miller, 2004, p.47; in Taylor, 2004).

As described by Kozinets, modern online consumption facilitates meaningful social relationships, when the very mode of shopping, by placing an order through participation

in an online community, allows for deeper conversations on diverse topics, to which I was often a witness. Acquaintances made through community membership and through virtual correspondence become free and often unsolicited pass-tickets to new jobs for the members themselves and sometimes for their families. Swapping a place in kindergarten for a place with more convenient, in terms of location, or the exchange of information about sales in Petrozavodsk stores and malls, or information on pediatricians and treatment options are some of the common issues discussed along with shopping. Mutual interest and support, openness to making new friends and networking help solidifying local social networks. This solidarity reaches much further than simple acts of purchase. Some online groups have a category of free giveaways. In their empirical study of online gift exchange communities in Russia, Moscow sociologists from the Higher School of Economics, point out that “the gift-exchange phenomenon correlates with categories like trust, joint consumption, social capital, social networks and ecological consumption” (Strelnikova & Polukhina, 2015, p. 2042)²⁸ I would add that even the money aspects involved in the exchange of gently used children’s clothes within an online community of moms help create trust between participants and a special atmosphere of open communication.

Female sellers definitely dominate e-commerce, which is largely oriented toward women’s clothes and accessories as well as children’s goods, acting as entrepreneurs with undeniable business acumen. Developing their trading businesses from scratch, these women demonstrate an uncanny adaptability, flexibility and vigor to manage the whole process from administering clients’ orders to making shopping tours to Finland

²⁸ The authors refer to the following works that defined principles of joint consumption: Bialski and Batorski (2009) “From Online Familiarity to Offline Trust: How a Virtual Community Creates Familiarity” and “Trust between Strangers”; Botsman, Rogers and Folei (2010) “What’s Mine Is Yours: The Rise of Collaborative Consumption.”

and finalizing purchases with meet-ups in person. In a way, this kind of business contributes to development of social stability and sustainability in the region through female involvement in the economy, although largely an informal economy.

Consumption practices being collaborative in nature, like second-hand shopping and giveaways for free through virtual communities could be regarded as an unconscious 'greener,' ethical practice; a practice that is more conducive to social and environmental sustainability as such. Such practices help sustain longer life cycles of the clothes and accessories, and help restrain (ideally) an increase in production, and contribute to less environmental contamination, etc. There is enough evidence to claim that a new ecological paradigm, that characterizes the postmaterialist turn in the West, is steadily making its way to Russia. Ronald Inglehart has done extensive research on direct correlation between a more developed economy and decent living standards with changes in value systems. He states that in 'full' or 'fat' societies, as clean water and air, social justice, etc., become supported and promoted on a large scale, so does catching up with materialistically oriented goals like the purchase of a private house, a car, or spending time on leisure activities.²⁹ Following Inglehart, I argue that actively seeking more sustainable consumption, simpler life styles, and cooperation among individuals for redistribution of public goods is definitely gaining momentum in Russia, and an improved economic situation is hardly the major cause for it. Being highly unstable, economic growth has been quite uneven geographically and chronologically. Being a region that feeds off Moscow, peripheral Karelia does not quite fit Inglehart's pattern. Nevertheless, the active citizenship of the local people is impressive and worthy of

²⁹ Ronald Inglehart is a prolific writer, a political scientist who collaborated with Eurobarometer and who calculated the index of values for the World values survey; for his works, see, for example Inglehart, R. *Human Values and Social Change: Findings from the Values Surveys*. Leiden: Brill (2003).

respect. Based on other social factors, somewhat unique to postsocialist Russia, an environmental consciousness is developing despite obstacles (I discuss this in Part IV, in the context of the project *WASTE: Waste sorting, treatment and education.*)

Also, it is true that mothers with small children are not the major driving force of this new sustainable consciousness: often hostages to survival needs, their primary interests lie in getting economic benefits and social capital or status bonuses that can be translated into economic profit. The need for expanded networks, gaining prestige and finding soulmates – all are important motives in online shopping activities of young mothers. Finally, such practices within the frame of an informal economy can be regarded as perhaps, half-intended opposition to the structural constraints imposed upon them by the capitalist logic of production, as in the vein of Michelle De Certeau (2000). Again, with individual financial considerations being the leading factor, practices that weaken the ‘system’ have not become unified or organized activities but rather, individual tactics.

Chapter 6.

Petrozavodsk in its sculptures and monuments.

6.1. Local monumental landscape.

Continuing the walk along Petrozavodsk streets we notice another category of visually present place markers in the city: its sculptures and monuments. They shape the city's landscape and character while being concentrated mainly in two locations, the Quay³⁰ and the downtown (sometimes the Quay is referred to as a part of the downtown as well). In 2003, Petrozavodsk turned three hundred years, while virtually every milestone of its existence can be traced through metal and stone, gesso and wood scattered around the city, placed in most chronologically (historically) significant and value-charged city spaces. When asked about their connection to the place and their take on what it means to be a Petrozavodian, my respondents pointed to the inherent value of local sculptures and monuments. They say that specific landmarks shape their experience of moving through the city, eliciting emotional response and a sense of being grounded, literally 'being in the place,' which in a couple of most reveling interviews was distilled into the pure "being" (or "sense of existence, being alive." This echoes what Thomas Csordas writes about the embodied "being-in-the-world" as a sensation that is deeply rooted in cultural experience (Csordas, 1994). Along the same lines of the lived urban experience and city landmarks that enhance it, Tonya Davidson in her recent dissertation on monuments and memory develops a perspective of monuments as "stone bodies... spirited with a certain life-force, having the ability to haunt, unsettling relationships

³⁰ I write 'Quay' with a capital 'Q' to express my respect for the significant role it plays for the city.

between place, memory, and belonging,” arguing that “monuments, by virtue of their original place-making and memory-generating intents are complicated bodies for remembering; they are messy and tangled” (Davidson, 2012, p.13).

I suggest that the selection of sculptures and monuments put up in the city project distinct identity – inward and outward – to the local citizens and visiting guests, branding the city in a specific way. The assessment of Petrozavodsk’ monuments is essential for understanding the visible (although not necessarily consciously constructed) city identity. On the contrary, the common territorial/neighborhood identity as a ‘glue for the region’ seems to be a deliberately designed project orchestrated by the Norwegian senior officials of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region. In this way, the local Petrozavodian place-making through *flâneuring*, consumption and monuments sets the stage for zooming out to the regional place-making, which I discuss in Part III.

There are twenty prominent sculptures and monuments in Petrozavodsk.³¹ Together, they make an organic whole of nicely blended epochs, ideologies, and artistic styles. In this chapter, I offer a discussion of five city sculptures installed in recent years that reflect the cultural, ideological and artistic turn after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. They are gifts to Petrozavodsk by its sister-cities; in fact, partnership with sister-cities is well rooted in townsfolk’s consciousness, not only due to its effectiveness and frequent ‘friendly delegations’ arriving to Petrozavodsk from Europe and United States but also due to city toponyms. In this way, the locals are reminded of special ties with Neubrandenburg (Germany) thanks to the respective street name and the Neubrandenburg Beerhouse; the quays named after La-Rochelle (France) and Varkaus (Finland) are the common walking destinations on weekends; probably, everyone has had

³¹ For the map of monuments see Appendix.

an occasion to whisper a wish in the *Wish Tree's* big ear, or appreciate dynamic postures of the *Fishermen* casting their nets into the Onega Lake.

Petrozavodsk's municipal government started to actively develop sister-city relations back in 1970s. As of today, it has cooperation agreements with thirteen cities of eleven countries of Europe, Caucasus and North America.³² At the times of the Soviet Union, the spheres of cooperation were mostly confined to cultural and sometimes scientific exchanges but during the last two decades, joint activities have spread to include business partnership and projects in the area of ecology, human rights, social security, education and more.

The boundary location is but one significant factor in the particular spatial feel of the city. The other component is its proximity to the 'big water,' which opens a gateway to multiple layers of implications. Onega Lake is the second largest freshwater lake in Europe (9,700 km²) following Ladoga (18,130 km²) which is only about two hundred kilometers from Petrozavodsk. Speaking pragmatically, there are some six ways of making use of water for recreational commercial purposes: waterscape (raises estimated cost of real estate), *over the water* use (i.e., parachuting while being towed by a motor boat), *on the water* use (boating), *by the water* use (barbecuing), *in the water* use (swimming), and *under the water* use (diving). For Petrozavodsk, the use of the visual perception of the waters of Onega Lake seems to be prevalent if only because its temperature is quite chilly for swimming even in summer.³³

³² More specifically, Petrozavodsk sister-cities are Varkaus and Joensuu (Finland), La-Rochelle (France), Umeå (Sweden), Neubrandenburg and Tübingen (Germany), Mo I Rana (Norway), Duluth (USA), Brest (Belarus), Nikolayev (Ukraine), Vagharshapat (Armenia), Alytus (Lithuania), Narva (Estonia): taken from the official website of Petrozavodsk municipality, last accessed on Sept 12, 2016 http://www.petrozavodsk-mo.ru/petrozavodsk_new/city/relations.htm

³³ However, there are other smaller lakes in Petrozavodsk proximity that are used for swimming such as Syamozero.

Water helps distinguish a city, which was noted by branding specialists and led to Petrozavodsk' active involvement in international projects aimed at promotion of the city as a tourist destination. As one of the presenters at the closing conference of the Finnish-Russian project with headquarters in Karelia put it, "humanization of the city needs new city space: experience instead of just moving through the streets."³⁴ Petrozavodsk' municipality and city planners have started the search for new identity, with the Quay and its monuments regarded as a city branding asset. Marketing specialists, architects and municipal officials consolidated their efforts in joint international projects to focus on the economy of experiences and impressions.³⁵ Viewing the city as a stage for playing out identities as social performances echoes Erving Goffman's dramaturgical metaphors in his *Presentations of Self in Everyday Life*. The trendy boom of creation of thematic spaces penetrates Petrozavodsk, with the Quay being the first declared space that needs restructuring and rebranding to make the most out of its 'modern art spirit.'³⁶

Since 2011, Petrozavodsk has served as a meeting ground (as well as a mastermind) for a number of joint initiatives aimed at enhancing wellbeing in Karelia and northern regions of Finland and Norway through promotion of tourism. Hence, an international project *Cities by the Water: New Guises and New Opportunities for Business Development* was set up in Petrozavodsk in 2011-2013. The goals of the project were to develop

³⁴ Vasily Dubeikovskiy, *City Branding Co*, Moscow. His presentation for the conference *Cities by the Water* in Petrozavodsk can be found here: <http://www.slideshare.net/CityBranding/ss-31433248> (last accessed on September 12, 2016).

³⁵ The focus on producing impressions as a key goal in new branding was mentioned in the Resolution that was adopted at the end of the Conference *Cities by the Water: New Guise and New Possibilities* (http://www.petrozavodsk-mo.ru/petrozavodsk_new/city/relations/info.htm?id=10523991@cmsArticle, last accessed on September 13, 2016).

³⁶ The first official statements made by the municipality about the transformation/ refashioning of the Quay appeared in Petrozavodsk press in 2014 and since then the efforts continue, with attention to both vegetation and architectural features (<http://petrozavodsk.rusplt.ru/index/vlasti-petrozavodsk-preobrazyat-onejskuyu-naberejnuyu.html>, last accessed on September 5, 2016.)

integrative decisions on the territorial development in the cities of Joensuu, Kitee (Northern Karelia, Finland), Petrozavodsk and Sortavala (Russian Karelia) that would provide support for local tourist businesses and space planning.³⁷ In February 2014, a two-year project on city branding was finalized with a closing conference held in Petrozavodsk. It summed up the project's achievements and gathered foreign partners and representatives of fourteen participating Russian cities. The project consisted of two phases: 'Modern and old city: development of crossborder cultural tourism' and 'City branding. Joint branding of middle-sized cities.' It is interesting to compare logistics of international projects developed in the city with the project that was the major focus of my fieldwork, *W.A.S.T.E. Waste Awareness: Sorting, Treatment, Education. The Cities by the Water* project as well as the *W.A.S.T.E.* had a pilot phase that lasted about a year, while the overall structure and proceedings (as far as I can tell from observing the branding project online) also look similar. As far as financing goes, the branding project directed at marketing, development of new technologies in tourism and promotion of attractiveness of Petrozavodsk and Joensuu was supported by EU's ENPI CBC program 'Karelia' along with federal Russian co-funding.³⁸ Regional politics of the European Union in regard to Karelia is one of the issues that I explore in Part III.

There seems to be a connection between preferred, or customary, set of administrative actions and those cultural unspoken norms that Dale Pesmen would reckon among the constituents of the "Russian soul" (Pesmen, 2000). While in European countries city

³⁷ Information about the project at the Petrozavodsk municipal website: http://www.petrozavodsk-mo.ru/petrozavodsk_new/city/relations/info.htm?id=10524007@cmsArticle, last accessed on Sept 5, 2016.

³⁸ ENPI CBC (European neighborhood & partnership instrument, cross border cooperation) is aimed at "enhancing well-being" in Russian Karelia as well as Finnish and Norwegian northern territories that are given special attention on the part of the national governments and EU at large. I discuss this in more detail in Part III devoted to the cooperation in Barents Euro-Arctic Region.

branding is a well-established industry that is responsible for attracting investments, in Russia it seems to be the opposite, when only a narrow group of specialists (art historians, architects and scholars with research interests in this area) is aware and appreciative of many historical and architectural landmarks. In her article on the small cities brand formation, Konovalova N.A. notes that in Russia, it is still considered inappropriate, or *mauvais ton*³⁹, to engage in popularization of the assets of old monuments and to “objectify” them by “corrupting” their high cultural value and transform it into sellable commodity of the new capitalism (Konovalova, 2013).

Those most visible and well recognized monuments in Petrozavodsk belong to different epochs and effectively claim and label the space they occupy. Perhaps, the earliest monuments are what I call ‘enculturated boulders’ that are abundant in Karelia due to the glacier retreat. Some of the boulders that lie in Karelian towns are too big to be removed. Others became quite successfully incorporated into the urban landscape with the help of the architectural human touch by inscribing the boulders into clear-cut geometric shapes.

Human-made sculptures and monuments mark the city’s historical paths, with their prophets, cultural and ideological shifts as well as concepts of what a ‘proper, artistic’ art is.⁴⁰ The map of the monuments provided in the Appendix 1 shows the

³⁹ *Mauvais ton* (“unacceptable in certain circles or polite society,” Fr.) This word along with another French loan, *comme il faut* (interestingly, with an added Russian prefix “non-,” meaning “not correct in behavior or etiquette”) are the ones that are widely used in oral speech and never in journalistic or bureaucratic writing. These words are grammatically maladaptive in the Russian language and do not allow for case inflection. There are few words in Russian that catch on as well as these two. My guess about the reason for this is that Russians are quite perceptive to what counts as ‘Culture’ (with a capital C) and ‘decent’ behavioral norms. Everyone seems to be aware of the ‘proper’ ways of having a conversation, behaving in public spaces, etc.; that is why deviations from the norm are labelled with French loans that seem to capture the same idea with just one word (in Russian adaptation it is one word).

⁴⁰ As Svetlana Boym noted in her chapter on everyday culture in Dmitri Shalin’s volume, “For many Russian and Soviet cultural critics, the expression “everyday culture” would appear problematic, if not oxymoronic, because culture in the Russian context, in the singular and with a

location and distribution of Petrozavodsk sculptures and monuments. For the sake of convenience an out of love for taxonomies, I would group Petrozavodsk monuments into the following three categories:



Figure 10 - 'Enculturated boulders.' Photo Credit: <http://dmitriy-k.livejournal.com/1492.html>.

- 1) Monuments referring to the subjectively remote pre-revolutionary past that locals can be proud of. This group includes the monument to the most famous Russian poet, who is the epitome of 'Russianness,' Alexander Pushkin. In his well-known poem *Evgeny Onegin* the character's last name is directly related to the Onega Lake. The next important figure recently objectified in metal is Alexander Nevsky. He was one of the Grand Princes during the times of Kievan Rus' (13th century), recognized as a saint by the Russian Christian Orthodox Church. His full-length bronze statue was erected in 2010 next to the Nevsky cathedral. The monument to

capital "C," has been defined as a heroic battle against the "everyday" (Boym 1996: 158). The concepts of culture and art in the Russian context are closely interconnected, and artistic works that are granted the right to be called such usually have to go through vigorous accessing and evaluating by public. This is especially true for the works put up for public display presumably for good, like monuments and sculptures.

Peter the Great was relocated several times since it has been first installed until it found its final resort on the Quay. Some say it is unfortunate because Peter is now separated from the historical buildings of the 18th and the 19th centuries: it would be 'more tasteful' and 'made more sense' if he was not.⁴¹ Finally, the last one is the statue of Gavriil Derzhavin, a Russian poet of the age of Enlightenment, politician and a privy councilor. He is connected to Karelia by the fact of being first Olonets governor, with Olonets province roughly corresponding to the contemporary Karelia, although the borders did shift to include new parts or yielding its villages to Novgorod and Archangelsk provinces. Although G. Derzhavin was the governor for only one year (from 1784 till 1785), he is one of the most remembered leaders of the republic.

- 2) The second group unites figures from the revolutionary and Soviet past of Karelia. The monuments belonging to that period are the monument to Vladimir Lenin, the Gallery of heroes of the Soviet Union, the memorial complex *Mass Grave & Tomb of the Unknown Soldier with Eternal Light*, monument in commemoration of *50 Years' Anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War*, Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels monument, and finally, the monument to Otto Kuusinen. Otto Kuusinen, a Finnish-born activist of the Finnish revolution in 1918, made a dazzling political career in Russia. However, my brief research on him revealed that he was a quite contradictory figure. I discuss some of these monuments in a greater detail at the end of this chapter.
- 3) The last group of monuments that is discussed in detail in this chapter is comprised of works of modern art presented to Petrozavodsk during last several

⁴¹ Noted from casual talks with my intelligentsia participants who place a great value on particular, 'proper' arrangement of space and ideas while having specific understanding of what a 'good taste' is.

decades by its foreign friends in sister-cities and other localities over the Russian border. I argue that for the modern identity of the city, they are the most significant out of all three groups.

Outweighed by the modern sculptures at the Onega Quay, older monuments still claim space, conventionally labeling it Christian (Alexander Nevsky monument), nostalgically imperial (Peter the Great monument), Soviet (without producing debates over its meanings and legacy), or relatively neutral (*Mother and Child* sculpture). These older monuments are becoming invisible, a part of natural landscape, and almost as unavoidable. Sculptures at the Quay, on the contrary, provoke discussions and debates among locals; between themselves (including me as an in-group member)⁴² they make inside jokes about these sculptures, openly doubting their artistic value, being ironic and downplaying their qualities, giving nicknames to them, saying that they are a part of sister-cities self-promotional efforts. At the same time, the Quay is the first place they take city guests to, giving a proud speech on the ‘contemporary open-air art museum’ as something unique to Petrozavodsk. In a way, this is similar to Edmontonians having mixed feelings about the West Edmonton Mall but mentioning it as the first attraction worth visiting to those new to the city. This could be regarded as an illustration for Erving Goffman’s array of cases around ‘frontstage’ and ‘backstage’ performances.⁴³

Among Petrozavodsk locals, there are those who really like the present look of the Quay. There are those who despise it for lack of taste, ‘yielding under the cultural load of

⁴² For the discussion of my position and identity as a researcher, see chapter 1.

⁴³ In the chapter on regions and region behavior of his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, E. Goffman discusses the manner of conduct that people engage in while being on duty, observed, in the front of the ‘audience’ that they want/ need to impress (impression management) and situations of relaxation in more private space where “the performer can relax; he can drop his front, forgo speaking his lines, and step out of character” (Goffman 1959: 112).

the West with their kitsch.⁴⁴ There are those who... in a word, views differ, and I would be cautious to overgeneralize. At the same time, the unifying facet is that the sculptures at the Quay do touch feelings. On this background of citizens' active involvement, other, older monuments become naturalized and reduced to a shadow, gradually becoming history, like communal graves.

6.2. Onega Lake Quay sculptures.

6.2.1. Fishermen.



Figure 11 - Fishermen. Photo credit: <http://dmitriy-k.livejournal.com/1492.html>.

⁴⁴ Stanislav, a male in his forties, chance acquaintance during my long walks along the Quay. Stanislav called himself a 'true Petrozavodian' in the second generation.

There is no doubt that the sculpture *Fishermen* is the most loved among the locals: this is the attitude shared by the city administration and tourist companies alike. The *Fishermen* have become a sort of a city's business card decorating City of Petrozavodsk's web pages and tourist booklets. In the opinion of many of my respondents, the *Fishermen* became the iconic and "most understandable, warm, or alive" in the gallery of contemporary art sculptures that are exhibited at the Quay. The *Fishermen* are the present from Petrozavodsk's sister-city of Duluth, Minnesota, USA, brought in 1991;⁴⁵ its author/ sculptor is Rafael Consuegro who personally participated in the installation of the monument. The interpretation that I read in tourist booklets had it that the two fishermen are a Russian and an American, casting a fishnet together, which should symbolize their joint "productive labor." Due to its bordering location, relative openness to communication with neighbors as well as more tangible factors such as relatively long history of international trade in Karelia that extends back over centuries, the continuity of ties over the border has never been disrupted, only thinned, when such connections were discouraged by the central government. Thanks to the tradition of giving sculptures for a present by its sister-cities that established in early 1990s, Petrozavodsk accumulated a number of unique but semantically disconnected sculptures. Each year, one sculpture was presented. This served as an occasion for official festive installation of the sculpture at the Onega Quay on the Day of Petrozavodsk that is celebrated on the last Saturday of June. In about ten years, the Quay was transformed into an open-air museum of contemporary art. Quite often this denotation of the Quay being an "open-air museum of contemporary art" is uttered by the locals with indulging irony, as if endorsing their exclusive right to criticize, based on the privilege of belonging.

⁴⁵ If not indicated otherwise, all historical data regarding international relations is taken from the official website of Petrozavodsk municipality, or from casual talks with its employees.

The agreement about establishment of sister-city relations between Petrozavodsk and Duluth was signed in 1987; since then, the cities have been regularly exchanging official delegations. A very friendly and helpful former head of the International Office of the Petrozavodsk State Pedagogical Academy, S.O., told me about exchange programs for students with the College of St. Scholastica in Duluth. For Karelia, used to the long history of cooperation with Finns and other Scandinavian nations, partnership with an American college was developing smoothly. Even after the breakup of the Soviet Union, informal connections and practices still play a visible role being a driving force not only for internal affairs but for international cooperation as well. Hence, it is not surprising that the majority of cooperative agreements with higher education institutions across the Karelian border were signed as a result of personal initiatives of the heads of these institutions who approached each other. “First, the Finns approached us. I mean, the rector of the Institute of Ecological Education, a Finn, came to Petrozavodsk and started randomly looking for partners. He came to us and said, ‘Let’s be friends!’ We agreed, why not” (S.O.) In 1990s, when Russia opened up, exchange programs for students flourished. All it took to get started was an agreement signed by the two parties, with minimal legislative restrictions: “Back then, all we required to have a cooperative agreement signed was the intention and a good will of the both sides; we had to notify our Ministry of External Affairs – but only notify, we didn’t have to have their permission. Once the agreement was signed, it was the time for project writing to win funding” (S.O.) Even at the time of this interview, back in 2013, these favorable conditions for cooperation of early 2000s came across as fantastic golden age that never existed. Since then the laws regulating external affairs have changed several times following directives from the central government that had a hard time deciding on the degree of independence that it could grant Karelia in terms of partnership with its neighbors and

more distant foreign partners. One of the ways to slow down international cooperation for universities (whether intentional or not) was to cut off funding. This happened to the Pedagogical College as well and consequently, the numbers of exchange students significantly decreased. However, the cuts had not ruin the partnership completely thanks to understanding and support of the foreign partners (universities and colleges) that agreed to substitute obligatory financial co-funding with intellectual work of Russian professors who contributed to the cooperation for free.

At the same time, official Russian-American relationships continued to remain frigid. According to local urban lore, as soon as the *Fishermen* were installed, there arose doubts and rumors holding that it was not a net that the fishermen were casting but a special wire that transmitted espionage information to the West. However, the central government's position regarding 'friends' and 'foes' have only so much influence on its citizens. My take on this is that the borderland population is less susceptible to propaganda because of multiple connections across the border, business and trade as well as personal ties and friendships. The *Fishermen* is indeed the most locally loved sculpture at the whole Quay which can be justified by the impressive number of folk nicknames given to it. In fact, all Quay monuments have their nicknames – perhaps, due to their 'modernist' nature which often equals 'alien, incomprehensible, and repelling.' At the same time, the more favorable attention is given to the subject, the more likely it will be joked about. Thus, the *Fishermen* are known to have several nicknames such as 'Prisoners of Buchenwald',⁴⁶ alluding to the wizen appearance of the fishermen; 'Victims of Perestroika,' or 'Dystrophic guys wrestling with a spider net.' Finally, the last

⁴⁶ Buchenwald was one of the cruelest Nazi concentration camps during the Word War II.

catchword that I heard a couple of days before leaving Petrozavodsk came from the mouth of a six-year-old boy who cried, ‘Look, grandma: fishing skeletons!’

6.2.2. *Wish Tree.*



Figure 12 - Wish Tree. Photo credit: <http://skbic.ru/en/4581/5099.html>.

The second most loved and appreciated work of art at the Quay is the *Wish Tree* presented to Petrozavodsk in 1996 by its sister-city from Sweden, Umeå (Västerbotten County). The original designer idea to wrap a real pine in black fiberglass belongs to a Swedish architect Kent Andersen. In the middle part of the tree there is a large ear in which one can whisper a wish that is supposed to come true. Originally, the Tree was adorned with brass bells – as a part of a ritual, the person making a wish had to ring them to ensure that the wish was heard. As was expected, the bells brought from Sweden

and hung at the tree were stolen by the locals the first week after the sculpture's installation and kept as souvenirs. Petrozavodsk municipality made duplicates but it did not take long (even with guardianship of police patrols) until those duplicate bells were gone as well. The municipality gave up after the third attempt and since then, there were no bells to ring. I associate the idea of the *Wish Tree* with Swedish fairy tales of trees bringing luck – a feature that is supposed to be transferrable to the Karelian land. The whole situation of removal of bells reminds me of an English fairytale about a mysterious Cupbearer. Cupbearer was that mystical ghostly figure who was treating hunters and other travelers who ascended his mountain with magically refreshing and energy reviving nectar. However, after the charm cup was impudently stolen from the Cupbearer by disgraceful knight (who died soon afterwards in punishment), no one could experience that marvelous healing drink anymore. The Cupbearer disappeared, bitterly disappointed and no longer wishing to serve the humankind. Yet, Karelians are tough and did not give up the right of their wishes to be fulfilled by a magical tree as easily as Englishmen had given up the blessing of the healing nectar and the noble service of the Cupbearer. As the local urban lore has it (bypassing the ill-starred bells), that for the wish to come true one needs to tie a colorful ribbon on a branch of the tree. The ribbon must be bright because only bright and colorful ones will be appreciated and received well by the tree spirit. Actually, the ritual of tying a ribbon, or just a knot in a rope, on a tree branch as a material signifier of a completed act (an act of making a wish in this case) is widely spread among Slavic cultures. I observed a similar custom in the Crimea; however, a tree over there was real but was believed to possess special powers because of its location on a sacred hill and the story that came with it. Yet the aesthetic preferences of the municipality confronted those of citizens: after the 'spring clean-up' all the ribbons were cut off from the tree which produced true outrage. A couple of months ago (in April

2016), Petrozavodsk City Administration announced an open competition among artists, designers, sculptures and architects to modify the appearance of the *Wish Tree*. According to Evgeny Frolov, the principal architect of Petrozavodsk,⁴⁷ the idea is to “revive the sculpture and shed new light on its re-interpretation” along with transformation of the ground area immediately around it.⁴⁸ We do not know yet what kind of re-interpretation will win and be selected to represent the new official understanding of the sculpture’s “revival.” At present, the most wide-spread folk nickname for the *Wish Tree* is ‘concentration camp dead-wood’ – again, alluding to the traumatic historical past of the Great Patriotic War.⁴⁹ Another catchword for it is “the Hiroshima tree” for it being all black as if burned, with no leaves but with a “post-atomic explosion effect: the grown ear!” In short – perhaps, doing some “revival” and “re-interpretation” is not a bad idea after all.

6.2.3. *Sleeping Beauty.*

The Day of Petrozavodsk in 1999 was marked by a sculpture *Sleeping Beauty* presented by a French sister-city of La Rochelle. The sculpture is inverted and looks identical from either side, front or back. It was introduced to me by my local friend Georgii as *Death by Bamboo*. Georgii holds a strong opinion that the Quay sculptures owe the existence of their nicknames to educated and well-read locals. The *Death by*

⁴⁷ The position of the “city principal architect” implies a municipal officer who works in one of city departments. If the city is big enough it may have the department of architecture and Urban Development which is headed by the principal architect. As I was told, this official does not possess super powers to improve the city image but rather, he (most often male) is there to carry out wishes of the mayor.

⁴⁸ News taken from the Swedish Karelian Business and Information Center website, <http://skbic.ru/en/4581/5099.html> (last accessed on December 12, 2016).

⁴⁹ Great Patriotic War is a Russian name for the part of the World War II that was fought on its grounds, implying the defensive and just nature of this battle for all Soviet people.



Figure 13 - Sleeping Beauty. Photo credit: <http://dmitriy-k.livejournal.com/1492.html>.

Bamboo is a good argument for this as it makes an allusion to Franz Kafka's short story, *The Judgement*. Franz Kafka is definitely known and loved by intelligentsia for being relatable in the context of Russian culture – not the least, due to Fedor Dostoyevsky's influence on Kafka and those parallels that can be drawn between their works. The link between *Death by Bamboo* and *The Judgement* is of associative linguistic nature. Georg, the main character of Kafka's story, was sentenced to "death by drowning" by his father with whom Georg had complicated and rather hateful relationships. This verbal act of pronouncing a judgment pushed Georg out of the room and mysteriously made him swing over the bridge railings and plunge with deadly outcome, undoubted but never stated openly. I can see the parallel: *Sleeping Beauty* looks both drowned and impaled by spear-like 'bamboo,' with her eyes closed. According to the official interpretation by the Petrozavodsk municipality that was posted on their website, the original idea of the

sculpture's designer Jan Pier Dyussayan was to marry the beauty of female body with the beauty of northern Karelian nature which is famous for its lakes and forests. A female rocking on the stone pole waves is supposed to represent peacefulness and conciliation of the local landscape. Local girls who I spoke to about this sculpture could not come to terms with this beauty canon and were reluctant to associate it with the beauty of Karelian women.

La Rochelle was one of the first cities to embark on partnership with Petrozavodsk back in 1973. As it was shared with me by a city administration staff member with over thirty years of work experience, this sister-city cooperation began with the personal friendship between the then mayors of Petrozavodsk and La Rochelle. The most traditional directions of partnership back then included art, culture and education realized through exchange programs; since 2004, the environmental dimension was embraced. Activist organizations on the Russian and the French side contribute to development of personal connections between citizens of Petrozavodsk and La Rochelle. In 2003, during celebrations and ceremonies devoted to the third hundred's anniversary of Petrozavodsk, official delegation from La Rochelle arrived to discuss new steps and areas of cooperation in spheres of human rights, education, social security, and business. In fact, it was the first official restatement of the original sister-city partnership agreement from 1973 that confirmed the ties and mutual interest in joint programs and projects.

6.2.4. Tübingen Panel.

The next iconic monument that decorates Onega quay is *Tübingen panel*, a gift from a sister-city of Tübingen, Germany. It was designed by Bernhard Vogelmann and Kurt

Geiselhart who personally participated in painting the tops of its elements in 1994. Like *Sleeping Beauty*, *Tübingen Zanel* was assembled at Petrozavodskmash.⁵⁰ As the official version of the meaning of this sculpture expressed in guidebooks holds it, a few stones built inside the poles were taken from historical buildings in Tübingen and Petrozavodsk. This unites the two cities not only in the present moment but also through history, with



Figure 14 - Tübingen panel. Photo credit:
<http://7constantine7.livejournal.com/90674.html>.

allusions to the Second World War: it is said that the top of one of the poles represents a bombshell. Hence, the poles reproduce a metaphor for the long way that the friendship

⁵⁰ Petrozavodskmash (Petrozavodsk machinery) is a joint stock company, one of the biggest machine builders in Russia, founded in 1966. It produces and delivers package units, vessel and other types of equipment for nuclear, petrochemical industries as well as self-contained paper mills; their official website can be found here: <http://prom.ru/site/11/103/petrozavodskmash/> (last accessed on July 17, 2016).

between the two cities has gone. In total, this architectural composition consists of sixty-one metal poles fixed in the ground, varying in size, shape, height and color, while each of them signifies a particular concept (such as unity or memory) or emotion (sorrow or inspiration). At the same time, its designers preferred to intrigue their Karelian audience by not being too specific about the original meaning. At the sculpture's inauguration Bernhard Vogelmann and Kurt Geiselhart said that they wish the locals "be patient and take time to grasp the intended meaning."⁵¹ It seems like since then the locals keep trying coming up with substitutes for the official name of the sculpture, such as *Set of Picklocks*, *Field of Masts*, *Pensive Reed* and *Lighter*. My favorite ones are *Death of Parachutist* and *Dogs' Joy*. The first one refers to sharp ends of the poles piercing the sky, and the other one reflects the fact that cohorts of dogs walked on the Quay unanimously show their appreciation of the sculpture by marking the poles and sniffing out new acquaintances by previous marks. It is said by local dog owners that *Tübingen panel* has become the most favorite place for dogs' mating.

⁵¹ News posted by the Petrozavodsk municipal administration http://www.petrozavodsk-o.ru/petrozavodsk_new/city/relations/cities/goroda.htm (last accessed on July 12, 2016).

6.2.5. *Wave of Friendship.*



Figure 15 - *Wave of Friendship*. Photo credit: <http://7constantine7.livejournal.com/90674.html>.

And finally, the last sculpture of the foreign origin being displayed at the Onega Quay that is worth discussing in detail is the *Wave of Friendship*. It was presented to Petrozavodsk by Varkaus, Eastern Finland, in 1997. Varkaus is the first sister-city of Petrozavodsk, with official contacts established in 1965. For the Day of Petrozavodsk, a Finnish architect Anna Kettunen designed a sculpture to represent the wave-like growing friendship between the two cities. The unofficial names for it are *Dinosaur's Skeleton* and *Belt of Obstacles*. The Onega Quay is a magnetic place for *flâneurs*, local and foreign, rain or shine. If your walk is long enough, you have a good chance to witness all kinds of incidents that reveal something about the general atmosphere at the Quay, or

sometimes, the reasons for local nicknames given to these sculptures of European (or broader, “western”) origin. One weekend I was passing by and I saw a group of Finnish tourists with a guide, watching this sculpture. Naturally, some of them wanted to try to go underneath the waves: they started with the largest element and moved to the smallest. As you can see on the picture, there is a little bridge beneath the smallest ‘wave’ and it happened so that one of the tourists, a little bit heavy woman, could not make it through the last arch and got stuck. Her fellows did their best to help her and finally succeeded. This became one of those “revelatory incidents” in my fieldwork when I overheard a local passer-by mention the *Belt of Obstacles*, in its true, straightforward meaning.

6.3. Soviet-era monuments.

The modern art sculpture gifts at the Quay stand in sharp contrast with more traditional monuments found in parks and squares of Petrozavodsk – monuments that represent historical figures or abstract people embodying specific ideas. Below is the compilation of three artworks that give insight into the alternative monumental city landscape. They are: the monument to Vladimir Lenin, the *Eternal Light* memorial and the *Mother and Child*. I chose these three as they seem to be typical of the Soviet historic



Figure 17 – top to bottom: Lenin monument, *Mass Grave and Tomb of the Unknown Soldier with Eternal Light* memorial complex and *Mother and Child* sculpture. Photo credit: KP.

legacy, representing the revolutionary and Bolshevik past and commemoration of the heroes of the Great Patriotic War. The last one, the *Mother and Child*, stands as a celebration of nurturing motherhood, represented in accordance with the Soviet canons of ultimate femininity. The eleven-meter high Lenin monument has been a part of Petrozavodsk cityscape for over eighty years, undisturbed, at the center of the well-maintained, traffic-free Lenin square. The memorial complex *Mass Grave and Tomb of the Unknown Soldier with Eternal Light* was erected in the graveyard of revolutionary activists and Civil war soldiers. Later, Soviet soldiers of the Great Patriotic War were buried here as well. The memorial was inaugurated in 1969 to commemorate twenty-five years of liberation from the Finnish occupation. Beside the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, there is a plate saying ‘Your name is unknown. Your feat is immortal’ that refers to dedication to all soldiers who

found their final resting place without a proper burial.⁵² The eternal light goes out several

⁵² I adapted the information about the Eternal Light memorial complex from the website of the Republic Center for State Protection of Culturally Significant Objects, <http://monuments.karelia.ru/ob-ekty-kul-turnogo-nasledija/katalog-ob-ekty-istoriko-kul->

times a year but is usually fixed within a couple of hours. The urban lore has it that the reason for the fire to die away are the coins that fall into the torch nozzle. The tradition of throwing coins at the memorial has existed since the time of its opening.

For former Soviet citizens, Lenin monument, the *Eternal Light* memorial and the *Mother and Child* sculpture are a kind of artwork, it does not require deep context to relate to it. The value of motherhood, for instance, is supposed to encourage new mothers when they leave the Birth House #1,⁵³ by which the sculpture is located. To be fair, the ratio of male and female sculptures in Petrozavodsk is about equal; however, I am not aware of any historical female figure embodied in stone, only metaphorical images of generalized femininity or motherhood. The *Mother and Child* is one of them. As many others, it has its own history of creation, erection, displacement and replacement. Several generations of Petrozavodians starting from 1940s, have their first photos taken with this sculpture on the background after it had been moved to the front yard of the Birth House #1. Maurice Halbwachs starts his chapter on the social frameworks of memory (1992) with emphasizing the importance of images (photos) and the role of friends and relatives in retrieving one's memories. Showing and sharing of old paper photos in family albums in Karelia continues to be an intimate and unifying activity, like it used to be in pre-digital era. Family albums are shown to guests as an entertainment when the mother/hostess of the home is finishing laying the table for a dinner; they are shown by parents to more or less 'serious' partners of their children. Familiar photo set up, naked

turnogo-nasledija-goroda-petrozavodska/razdely-kataloga/ob-ekty-svjazannye-s-sobytijami-velikoj-otechestvennoj-vojny-1941-1945-godov/memorial-nyj-kompleks-bratskaja-mogila-i-mogila-neizvestnogo-soldata-s-vechnym-ognem-slavy/ (last accessed on July 12, 2016).

⁵³ In Russia and other countries of Commonwealth of Independent States, the process of giving birth usually takes place in so-called 'birth houses' which are official medical institutions separate from hospitals, in both structure and ideology as far as a 'hospital' (bol'nitsa) is a place where sick people are being treated but in birth houses new people are being born, which is viewed as a healthy natural process that requires some level of assistance.

smiling babies, feeding, first wobbly steps. Sharing childhood photos is still an intimate gesture of trust and openness. The only two birth houses in Petrozavodsk are the Republican regional hospital, designated for birthing mothers with complicated medical history and the birth house #1 designated for everyone else. The first photos traditionally made in front of the birth house, claim the “local-iness” readily recognized and supported by those to whom the photo is shown, which establishes a connection to shared childhood memories, which in turn, helps strengthen social and personal ties. I find it fascinating how collective memory can be triggered by a carved piece of old gesso, which illuminates the theme of emotional effects of monuments and sculptures on people. As Tonya Davidson put it, “Monuments and human agents collaborate to produce places and generate memories” (Davidson, 2012, p.13).

6.4. Concluding remarks.

The past is never dead. It's not even past.
(William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun*)

In Petrozavodsk, two realms of monumental landscape seem to coexist without encroaching into each other's existential domains. Conventionally, I divide all types of sculptures there into the ‘Quay sculptures’ and ‘everything else’ which is essential for my argument about the nature of the urban identity formation that has taken place in Petrozavodsk for the last couple of decades. The more traditional monuments, be it remains of the social realism style or more recent commemorations of a saint in front of the classicist cathedral, are reflective of the common past and pan-Russian memory which visually puts peripheral Karelia in the broader state context. These monuments are traditional in the sense that they are perceived as magnificent bodies that exist on a

parallel xy-plane, intersecting with people's everyday lives only on particular dates and for specific commemorative occasions. If viewed from the perspective of an urban landscape designer (Gurler and Ozer, 2013), the monuments of this type can be classified as "enclosed memory sites" as opposed to more integrated ones such as stumbling blocks arts projects that can be related to on a more personal level. Due to their traditional form (a male figure on a high pedestal) and a traditional choice of the person (or idea) to commemorate, arguably, these monuments fall out of sight and become invisible and disconnected from local people's daily routines. At the same time, it would be wrong to overgeneralize and forget about generational difference: it is clear from talks with local people whose youth fell on 1970s that they are quite conscious of the monuments that allude to the past – in ideological, religious, or cultural terms.⁵⁴

I believe that city identity is shaped by its multifaceted context and does not exist in vacuum. The interplay of sculptures and monuments in Petrozavodsk is performed, like in orchestra, with a variety of instruments, in a particular hierarchical structure. The local place identity as perceived and lived by city folk resembles a final musical theme streaming from the co-creation of all participants. As such, it is negotiated through dialogues on at least three scales – with Moscow, former Soviet republics, and the European part of the Barents Region (mostly the Nordic countries and Finland in particular).

The modern-art Quay sculptures are clearly a product of the post-socialist era and reflect the aspirations for international cooperation in the region (the project *W.A.S.T.E.* is an example of that). The other monuments, while definitely belonging to the present

⁵⁴ For example, for Tatiana N., it was an important family tradition for her and her husband, now deceased, to go to yearly parades in commemoration of the Victory Day (May 9) every year. They would meet other parade participants by the Lenin monument that still invokes nostalgia of her youth in her.

spatially, are pathways to the past through the links of common social memory. Gurler and Ozer (2013) call monuments of this type “the psychological and sociological requirement of the society on the landscape.” They refer to the particular functions that are performed by monuments such as that of civil duty to keep memories of “painful events” and those milestones that were transforming lives of people of the whole country, and regionally. In Russia, preservation of memories and nostalgia go hand-in-hand. Svetlana Boym, in her essay *From the Toilet to the Museum: Memory and Metamorphosis of Soviet Trash*⁵⁵, states that “...there is nothing particularly new about post-Soviet nostalgia except its scale. No longer the property of nationalist politicians or ironic postmodern intellectuals, nostalgia has become insitutionalized in the new monumental propaganda that flourishes in Moscow” (1999, p.383). Primarily, she refers to the colossal, multi-million project of rebuilding a Christian Orthodox cathedral in the center of Moscow that was previously destroyed in 1931 (see Figure 16 below). The project was funded by the government and ordinary citizens who made generous donations. When rebuilt, the cathedral has become a battle-ground for its huge proportions and the cost. While renovation of the Alexander Nevsky cathedral in Petrozavodsk (see figure 9 below) actually followed the same pattern of religious revival, the scope of the local restorative work was not nearly comparable to that in Moscow. I would add that big investment in A. Nevsky cathedral rebuilt was limited but budget but also, to my knowledge, beaming gold and other decorations were not on the agenda anyway. Massive renovations of war memorials in Moscow (such as the one at the Poklonnaya Hill) and official religious spaces embody what Boym called “utopian nostalgia” for a powerful homeland. At the same time, Petrozavodsk, a capital of a frontier republic, follows its own path and does not copy identity ambitions of Moscow.

⁵⁵ Barker, A.M. 1999. *Consuming Russia: Popular Culture, Sex, and Society since Gorbachev*. Duke University Press.



Figure 16 - Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Petrozavodsk.

The Alexander Nevsky cathedral was restored from the original 1832 building, within the same frames and limits, in the same style with no attempts at gigantism or excessive dazzling gilding. The imperial kind of nostalgia evident in Moscow is not replicated in Petrozavodsk – the city that seeks its own way of navigating in the post-socialist realities and constructs its own unique (and arguably marketable) identity. However, Moscow is undoubtedly a point of reference for Karelia, due to subordinate region-center relationship that is manifested on so many levels, from the legal system to scientific consultations in local or joint international projects.

On a larger scale, Petrozavodsk is a capital of the Republic of Karelia and as such can be contrasted to other postsocialist cities of former Soviet republics or countries of the

Eastern Bloc⁵⁶. The Polish town of Katowice was Petrozavodsk' partner in the project on finding marketing solutions for cities by the water. Researchers of its changing identity, Monika Murzyn-Kupisz and Krzysztof Gwosdz⁵⁷ (2011) note that "Katowice represents a specific model of urban identity formation, in which each successive historical period represents a rupture with the foregoing values and ideas and an attempt to make a new, lasting imprint on the material outlook of the city and its image" (2011, p.114). My understanding is that Katowice's development pattern can be readily applied to many other postsocialist cities as long as "a rupture with the foregoing values and ideas" is viewed as the only livable resolution for the corresponding local governments. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, the major geopolitical shift disjointed the former Soviet countries to two opposing camps, with Russia on the one side and all the rest – on the other. Street renaming, removal of old monuments as well as other visual architectural reminders of the Soviet era seem to be a shared scenario by cities and towns in Hungary and Ukraine, among others. This is how Krisztina Fehervary depicts the new landscape after the fall of the Communist party in Hungary in 1991:

There was a new regime focused on eliminating all symbolic references to the socialist state, communist ideology, and Soviet occupation in public space. As elsewhere in the former Soviet satellite states, the red stars that had graced all public buildings for four decades disappeared overnight.

⁵⁶ The so-called Eastern Block was formed by signing of the Warsaw Pact in 1955 between Soviet Union, People's Republic of Albania, People's Republic of Bulgaria, Socialist Republic of Romania, People's Republic of Hungary, People's Republic of Poland, Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia, and a Democratic Republic of Germany. Under the terms of the agreement, the member countries were obliged to withhold from threat of force as well as applying force in their international relations; in case of an armed attack upon a member country, other member countries were obliged to render help to the assaulted country with all means, including use of armed force. The Warsaw Pact was signed in Poland in 1955 and in 1991, the member states signed a Protocol regarding the termination of the Pact (<http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/ruwiki/853220>, last accessed on September 12, 2016)

⁵⁷ Murzyn-Kupisz, Monika and Krzysztof Gwosdz. 2011. The Changing Identity of the Central European City: the Case of Katowice. *Journal of History Geography* 37, pp.113-126.

Statues of Marx and Lenin were removed, though some of these were later displayed, somewhat controversially, as socialist “relics” in a tourist-oriented park on the outskirts of Budapest (Nadkarny 2009). Ideologically charged street and place names such as Red Army Road or Lenin Street were literally crossed out, supersede by signs displaying names associated with pre-socialist Hungarian identity.

(Fehervary, 2013, p.129)

A similar kind of remark about official approach to the change of social memory right after the lapse of the Socialist Unity Party of the German Democratic Republic can be found in Lewis Coser’s introduction to Maurice Halbwachs’ work on collective memory,⁵⁸ “the whole Soviet history of the last seventy years had to be rewritten. Needless to say, the new history books often had their own biases, but they were at one in demolishing the old” (1992, p.22). G. Konrad, Hungarian writer, echoes Coser in that most people in Hungary in 1990s made a point of “loosing memory” while only dissidents “conserved the sentiment of continuity” (Halbwachs, 1992, p.31). Although former satellite republics rushed to the new future, in a rampant way, annihilating connection to the past “overnight” – Russian cities, and Petrozavodsk in particular, seem to proceed with different scenario that favors continuity through reconnection to the past and simultaneously reach out to the future through cooperative projects with neighbors. I see dignity in the way in which Karelians treat their historical monuments while erecting new ones, without emotionally charged eradication or desecration of Soviet monuments in public acts of violence the way it has happened in Odessa, Ukraine⁵⁹. While it is evident

⁵⁸ Halbwachs, Maurice, and Coser, Lewis A. 1992. *On Collective Memory*. Heritage of Sociology Series, University of Chicago Press.

⁵⁹ On May 28, 2016, the demolition of the ten-meter high Lenin monument was finished in Odessa. Previously, it was dislocated from the place it has been occupying from 1967 till 2006 on one of the major squares of the city. The monument’s demolition in 2016 was done in execution of the “decommunization law” signed by the Ukrainian President, Petro Poroshenko on May 16,

that the central government would not permit demolition of monuments pertaining to the Soviet epoch, my strong impression is that Petrozavodians, for the most part, would not argue for dramatic redesign of the city landscape involving extermination of monuments to Soviet public figures. The common attitude that I encountered was that of composed, or sometimes distanced, respect for the past and active citizenship in the present, with neither exhibited shame for any past events, nor bragging “imperialistic” claims. Petrozavodians use St. Petersburg as a frame of reference in terms of social policies and innovations (for example, in the project *W.A.S.T.E.*, some technologies for waste processing were adopted through partnership with St. Petersburg private firms), acknowledge the Moscow’s leading position, and look up to their Nordic partners, adequately estimating their bordering location and benefits that it can bring. I view this approach as mature. In a word, for Karelians it consists in accepting who they are in relation to the rest of the world, understanding the assets of their geographical location and socio-cultural capital without the need to ‘draw the curtains,’ lute, or ‘cover up shame’ of historical events and choices, shame as imaginary construct imposed from within or outside.

2016; the demolition started the next day after the documents were signed. During the crisis of 2013-2014 years in Ukraine, this particular Lenin monument underwent symbolic “execution” by ultra-right activists who conducted a ceremony of “death by hanging” which became a point for heated debates and emotional outbursts on the part of townsfolk. The whole phenomenon of mass destruction of Lenin monuments in Ukraine, especially during the crisis of 2013-2014, is sometimes referred to as Leninopad, or “Lenin-drop” alluding to leaf drop in the fall. The information about the dates of the final demolition of the Lenin monument is taken from a local newspaper Pravda (http://www.pravda.ru/news/world/formerussr/ukraine/17-05-2016/1301144-lenin_v_odesse-0/, last accessed on September 25, 2016); other information is the result of my personal observations.

PART III.

Macro-scale borders, local identity and networking.

Chapter 7.

Behind the line on the map.

7.1. Preamble.

State and regional borders are regularly crossed for multiple reasons and purposes including the flow of people, trade, and business. The acts of state border crossing involve the issues of political and social security, customs and border protection and border legislative regulation, all of which represent major concerns in the field of border studies. At the same time, soft priorities such as migrating ideas, identities, values, attitudes, priorities, and power imbalances receive far less attention. Building on M. Wilson and H. Donnan's statement that "Anthropologists approach [these] borderlines more as countless points of interaction, because the borderline is there, or in spite of it" (Donnan & Wilson, 2010, p.8), in the Part III, I am moving from local small-scale borders to larger regional ones to see how they influence the experience of Karelian side of international cooperative projects. I argue that less tangible instances of cross-cultural communication that parallel specific activities in cross-border cooperative projects and initiatives are quite influential factors affecting the projects' outcomes. This view is shared at the highest political level within the Barents Euro Arctic Region (BEAR), which is manifested in the conscious and deliberate attempts to create a common regional identity and sense of community among its inhabitants.⁶⁰ Discussion of the scope of and

⁶⁰ From the very start of the political Barents project, Norwegian Foreign Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg tried to present something more than solely rational motivation for construction of the new region and so, he justified his initiative by the restoration of historical relations between Northern Norwegians and Northwestern Russians (Thorvald Stoltenberg, Foreword in Stokke and Tunander, 1994, Stoltenberg 1997). He perceived it necessary to come up with some sort of "glue" that would secure the newly drawn regional lines and would bridge the territories so different in

platforms for international cooperation in Karelia is crucial for understanding the factors that play out in geographical, political and cultural border crossings in local projects; in the chapters to follow, I use the project *W.A.S.T.E.: Waste Awareness. Sorting, Treatment, Education* (2011-2013) as a study case.

One characteristic feature of the BEAR is that it is a region and an organization at the same time. Its functioning as an organization is most productive when it involves cooperation on the highest level of the Barents Council along with different regional structures responsible for particular spheres of cooperation. Still, there are a number of factors that hinder cross-border cooperation, such as dividing properties of the national border between Russia and its northern neighbors. The border is not only a demarcation line separating Russia from the Nordic countries and European Union, but also a frontier between Russia and NATO. This context has had a significant effect on the rationale for the creation of the Barents Council that continues to be an instrument of normalizing relations between the two rivalries in the economic and military spheres. At the same time, the Barents region is evolving and constantly changing (Hettne, 2002) providing an important platform not only for socially meaningful projects but also for regional security and peace-building.

However, the scope of international cooperation in Karelia reaches beyond the BEAR and includes other successful frameworks. Every year, numerous programs and projects are carried out within the structures of the Baltic Sea Region, region-to-region initiatives,

terms of societal norms, culture, politics, religion, and language. Mr. Stoltenberg appealed to the Pomor trade era that was chosen to be a symbolic consolidating factor. The Pomor era was a period of relatively peaceful and mutually beneficial trade between the Norwegian, Russian and a few Finnish settlements along the shore of the Barents Sea (Nielsen, 1994: 91). However, it is questionable if there was a real need for intensive construction of common identity stimulated by the political objective to make the regional cooperation happen (Bærenholdt 2007). I discuss the regional identity in chapter twelve.

sister-city related projects, projects of the cross-border cooperation program Russia – EU “Karelia,” projects of “contagious cooperation,” etc.⁶¹

The higher authorities in the Nordic countries whose responsibility is to ensure successful multilateral cooperation with the eastern neighbors, have advocated for closer ties not only in economy, trade, business and cultural exchanges, but also in collective spirit of common regional identity. The common priorities shared by the Nordic countries are reflected in their policy documents as are the focal points for cooperative programs and projects. But the question is, whether these priorities accord with local Karelian realities, and whether there is a chance of Karelia’s integrating into the Northern European cultural space. The primary sources delineating the policies of the northern countries under the Nordic Cooperation as well as larger European partnership converge in naming green development, education, and entrepreneurship as top of the agenda. Thus, the public statement of the Nordic Cooperation directly refers to commonly shared values as the starting point as well as the core of partnership.⁶²

⁶¹ For the reports about international cooperative projects in Petrozavodsk in 2010-2013, I am indebted to the Ministry of Economic Development of the Republic of Karelia and personally to senior specialist A.M. Zvetkov.

⁶² The welcoming statement reads, “The political cooperation is built on common values and a willingness to achieve results that contribute to a dynamic development and increase Nordic competencies and competitiveness.” Available at: <http://www.norden.org/en/about-nordic-cooperation> (last accessed on October 11, 2016).

For other sources on the Nordic priorities and fields of cooperation see documents such as *The Nordic Welfare Model*, OECD publications on sustainable development, Norway’s Strategy for Sustainable Development, Sustainable development: National Agenda-21 for Norway, Priorities for Norway voiced at the UN General Assembly in 2012, etc. Gerd Vidge. 2013. *The Nordic Welfare Model*. Nordic Center for Welfare and Social Issues is available at:

http://www.nordicwelfare.org/PageFiles/7117/Nordic_Welfare_Model_Web.pdf (last accessed on October 12, 2016). *Sustainable Development: Linking Economy, Society, Environment*. 2008. OECD publication. Available at:

<http://www.oecd.org/insights/sustainabledevelopmentlinkingeconomysocietyenvironment.htm> (last accessed on August 13, 2016). *Norway’s Strategy for Sustainable Development*. Norwegian Ministry of Finance, published as Part of National Budget of 2008. Available at:

<http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/FIN/rapporter/R-0617E.pdf> (last accessed on August 13, 2016). *National Agenda-21 for Norway in sustainable development*. Available at:

<http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/fin/Documents-and-publications/Guidelines-and-brochures/2005/Sustainable-Development-National-Agenda-.html?id=419468> (last accessed on

In short, the Nordic countries continue to be the point of reference for Karelia, with their focus on social and environmental sustainability – the concept that resonates well with Karelian society. For example, a program Youth at Risk 2008-2015 has been implemented in Petrozavodsk under the Kolarctic cross-border cooperative initiative. Strong commitment to the Russian partner was manifested by establishment of an interregional center for methodological support in Petrozavodsk in 2012 as a major coordination office for the whole of northwest Russia.⁶³ Year by year, in spite of some criticism, Nordic countries keep heading the international rankings that assess not only custom components of well-being such as health, employment and income, safety and security, environment, education, entrepreneurship and opportunity, but also measure more subtle psychological and social parameters such as general life satisfaction. According to OECD's Better Life Index, the Nordic countries top the list, with Norway yielding second place only to Switzerland, which is well above the OECD average results.⁶⁴ This highly successful performance cannot but attract Karelia whose joint international projects aim to benefit from the positive experience of the Nordic countries as well as their innovations in the public sphere. The Nordics have invaluable experience and technology to share with their eastern neighbor; although, with varying degrees of applicability ranging from virtually inimitable eco-cities with their sustainable brand for

August 10, 2016). *Priorities for Norway at the UN General Assembly in 2012*. Priorities for Norway at the UN General Assembly, http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/selected-topics/un/priorities_assembly67.html?id=699661 (last accessed on August 12, 2016).

⁶³ Steering Committee on Children and Youth at Risk 2008-2015 (CYAR) <http://www.beac.st/in-English/Barents-Euro-Arctic-Council/Working-Groups/Joint-Working-Groups/Health-and-Social-Issues/Children-and-Youth-at-Risk-> (last accessed on November 12, 2015).
Better Life index, OECD, <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/> (last accessed on November 16, 2014).

local entrepreneurship, to small programs in implementing recycling strategies and early ecological education that are easier to replicate.⁶⁵

7.2. More than just a dividing line.

Yet, the BEAR is not the only successful framework for international projects in Karelia. Every year, numerous programs and projects are developed and realized under the cooperation of the Baltic Sea Region, region-to-region initiatives, projects between Petrozavodsk and its sister towns, projects of the cross-border cooperation program Russia – EU Karelia, projects of ‘contagious cooperation,’ etc.⁶⁶ Similarly, Karelia lies within the scope of the European Union policies of Strategic Partnership with its external eastern neighbors – policy that is named among the key priorities by the European Commission (2000); other platforms include the cross-border cooperation (CBC) and developing European neighborhood policy (ENP). Gerald Blake (2010) developed a set of criteria to determine whether an international border is ‘under stress’ or ‘without stress.’ Application of these criteria to the border in question reveals that the Karelian-Finnish border can be characterized as a relatively soft one. There are no active territorial disputes, and the intensity of flow of people and goods in both directions is relatively high and free. The local government and municipalities are engaged in active cooperation with partners across the border (the majority of them involve Finland) on social and cultural

See a case study of a Swedish eco-municipality of Overtornea. However, similar cases are becoming more numerous throughout the whole northern Europe, with the rest of EU slowly catching up: Belser, Ann. 2004. Officials Learn about Swedish “Eco-Cities” in Pittsburg Post-Gazette <http://old.post-azette.com/pg/04136/316914.stm#ixzz1KZBIDWRp><http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/04136/316914.stm> (last accessed on August 12, 2014).

⁶⁶ I am grateful to the Ministry of Economic Development of the Republic of Karelia and personally to senior specialist A.M. Zvetkov, for the reports about international cooperative projects in Petrozavodsk for the period 2010-2013.

projects as well as infrastructural maintenance. A particular attention is given to the environmental concerns. Ecological domain is a 'safe' unpoliticized area, unanimously acknowledged as an important focus in the light of deteriorating environment in Karelia. The partnership in this sphere also involves combating water, air, and ground pollution as well as rescue cooperation and forest sector task force.⁶⁷ In short, cross-border interaction in Karelia can serve as illustration to the idea voiced by Esklinen et al (1999) about the changing scale of cooperation – with the focus of power shifting from central governments to regional and local bodies.

I find it informative to situate my study of a socio-ecological joint project designed to benefit a local Karelian community within a larger scale of inter-regional relations and the specifics of the Barents region as a product of new regionalism⁶⁸ as well as the product of a new post-Cold War era. As such, it draws the borders that separate Russia and the Nordic countries, i.e., it highlights the distinctiveness of political, economic, cultural and social systems of each. Currently, during a period of mutual economic sanctions adopted by Russia and Europe on the basis of Russia's government's external policy in regard to Ukraine, the political relations between Russia and Finland remain consistently warm with no changes in the border-crossing policies. In Hastings and Donnan's terms, "the international relations litmus test" has been passed (Hastings and Donnan, 2010:6). Although the one-year ban on import of certain food items introduced by the Russian government hit some Finnish producers quite badly (and probably, it was

⁶⁷Barents Euro-Arctic Council <http://www.beac.st/in-English/Barents-Euro-Arctic-Council/Working-Groups> (last accessed on November 16, 2015).

⁶⁸ Keating M. *The New Regionalism in Western Europe, Territorial Restructuring and Political Change*.

Cheltenham, 1998; Hettne B., Inotai A. *The new regionalism: implications for global development and international security*. – Helsinki, 1994; Hettne B. *The new regionalism revisited // Theories of new regionalism: a Palgrave reader* / Ed. by Söderbaum F. and Shaw T.M. –Houndmills, 2003. – P. 22-42.

best felt by the well-known dairy *Valio*), some compromises have been achieved. Thus, the production of milk and cream started near St. Petersburg, at the partner factory Galaktika.⁶⁹

As theorized by E. Haas in 1958, the true international convergence is more likely to happen in cross-border projects and networks in ‘soft’ spheres where cooperation usually does not provoke excessive control and paternalism on the part of the central government. Taking this statement one step further, it can be argued that success of the cross-border bottom-up networks and projects like *W.A.S.T.E.* supports softening the borders between Europe and its neighbors. The focus on environment and youth in the context of sustainability has been implemented through different frameworks and programs including the *Youth at Risk* (2008-2015) under the Kolarctic cross-border cooperation. Strong commitment to its Russian partner was underlined by the establishment of an interregional center for methodological support in Petrozavodsk in 2012 that served as the head coordination office for the whole of northwest Russia.⁷⁰ Among other most relevant initiatives involving recycling are, firstly, the Nordic strategy for collection, sorting, reuse and recycling of textiles and secondly, the Nordic Waste Group that “works toward sustainable processing of waste products in the Nordic countries and Europe”; both of these platforms function through the Nordic Council of Ministers.

⁶⁹ Strategic Culture Foundation (online journal). 10.10.2014. Finnish Valio to begin producing milk, cream in Russia. <http://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2014/10/10/finnish-valio-to-begin-producing-milk-cream-in-russia.html> (last accessed on Nov 12, 2014).

⁷⁰ Steering Committee on Children and Youth at Risk 2008-2015 (CYAR) <http://www.beac.st/in-English/Barents-Euro-Arctic-Council/Working-Groups/Joint-Working-Groups/Health-and-Social-Issues/Children-and-Youth-at-Risk-> (accessed on 12.10.2013).

Chapter 8.

Scope of international cooperation in Karelia.

8.1. Karelian crossroads.

Geographically, Karelia is located between two seas, the Baltic and the Barents, taking advantage of the programs that run in this territory under the auspices of different organizational structures. Since the Soviet era, bilateral cooperative projects between Petrozavodsk and municipalities in Finland, Sweden, France and other countries have been quite successful. However, in 1995 the Karelian partnership with Finland received a boost when the EU funding programs started to cover Finland. Karelia is a scene for active multifold international inter-regional initiatives that run on various platforms such as: the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Regional Council, the Baltic Sea Council, Euroregion Karelia, the Northern Forum and the European Union's Northern Dimension Program. Besides, Karelia is a participant of the ENPI CBC Kolarctic program as well as the target of the programs developed by the Nordic Council of Ministers and European neighborhood policies like TACIS and INTERREG.⁷¹ Multiple institutions that intersect in Karelia, to some extent, make cross-border cooperation challenging because of duplicate or conflicting agendas, different driving motives and financial sources. Below, I discuss some of the most active partnership platforms. The

⁷¹ TACIS (Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States and Georgia) is a framework for support of the development of market economies as well as integration to the world economy of the former Soviet republics provided by the European Commission. See European Commission release database: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-92-54_en.htm (last accessed on February 18, 2017). INTERREG is a series of programs for Europe's neighborhood; some of them include EU states only (including Norway and Switzerland), while others focus on the EU periphery and neighbors such as Russia. See INTERREG IVC: Innovation & Environment, Regions of Europe Sharing Solutions, <http://www.interreg4c.eu/programme/2014-2020/> (last accessed February 20, 2017) and European Regional Development Fund, <http://www.interregeurope.eu/about-us/what-is-interreg-europe/> (last accessed February 18, 2017).

former minister of European Council in Russia, Ottokar Hahn once called the European Union an “unidentified political object” referring to distinctive complexity (at times confusing) of the political construction of the EU (Leshukov, 2000, p.24). Hence, the multiple layers of political organization of which Karelia is a part, are also complicated, with intersecting priorities. The gap in standards of life on the two sides of Karelian-Finnish border has been the most acute gap of all of the European Union’s borderlands, so the elimination of this gap, for the sake of security, was seen as a priority in Finland (Rouge-Oikarinen, 2009, p.27).

8.2. Platforms for international cooperation in Karelia.

The Northern Dimension is a cooperative policy between the EU, Norway, Iceland, and Russia; the ‘equality’ of the partners is emphasized in the official statements on this policy.⁷² The major tool for achieving its goals: well-being, sustainability and economic development, among others, is a practice-oriented cooperation through specific joint projects. Canada holds an observer status in the Northern Dimension. The ND Policy was initiated in 1999, and renewed in 2006. Due to a complex scheme of actors in the region,

⁷² Exploring the Northern Dimension, <http://www.northerndimension.info/northern-dimension> (last accessed on October 27, 2016). The Northern Dimension policy has as an academic partner, the Northern Dimension Institute that is coordinated by three academic institutions, two of which are Russian (Saint-Petersburg State University of Economics and Northern (Arctic) Federal University) while the lead coordinator is Aalto University/Center for Markets in Transition, <http://www.northerndimension.info/contacts/northern-dimension-institute> (last accessed on October 12, 2016). Moreover, the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP) runs a Support Fund made up of donors from thirteen countries, with Russia contributing the larger share of sixty million euros, <http://ndep.org/about/partners/contributors/> (last accessed on September 13, 2016). One of the most recent documents from the Northern Dimensions Institute is the Coherent Northern Dimension Independent Report (October 28, 2011) that can be found here: http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/NDI_Report_28_October_2011_Coherent_Northern_Dimension.pdf (last accessed on October 12, 2016). It discusses the policy priorities of the Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Council of Baltic Sea States and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

the programs and projects often overlap, and their efforts are duplicated. This poses efficiency problems that are fully recognized and addressed, for instance, by the Northern Dimension team and the Barents Council alike.⁷³ There are four regional councils that operate in the European North and cover Karelia in their activities. All four councils are intergovernmental forums: the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Arctic Council, the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Council of the Baltic Sea States. Out of the four, the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) is the most visible with a publicly accessible office for Karelia located in its capital. The chair of the NCM's Info Center, Pavel Petrov, was an inescapable guest speaker at all conferences and kick-off seminars that I attended, for joint projects with the Nordic countries in Petrozavodsk in the years 2010-2014.

The Nordic Council of Ministers, founded in 1971, is an umbrella organization for ten Nordic councils focusing on labor, business, culture, environment and other areas of cooperation, including a cooperative dimension with Russia. In 2013, with the passing of a new highly contested federal law regarding the obligatory registration of Russian NGOs as 'acting foreign agents,' the NCM's main office in St. Petersburg was the first to be officially labeled a 'foreign agent.' At the same time, the NCM office in Kaliningrad was

⁷³ Review of the achievements of the Barents cooperation: coinciding chairmanship and a theme-based emphasis as well as joint meetings could be used to reduce overlap and strengthen the 'sister-councils' synergies. <http://www.barentsinfo.org/Barents-region/Cooperation/Review-of-the-Achievements-of-the-Barents-Cooperation> (last accessed on September 26, 2014). See also: 'Opinion: who will ever understand why the Barents cooperation has several supporting secretariats with overlapping responsibilities, competing grants schemes and a Regional Council with zero appeal among regional decision makers' <http://barentsobserver.com/en/opinion/2014/03/why-barents-cooperation-needs-makeover-13-03> (last accessed on September 26, 2014); Joint Communiqué of the 13th BEAC Foreign Ministers Session, 11-12 October 2011, Kiruna, Sweden: "35. The Council stresses the need for synergies and an effective division of labour between the Regional Councils in the North and other structures of relevance for cooperation and development in the Barents Region, notably the Northern Dimension. In particular, closer cooperation with the Arctic Council is encouraged on a project and programme basis, i.e. the relevance of the Arctic Change Assessment also for the Barents Region..." https://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/All_speeches_13th_BEAC_Ministerial_Session_Kiruna_12_October_2011_upd2011-10-27.pdf (last accessed on March 25, 2017).

inspected by the Federal Security Service. Opened in 1995 to “facilitate the development of business and cultural contacts,”⁷⁴ the Info Center in St. Petersburg was instrumental in channeling funds for joint projects including initiatives in Petrozavodsk. While the new law specifically targeted NGOs, the NCM had a different legal status of an intergovernmental organization. Nevertheless, this did not help it to avoid placement on the foreign agent register. The Nordic politicians reacted to the inspections in St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad with a concern, and for some time it was unclear whether the NCM in the North-West region would continue their work or not.⁷⁵ I used the fore-mentioned events to reconnect with my research participants in Petrozavodsk. Not surprisingly, I heard frustration and concern about the future of the joint projects that were financed through the Nordic Council of Ministers. One of the projects whose future was uncertain was the next phase of the project W.A.S.T.E. that was focused on the engagement of businesses to waste sorting and treatment (See chapters 14 and 15). However, this project was approved and received its funding. Yet, due to political matters, the project lost some of their associates within Russia (such as partners in ecological initiatives in Karelia, Arkhangelsk, Murmansk and St. Petersburg) and across the border in the Nordic countries.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Association for cooperation with Baltic Sea countries "NORDEN"
<http://www.norden.spb.ru/en/partners/information-office-nordic-council-ministers-st-petersburg> (last accessed on February 13, 2017).

⁷⁵ Although the Center suspended its work for some time, it did not shut down: Norden:
<http://www.norden.spb.ru/ru/partnery/informatsionnoe-byuro-soveta-ministrov-severnoykh-stran-v-sankt-peterburge> (last accessed on February 13, 2017).

⁷⁶ In short, the new law that came into effect in November 2012 (Section 2, subsection 6 of the Federal Law “On non-governmental organizations” from January 12, 1996, #7-FZ, with an amendment from June 13, 2012.) obligated Russian NGOs that receive any amount of financial aid from abroad and are involved into political activity, to register as ‘foreign agents.’ At first glance, this law may seem as a reasonable way for the state to trace active assets of organizations that may be involved in a political job order placed by the foreign financing institution or an individual. After all, this law could be interpreted as the state’s concern about national security and defense through securing transparency in the sources of funding as well as spending of those

As is the case with the Barents Euro-Arctic Region, Euroregion Karelia, as a cooperation platform (or Euregio Karelia, which is one of the common alternative names for 'Euroregion'),⁷⁷ is a recent formation. Its formal existence began in 2000, after the founding agreement between the regions of Kainuu, North Karelia and Northern Ostrobothnia in Finland on one side and the Republic of Karelia in Russia on the other was signed.⁷⁸ As stated officially, "the objective of Euregio Karelia is to function as a cooperative forum for the participants, deepen the programme- and project-based cross-border cooperation of the member areas, as well as to bring strategic and political

funds. In fact, President V. Putin and several other officials openly argued for this reasoning. Putin: "Today, we have established the operating procedures for NGOs' activities in Russia, which also concerns their receiving funding from abroad. These laws must certainly be abided by. Any direct or indirect interference in our domestic affairs, any forms of pressure applied to Russia, to our allies and partners is inadmissible." (President of Russia's official website: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/17516>, last accessed on February 14, 2017). However, this issue is not as easy while the law itself implies a range of shortcomings that open the door to abuse. Not accidentally, the law was harshly criticized while the perception of the label of the 'foreign image' as a hallmark of disgrace has been shared not only by representatives of Russian NGOs but also by the European politicians: "Continuing operations under the status of a foreign agent is unacceptable to the Nordic governments" (Karsten Hansen, chair of the Ministers of Nordic Cooperation, Norden: "Activities in Northwest Russia on hold indefinitely" <http://www.norden.org/en/news-and-events/news/activities-in-northwest-russia-on-hold-indefinitely>, last accessed on February 14, 2017). Utter ambiguity of the concepts of 'foreign funding' and 'political activity' makes it impossible for NGOs such as War Veterans who defend the rights of veterans for the benefits to which they are entitled by law, to function. The case that was close to my heart concerned labelling of the Center for Independent Sociological Studies from St. Petersburg headed by Viktor Voronkov, a 'foreign agent.' V. Voronkov is a St. Petersburg sociologist with a world name, who was a vice president of the St. Petersburg Association of Sociologists in 2000-2002 and the President of the European Association of Researchers of Transformation. He and his team regularly publish in the reputed journal *Laboratorium*. I was following their struggle on Facebook a couple of years ago. The struggle was lost. As he confessed, it will be very hard to continue deep qualitative research of Russia's everyday reality with a label of 'foreign agent' that implies perusing of foreign interests and political order that is potentially unsafe – equally for the researchers and the researched.

⁷⁷ Local names for euroregions may differ. In the case of Karelia, the term "Euregio" is used in program documents, including the official website: Euregio Karelia: Neighbourhood Programme <http://www.euregiokarelia.fi/EN/> (last accessed November 1, 2016); Euregio Karelia: Neighbourhood Programme Projects 2001-2008 http://www.euregiokarelia.fi/attachments/Projects_ENG.pdf (last accessed on Nov 12, 2016).

⁷⁸ General information about Euregio Karelia <http://www.euregiokarelia.com/en/euregio-karelia-2/general-information> (last accessed on Oct 31, 2016).

guidance into the cooperation.”⁷⁹ More specifically, the Program for cooperation created by Karelian stakeholders consisting of politicians, economists and academics, considered the most productive fields of partnership to be development of high technologies (and Nordic countries are known for those), raw materials processing, care for the environment, and promotion of tourism (Birckenbach, 2003, p.252). At the same time, some researchers questioned the validity of the EU–Russia cooperation format from the very beginning of the creation of Euregio Karelia. Concerns about a hidden agenda and masked benefits on the part of the EU as well as Russia instead of an earnest focus on the positive change in lives of ordinary citizens, were voiced by Scott (1999) and others. Igor Leshukov (2000:40) points out the “*turizm dlya chinovnikov*” [tourism for bureaucrats] as a key motive. A similar concern phrased in the exact same way came up in my interview with one of the members of the Legislative Assembly of the Republic of Karelia. He voiced a doubt regarding the progressive force of joint projects with the Nordic partners because of the “unbeatable influence of those in power” (implying both Nordic and Russian bureaucrats) and “resolution to look for their personal benefits first.” This discomfoting generalization was made in regard to the common practice of arrangement of ‘study trips’ to the Nordic countries that had been a necessary component of many cooperative projects. At least at the beginning of the era of active international projects between Karelia and its Nordic neighbors, the lists of go-abroad trip participants included local officials of various ranks. The arguable rationale was that those bureaucrats would learn about innovative practices and spur positive change in terms of legislation and funding.

⁷⁹ Euregio Karelia <http://www.euregiokarelia.com/en/home> (last accessed on Nov 12, 2016).

A long history of productive people-to-people contacts on the Finnish-Russian border as well as the firm determination of the officials on both sides to keep the cooperation going resulted in rather mild ramifications of the EU sanctions imposed on the economic relations between Finland and Russia in response to the Ukrainian crisis. Valery Shlyamin, a trade representative of the Russian Federation in Finland, confirmed scientific partnership was one of the country's major interests, especially considering Russia's recent hi-tech advances.⁸⁰ In August 2016, the Finnish Border Guard office attempted to reduce hours of operation of the Russian-Finnish border crossing posts. As was explained, they needed some time to adjust the budget and to expand the workforce to guard the border. However, the Euregio Karelia's officials delivered a joint statement shortly thereafter that appealed this initiative and argued for keeping the operation hours intact.⁸¹ One year earlier, in 2015, the European Commission and regional authorities signed the Financing Agreement to support the Kolarctic Cross Border Cooperation through micro projects.⁸² These are just a couple of cases that demonstrate the power of the joint efforts, when they are applied to the common goal to keep the Finnish-Russian border as open as possible, considering the overall Russia-EU climate.

Karelia is a part of the Karelia CBC (cross-border cooperation) and the KOLARCTIC CBC programs. KOLARCTIC CBC is one of the ENPI's (European Neighborhood and

⁸⁰ Euregio Karelia, News <http://www.euregiokarelia.com/en/news> (last accessed on September 25, 2016). Finland is in top 5 in Bloomberg Innovation Index (Research & Development category). Overall rank: Finland – 4, Russia – 14 (out of 50). <http://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2015-innovative-countries/> (last accessed on September 25, 2016).

⁸¹ Euregio Karelia, News <http://www.euregiokarelia.com/en/news> (last accessed on September 26, 2016).

⁸² Kolarctic CBC Cross-Border Cooperation <http://www.kolarctic.fi/fi/welcome-to-the-website-of-kolarctic-cbc-2014-2020/> (last accessed on September 25, 2016). Micro projects in a nutshell ("Micro projects are also cooperation projects, and the partnership requirements for cross-border cooperation apply: at least two organizations are needed, one from each side of the border"): <http://www.kareliacbc.fi/micro-projects-in-a-nutshell/> (last accessed on October 16, 2016).

Partnership Instrument) financing mechanisms within the European Union being implemented on the external borders of the EU.⁸³ Because Karelia is one of the adjoining regions, its municipalities, governments, and NGOs can participate in the KOLARCTIC CBC programs with restricted budget rights (“adjoining” regions as opposed to “core” regions can rely on 20% of funding from the KOLARCTIC budget.)⁸⁴ A particular feature of this program is cooperation between Russia, Finland, Sweden and Norway. Namely, cooperative terms that delineate equal partnership status and equal financial contributions. Thus, Russia is committed to investing twelve million euros to the KOLARCTIC CBC Program 2014-2020.⁸⁵ Besides the KOLARCTIC program, there are two more incentives within ENPI CBC that involve Karelia. They are Karelia CBC program and South-East Finland–Russia CBC program. Similar to the Barents Region, the ENPI CBC also functions through project administration. For example, KOLARCTIC ENPI CBC financed fifty projects in 2007-2013. The major difference between the KOLARCTIC ENPI CBC and the Barents Region is that of geographical coverage. The core KOLARCTIC program region consists of the Murmansk oblast (region), the Arkhangelsk oblast and the Nenets autonomous okrug (district) in Russia; Nordland, Troms and Finnmark counties in Norway; Norrbotten in Sweden; and Lapland in Finland; while the Republic of Karelia has the status of an adjoining region. In addition to the territories mentioned above, the Barents Region includes the Kainuu region in Finland, the Republic of Karelia and the Komi Republic in Russia. Therefore, Karelia is a legitimate partner in both frameworks.⁸⁶

⁸³ KOLARCTIC CBC <http://www.kolarctic.fi/> (last accessed Oct 30, 2016.)

⁸⁴ The Arctic: with Support of the Russian Geographical Society: Analysis and Commentary, <http://arctic.ru/analitic/20160810/404924.html> (last accessed on October 10, 2016.)

⁸⁵ Russia to invest 12 million euros to KOLARCTIC CBC Program, June 8, 2016 <http://arctic.ru/analitic/20160810/404924.html> (last accessed on October 10, 2016.)

⁸⁶ KOLARCTIC CBC ENPI <http://www.kolarcticenpi.info/en> (last accessed on November 9, 2016.)

One of the projects developed by the Karelia CBC program is *Cities by the Water*, brought together by the Petrozavodsk City Administration, the Karelian Research Center KETI (Finland), the Sortavala municipality (Republic of Karelia), the Business Incubator of the Republic of Karelia, the Kizhi Federal Museum of Cultural History, Architecture and Ethnography, the City of Joensuu and other partners, united by the goal to improve urban spatial planning in participating territories.⁸⁷

The slow bureaucratic process as well as some incompatible gaps/controversies between the legislative systems of Russia and its European neighbors pose a major challenge to joint initiatives. Bilateral cooperation in this sense seems to be more efficient to the ministerial respondents, and I tend to agree with them. The underlying logic is that the fewer the number of parties, the easier it is to coordinate the numerous practical aspects of a project. Karelia is not the only Russian region sharing a common border with a Nordic country, the Murmansk oblast is another one. Both the Murmansk oblast and the Republic of Karelia are members of the Barents cooperative scheme and have a common border with European countries. There is, however, a key difference between the two: during the Cold War, Murmansk was a closed and highly militarized area bordering Norway, a NATO country, while Karelia was much more open to its western neighbor and never cut off cross-border relations with Finland, except for the wartime. The history of hostility around the issues of environmental safety due to improper disposal of Russian nuclear submarines after the break-up of the Soviet Union has overshadowed Norway-Russian relations in some respects. Karelia has been in a more advantageous position in

⁸⁷ *Cities by the Water* CBC Project <http://www.cbcprojects.eu/en/projects/737> (last accessed on November 10, 2016.)

terms of international cooperation sharing a border with non-NATO Finland and a long history of people-to-people contacts that included trade and family ties.

8.3. Local perspectives on partnership with Nordic neighbors: for better, or for worse.

For people, involved in cooperative exchanges with foreign parties, expressly or by implication, the essence of the process is often reducible to evaluative binary oppositions with a limited range of options between them. The poles I identified from interviews are 1) an optimistic versus a pessimistic vision, and 2) worthiness versus vanity of efforts. Depending on perspective, Karelia's gain is viewed as ranging from the clearly positive process of exposure to advanced European strategies and technologies, to a strong feeling of being 'ripped off' as a resource colony by Nordic neighbors and Moscow central government alike. When Karelia enters the scene of international relations, its executive bodies engage in highly complex nexus between their foreign partners and the Moscow bosses – a wobble, irreducible to straightforward schemes and solutions. Karelia has the constitutional and legal status of a republic within the Russian Federation. A long history of relations with the central administration have been characterized by different levels of freedom within the sphere of cross-border relations. This means that local political and economic elites have developed a skillful maneuvering strategy to be sure to exhibit enough loyalty to Moscow while defending their self-interests within the 'clan capitalism'⁸⁸ that is still vibrant in the region (I delve into aspects of informal networking

⁸⁸ L. Kosals, in his *Essay on Clan Capitalism in Russia* (2007) explains that, "Not only specialists in transformation societies but also researchers on management and organisational behaviour use the term 'clan' to explain different types of coordination and control in current business both in advanced and developing countries – Ouchi 1980; Alversson - Lindkvist 1993; Boisot - Child 1996 (2007:72). "Rather than merely groups of relatives, such clans are business entities with a for profit activity. Actually, it is beside the point whether such a clan includes relatives or not - the major interest of the clan is to gain money, to conquer new markets and to capture new assets,

in chapter 13). Being a beneficiary region, Karelia has much to negotiate about with the central authorities and foreign partners and is sometimes compelled to reduce expectations.

The root of the local concern that Karelia is no more than a resource frontier and a playground for the selfish interest of neighboring Finland can be found in the fact that Russia's economy continues to be heavily resource-based. Since his first presidency, Vladimir Putin has perpetuated a heavy dependency on raw materials, and the overall reliance on extraction and export was huge in the 1990s when the country's mineral resources were perceived as the fastest and easiest way to survive after the breakup of the Soviet Union, at a time of sharp economic decline. Timber, the major Karelian natural wealth, is at the core of the local economy. The reasons that fed harsh criticism of the intrinsic value of relations between Russia and Finland are real and problematic.⁸⁹ Here are some of them: extensive export of Karelian timber to Scandinavian countries including Finland that prefers buying wood from its eastern neighbor to cutting down its own forests, and highly limited Finnish financial investment into the Karelian economy, particularly in regard to transport infrastructure engaged in the shipping of Russian raw materials for processing to Finland and further westwards, as well as sending the Finnish workforce (mainly lumberjacks) to Karelia. M.V., an official in the Karelian Ministry of Social Development and Health, shared with me her suspicion regarding the nature of the cooperation with Finnish partners. She said, "You can never be sure what these Finns are up to. The only thing certain is that these foreigners do nothing out of pure

which makes it a 'business clan' rather than a system of kinship. In Russia, clans usually consist of businesspeople, state officials, and sometimes criminals" (2007:73).

⁸⁹ See, for example, an article by Oleg Reut (2009), a local Karelian political scientist and publicist: The Republic of Karelia in the Baltic-Barents Region. *Russian Politics and Law*, 47 (5), 80-90.

benevolence. And... our president says the same. You should listen to him, Medvedev sometimes has wise things to say... Yeah, *some* times [smiles].”⁹⁰

That said, however, I would not question the local agents’ appreciation of cooperative opportunities irrespective of the underlying motives and unvoiced goals of their partners. Thus, when asked about the outcomes of joint activities, even those skeptical of the real intentions of Finns and Norwegians appraised activities and programs in which they were involved or heard about. Some joint initiatives (familiar to most of the locals) consisted are humanitarian aid sent to Karelia in the early 1990s, projects in the sphere of health (such as fighting HIV) and three Karelian-Finnish production enterprises in northern Karelian border districts.

Reference to such joint production projects often serves as a counterargument to those who view foreign investors as the creeping agents of neo-colonialism who “learnt to smile and hide a knife in the sleeve” (mostly in the form of buying relatively cheap natural resources and shipping them westwards.)⁹¹ In the local post-socialist context, the classification of businesses into ‘true’ business (involving production) and ‘questionable’ businesses (involving resale) is the Soviet legacy of moral categories related to private

⁹⁰ An interview on the condition of anonymity was held with M.V. (initials changed) on April 10, 2010.

⁹¹ Taking a step further, one of my informants from a republican executive body, in a private conversation, expressed their concern in line with a conspiracy theory – about the secret intentions of the Finns to take revenge and keep their presence in one way or another (mostly through cooperative projects) in the former Finnish territories that were lost to the Soviet Union after the World War Two. On the issue of identity and attitudes among Finns from the Eastern Karelia (which belongs to the Finnish state) and corresponding or conflicting views of Russian Karelia’s inhabitants, see, for example, case studies of I. Milyukova, “Should I Stay, or Should I go?”

business. People engaged into the ‘questionable’ type of business have been called *spekulyanty* (speculators or profiteers).⁹² In the 1990s, the main source of profit for *spekulyanty* was coming from resale of cheap goods acquired abroad (mainly China or Turkey) for a high price which allowed those *spekulyanty* to make ‘obscene’ profit by local standards (then, 80% approximately). These kinds of activities were considered unworthy and shameful from the viewpoint of intelligentsia, highly educated people who in their judgement referred to some ultimate socialist-type justice. Far from being conclusive, this view accounted for an arduous economic situation and the need to survive and feed your family. This is why a feeling of antipathy for the *spekulyanty* went along with the compromises and feeling of helplessness in the face of the new, ‘wild’ capitalist reality. Due to these cultural reasons, joint projects that involve the production of new tangible objects are highly valued in Karelia, even if the organizational coordination is not very transparent.

As James Scott (2010, p.135) notes, the investment climate in Karelia has been slow and scarce. Among those joint enterprises that were the major employers he names the Stora Enso’s saw mill, PKC Grou’s automobile wiring plant, Helkama’s refrigerator plant and many timber-logging enterprises and subcontracting ventures. Yet in my talks with Karelian officials in several departments I was made aware of the *Karhakos* enterprise – as a case that they considered special because of apparent advantages for the Karelian economy, employees and local investment image.

⁹² *Spekulyatsiia* [profiteering, price gouging] in the USSR was considered a criminal offense and was punished with a Criminal Rule (up to two years of incarceration, with or without property confiscation or one year of community work, or penalty at the rate of 300 rubles, depending on the severity of the offense). *Spekulyatsiia* was considered a morally degradable activity; although many people were involved into it on various scales, they usually were reluctant to deny this involvement and tried to dissociate themselves from this activity.

8.4. *Karhakos* enterprise as a case of positively viewed Karelian-Finnish cooperation.

In my interviews with government officials from the Ministry of Health and Social Development and the Ministry of National Politics and with officials from the Petrozavodsk municipality, the case of *Karhakos* was regularly brought up as an example of a ‘true’ business done cooperatively by Russians and Finns, which intrigued me and made me want to learn more about it. *Karhakos* (located in Karelian Kostomuksha, to the north of Petrozavodsk) is a production factory located in the north-eastern border region of Karelia.⁹³ The factory produces electrical wiring for the Nordic automotive giants *Volvo* and *Scania*. *Karhakos* was cofounded by a St. Petersburg engineer and Finnish company *Carhatec OY* in 1993 as a subcontractor.⁹⁴ My interviewees highly appraised this joint venture and named such benefits as providing work for the local people (by August 2016, the number of workers approximated nine hundred) and safe working conditions. Stable transport infrastructure was set up thanks to active lobbying by the Finns in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. They achieved funding to modernize the thirty-kilometer transport corridor from Karelian Kostomuksha to the Finnish border. Relatively clean production is regarded as a huge asset as well, especially if weighted against working conditions at the mining and processing company *Kareliskyy Okatysh* (a Karelian palletizing plant), which is the local economic citadel. In his article reviewing the international cooperation in Karelia (2009), Oleg Reut, at the time PhD candidate in Political Science at Petrozavodsk State University and now an analytical writer in the Karelian media, insists on viewing lobbying and improving particular transport corridors as a ‘colonial’ move, stating that, “...the

⁹³ Translated from the Finnish language, “*karhakos*” means ‘kostomukshan wires’ with Kostomuksha referring to a town in northern Karelia where the factory is based.

⁹⁴ *Stolitsa na Onego* [Capital on the Onego Lake], Karelia’s online news publication, <http://www.stolica.onego.ru/articles/33176.html> (last accessed on October 31, 2016).

systematic lobbying by Finnish political and business circles, in both CBSS (Council of the Baltic Sea States) and the BEAC (Barents Euro-Arctic Council), in favor of infrastructure projects aimed not only at confining cross-border cooperation to satisfying the need of the Baltic-Barents region in raw materials but also at making better use of the capacities of Finnish ports that have been underused for years. So, the major goal of this lobbying effort is not so much to promote stable development of the Karelian republic and diversify its economy but to gradually improve transit routes for shipping Russian raw materials to the large industrial and wholesale centers in Finland” (Reut 2009: 88). To be fair, I ought to note that the term ‘colonial’ is bound to its scholarly context; I have never heard it in public discourse or in local media.⁹⁵ For the most part, Oleg Reut refers to the timber resources, and in the case of *Karhakos* production that produces metal wires is generally viewed as positive by my informants: local production raises the overall GDP which is important for contesting Karelia’s status as a beneficiary region that is not entitled to much autonomy in its international relations.

8.5. The “invisible divider” that ruins cooperation: the case of IKEA.

Unlike the positive image of the *Karhakos* case as a mutually beneficial Russian-Finnish business, cooperation with Swedes, specifically, with the Swedish furniture giant IKEA, did not go smoothly for Karelia. In 2006-2007, IKEA built a sawmill and a

⁹⁵ My interpretation is that for a long time the word ‘colonial’ has been used in official Soviet historical (and ethnographic) discourse in reference to European empires that used to govern particular territories in the southern and south-eastern Asia. This term has been never applied in the context of Soviet territories.

furniture components factory in Kostomuksha.⁹⁶ In 2012, IKEA was accused of felling old growth forests in Northern Karelia. Russian and Swedish environmental NGOs were united by their efforts to stop, what they called “nothing but a scandal.”⁹⁷ The passions rose around the company *Swedwood Karelia*, a subsidiary of IKEA that was certified by the international Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Swedwood came to Karelia in 2003, but nine years later, information about them logging ancient trees in previously untouched taiga was put forward by environmental NGOs who tried to draw the attention of the local regional government to this problem. In 2014, Swedwood’s FSC certificate was suspended but was quickly restored. IKEA, known for its sustainability-driven slogans and statements about commitments to fair production practices, denied the harvesting of old growth forest (400-600 years old). IKEA insisted that the certificate suspension was the result of minor violations of the working conditions for employees and had nothing to do with accusations of unsustainable logging.⁹⁸ The area in question is about 700,000 acres of forest in the north of Karelia containing what the *UK Sunday Times* newspaper called “key biotopes.”⁹⁹

Some of the environmental organizations that stood up to protect Karelian forest were NGO SPOK (Karelian regional nature conservancy, Russian division), Protect the Forest

⁹⁶ The Republic: ‘A Swedish Company IKEA leaves Karelia, Workers Expect Discharges, February 11, 2014. <http://gubdaily.ru/blog/article/respublika/shvedskaya-kompaniya-ikea-uxodit-iz-karelii-rabotnikov-fabriki-zhdut-uvolneniya/> (last accessed on February 12, 2017).

⁹⁷ Linda Ellegaard Nordström, board member of Protect the Forest, “Scoop” World, Independent News, “IKEA cuts down old-growth forest – protest launched today,” April 26, 2012. <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO1204/S00502/ikea-cuts-down-old-growth-forest-protest-launched-today.htm> (last accessed on February 12, 2017).

⁹⁸ IKEA, “Suspension of Swedwood Karelia’s FSC certification withdrawn” http://www.ikea.com/us/en/about_ikea/newsitem/031014_karelia_suspension_withdrawn

⁹⁹ UK Sunday Times, February 23, 2014, “IKEA cut down to size as 600-year-old trees used for flat-pack” http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/uk_news/Environment/article1379000.ece

(Sweden) and the Global Forest Coalition which is a group of NGOs in more than forty countries. The initial information leakage was followed by protests and pickets against IKEA at its hypermarkets in Sweden. This helped to arrange a meeting of activists with IKEA management in Stockholm. The activists demanded Swedwood provide detailed maps of their logging sites and asked them to cooperate with Swedish and Russian

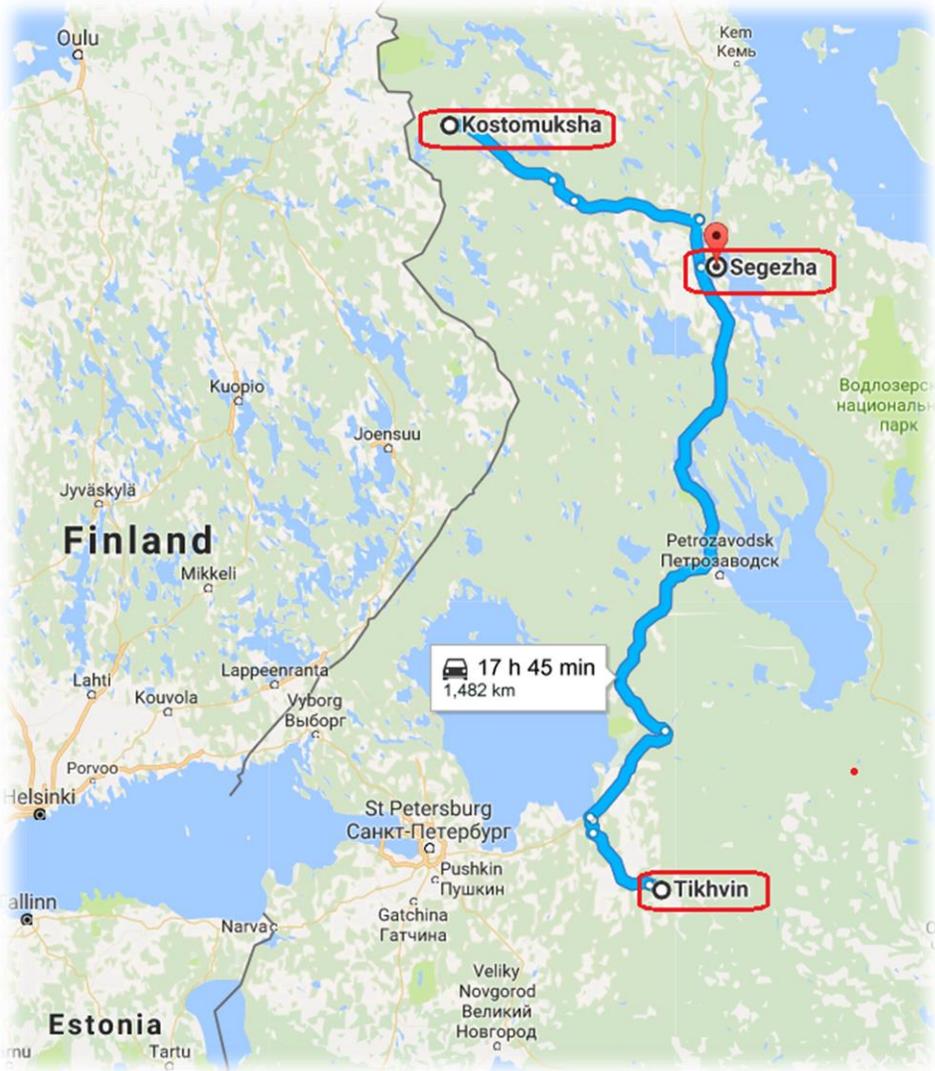


Figure 17 - Distance between the towns of Kostomuksha, Segezha and Tikhvin. Map source: google maps.

environmental NGOs as well as regional government on this matter.¹⁰⁰ Further details rest in the shadow. However, the known result of the apparently failed negotiations was the relocation of Swedwood to neighboring Leningrad oblast (the town of Tikhvin) in 2014.

There were about one hundred fifty workers at the Swedwood Karelia site, who were discharged with a compensation after the company relocated to the Leningrad oblast. Swedish ecologists shot a documentary film about Swedwood's harvesting operations in Karelia in which they interviewed Karelian workers who also complained about wages and working conditions.¹⁰¹ The issue with the felling of old growth forest by IKEA subsidiary, *Swedwood*, received broad international coverage including the European media and even an Arabic network and channel, Al Jazeera.¹⁰² Contrasting voices were heard in the Russian media on this matter, with some of reports taking pro-environmentalist perspective, while others were regretting the loss of another investor in Karelian economy. Apparently, the Karelian government adopted a hands-off attitude and did not take sides. Interestingly, Peter Feilberg, the executive director of Consultancy NEPCon (*Swedwood's* certificate provider) commented that he was not surprised that the first appeal case occurred in Russia, out of all other possibilities. He believes that this

¹⁰⁰ WhatWood: timber industry research & analytics, "FSC certificate of Swedwood Karelia suspended," February 12, 2014. <http://whatwood.ru/english/fsc-certificate-of-swedwood-karelia-suspended/>

¹⁰¹ A small episode of this film with the interview with Russian workers is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3gHLVAoV5E> (last accessed on February 18, 2017).

¹⁰² See, for example, Rainforest Rescue, "Success – IKEA halts deforestation in Karelia," February 18, 2014. <https://www.rainforest-rescue.org/achievements/5722/ikea-has-stopped-deforestation-in-karelia> (last accessed on February 18, 2017), The Guardian: "IKEA under fire for ancient tree logging" <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2012/may/29/ikea-ancient-tree-logging> Fordaq ("FSC dissociates from the Schweighofer Group"; network of timber merchants for wood professional), "IKEA sells Swedwood Karelia to Finnish company," January 27, 2015. http://www.ihb.de/wood/news/IKEA_Swedwood_PinArctic_Russia_Karelia_Finland_40102.html (last accessed on February 18, 2017).

happened due to the severe discrepancies between the norms of sustainable forestry that *Swedwood* was adhering to and the ideas about sustainable forestry in the discourse of Russian environmentalists and officials.¹⁰³

Swedwood was not the first Swedish company to withdraw its investment from Karelia. A previous issue concerned a self-contained paper mill in Segezha when a Swedish paper giant Assi Doman bought 57.3% of its shares and came as an investor and restructurer in 1997. This endeavor failed and was labeled in Russian media as “Karelian Poltava” (referring to the epic Swedish defeat in the major battle between Russian army under the command of Peter I and the Swedish army of Karl XII).¹⁰⁴ Ready to invest over \$100 million, Assi Doman attempted to modernize the *Segezhbumprom* [Segezha Paper Mill] and came up with a compelling business plan that reportedly bound to work. One of the reasons why it did not was the unsupported expectation that the Karelian and federal government would be ready to meet the investors halfway, which never happened. To cut a long story short, the situation with *Segezhbumprom* reminds me of a situation with a privatized Polish factory that started to produce Gerber baby food, researched by Elizabeth Dunn (Dunn 2004).¹⁰⁵ However, the end of this story in

¹⁰³ European Timber Trade Federation: “Swedwood quickly regains its Karelia FSC certificate” <http://www.ettf.info/node/133> (last accessed on December 5, 2016).

¹⁰⁴ Expert Online: “Spasenie utopayushih...” [Sink of Swim] http://expert.ru/northwest/2000/18/18no-spasen_53661/ (last accessed on December 5, 2016).

¹⁰⁵ “Given how similar the two firms and their settings look, it is no wonder that Gerber executives believed they could duplicate their firm’s phenomenal rise, in the new Polish setting... since they believed the people were similar and the places were similar (except that Poland was somehow ninety years behind Fremont), Gerber managers believed Alima could follow Gerber’s road to capitalist success” (Dunn 2004: 3). Elizabeth Dunn points this to be a major mistake: not to account for cultural and historical differences, the differences in corporate traditions and customs, in particular. The story of new western management techniques of reshaping and redesigning the production process, sales, but most of all – people involved in production and sales – resulted in tensions and multiple misunderstandings. The Polish workers’ socialist experience, active position and vast networking was at odds with the ‘flexible’ capitalist managerial approach.

Russia was different. After having failed to find common ground with the regional bureaucratic system, Swedish investors fled Karelia and dropped their assets, only not to hear about the Segezha factory anymore. Subsequently, new, Russian management chaired the factory and successfully solved the problems that the Swedes could not – sure enough, thanks to a delicate bypass approach, namely, that of the insiders of the system who know what to ask for and to whom to speak, and the timing for such negotiations.¹⁰⁶ This was the same as what Dale Pesmen (2000) found in her research about the components of the Russian soul: expressed in the Russian saying: “*Hochesh zhit’ – umei krutit’sia*” [If you want to live, you’ve got to *krutit’sia*, or ‘swim in it, know how to navigate in your everyday life’].

Later, the Russian heads of the *Segezhhumprom* put it in the following way, “For me, the Swedish experience is interesting in the sense that it made me think about the invisible line separating ambition and determination from certain aggressiveness in one’s behavior. You shouldn’t demand from your associates what is not currently possible. If nothing else, it is unproductive” (Dmitrii Zuev, assistant director of the *Segezhhumprom*). The head of the factory, Vasilii Preminin was more explicit in his judgement, stating that “western management can’t be transplanted into Russian grounds without accounting for

¹⁰⁶ For example, one of the biggest clashes between the Assi Doman management and Karelian government (even including general population) was about Assi Doman’s demand to receive a concession for almost 40% of Karelian forests for 49 years which was unacceptable for the regional government. Another hot spot was Anssi Doman’s intention to retain jobs for only 1600 workers of the factory out of total 5300 who were working there before the modernization plans of Anssi Doman. On the contrary, the new Russian management (coming from a medium-size consultancy firm Excellence-Center) succeeded in modernizing the way business at *Segezhhumprom* was done using the Swedes’ business model – but the key difference was in administrative approach and in dropping demands that Swedes were making. Thus, instead of asking for concession for 40% of Karelian forests, new management bought shares of the nearby small local sawmills which covered the factory’s needs for raw material. As to the downsizing the factory stuff, they realized that they must proceed in the same direction as Anssi Doman was moving. However, the difference was that the Russian management found solution – and work – for those currently employed along with estimating the demographic situation. The results showed that in five years the working population that they would be able to hire will shrink, and the problem of excessive stuff will resolve peacefully and without major turbulence for Segezha.

political and economic conditions, existing traditions and the infrastructure of core enterprises, or disregarding the local mentality, without knowing the ever-changing legal framework.”¹⁰⁷ In fact, the transplanting of values and difference in approaches to running businesses or a joint international project are crucial factors in making things work as well as getting optimum cooperative results. Nordic countries have long been places for Karelia to live up to, to reach for and aspire to – due to their advanced technologies, high standards of living, and active civil society. The proximity of the Nordic countries helped Karelians to see all the benefits of cooperation. In more details, I address the translation of values and approaches in some detail in chapter 15 when discussing the joint Nordic-Karelian project *W.A.S.T.E.*

¹⁰⁷ Expert: “Na karel’skom, predpriyatii zapadnyi menedgment ne prizhilsya” [At a Karelian enterprise, Western management didn’t catch on], http://expert.ru/northwest/2000/18/18no-spasen_53661/ (last accessed on December 5, 2016).

Chapter 9.

Patterns of migration and settlement in the Russian part of the Barents region from early times to the 1990s.

9.1. Who is mestnyi (native) in Karelia?



Figure 18 - The Barents Euro-Arctic Region with Petrozavodsk in a red box at the center, below. Map source: <https://cryopolitics.com/arctic-maps/>.

In this chapter, I attempt a historical flashback to show the dynamics of population migration and settlement patterns in the Barents Region, with Karelia in focus. However, the Barents Region is just one of the cooperative platforms existing there (I explore the BEAR framework in chapter 11). Before moving on to discuss issues such as moving

across regional and national borders including ways of overcoming these macro-scale lines of division or the context that makes them more salient, I find it useful to do a review of historical and social factors as well as the events that contributed to the present state of affairs.¹⁰⁸

The Russian territories of the Barents Region consist of the Republic of Karelia, the Murmansk *oblast*,¹⁰⁹ the Archangelsk *oblast*, Nenets Autonomous Okrug, and the Republic of Komi. The populations of these territories are highly urbanized (78%) except for Komi Republic (Lausala & Valkonen, 1999, p.25). In Karelia, the six most numerous ethnic groups are Russians, Ukrainians, Karelians, Byelorussians, Veps and Finns.¹¹⁰ Unlike *ethnic*, the terms *native/indigenous* can be highly contestable in the local context. Karelians, Veps, and Komi are recognized as indigenous only regionally whereas Nenets and Saami's native status is recognized on a federal level. (Lausala & Valkonen, 1999, p.70). Russians have been living on Karelian lands since tenth century AD, which is long enough for them to claim a native status – if not for a benefits package then for the legitimacy of their localized patriotic feelings. Niobe Thompson's fieldwork in Chukotka in early 2000 insightfully demonstrated the blurry boundary between the concepts of *migrancy* and that of *nativeness*. In the case of Chukotka, they correlated with the opposition to the resettlement program, on the part of relatively recent Russian settlers in Chukotka who have spent about ten to fifteen years in the region when they were asked to leave and go to 'mainland' Russia in 1998. "Many [Russian settlers] expressed a tenacious attachment to their local communities and landscapes, and in fact

¹⁰⁸ Comprehensive studies of the history of the Finnish-Russian border have been done by James Scott (2010), among others, so here I focus on the specific milestones in Karelian history that contribute to our understanding of the overall context in which joint projects take place.

¹⁰⁹ Russian territorial administration unit *oblast* roughly corresponds to 'region.'

¹¹⁰ Official Karelia: Official Internet Portal of the Republic of Karelia, statistical data: <http://www.gov.karelia.ru/Different/karelia3.html> (last accessed on November 13, 2016.)

passionately contested the idea that “local” or *mestnyy* should be a term reserved for natives alone. “Homeland” or *rodina* was rarely a long-lost birthplace in central Russia; like natives, many settlers professed their attachment to Chukotka using exactly this term” (Thompson, 2003, p.138). Due to the long history of their presence on this territory, Russians are considered a native ethnicity to Karelia by its law. However, this does not have any tangible economic or political privilege that would be felt in the daily lives by Russians or their neighbors. *Perestroika* in the Russian North meant massive outmigration, especially in Siberia, economic deprivation and budget cuts, closures and partial closures of industries, and the cancellation of ‘northern benefits.’ According to surveys conducted among people who decided to migrate to the south, at that time, about 45% consisted of those people who came to the North no more than five years ago (Denissenko, 2004, p.32). Those who stayed, irrespective of nationality, like Chukotka’s ‘native settlers,’ expressed localist discourse of belonging. At the time I was doing my fieldwork in Karelia, the question of (different) nationalities/ ethnicities as a wedge of divide had never been brought up in relation to Russian/ Ukrainian/ Byelorussian/ Karelian/ Vepsian relationships. Most likely, this stable interethnic climate persisted due to shared regional identity that is linked to the language politics, which I mention in Chapter 13.

Apart from top-priority ‘soft’ cooperative areas in the Barents region such as health-related partnership and cross-cultural initiatives, Karelian natural wealth feeds business-related ambitions on both sides. Timber (about 49% of its territory is covered with forests) and water (there are about ten thousand fresh water lakes)¹¹¹ are Karelia’s most significant natural resources that feature in joint projects and spark interest in

¹¹¹ Official Karelia: Official Internet Portal of Karelia, <http://www.gov.karelia.ru/Different/karelia3.html> (last accessed on November 13, 2016.)

northern partners. Andrei Kozyrev, the first Russian minister of foreign affairs who was the signatory to the founding Kirkenes Declaration from the Russian side of the Barents Region, seemed to be realistic in having said that “[Our natural resources as well as favorable political conditions] provide a sound foundation and starting point for the development and economic growth of the region” (Kozyrev A., in Stokke, 1994, p.25).

Below, I outline some historical milestones that I consider important for understanding current context of international cooperation climate in Karelia. A comprehensive study is beyond the scope of my thesis; hence, I include only selected historical events and themes that highlight specific features of Karelia as a geographical and socio-cultural space and place. It is believed that since 7000-6000 BC, the present-day territories of Karelia, Arkhangelsk and Murmansk regions were populated by the first tribes of Finn-Ugric origin, who arrived from Western Siberia and the Ural Mountains. Some of these tribes had spread along the shores of the White Sea and the Barents Sea, while others continued their migration and ended up in modern Finland and Baltic states (A. Bryusov ,1940, p.43). Three thousand years later, when the climate in the north became milder, another wave of migrants came from the Volga river basin and assimilated the earlier population through marriages, close cultural contact and trade. Historians agree that the assimilation was peaceful in nature, mainly because both waves of migrants were numerically insignificant. The settlers populated the shores of lakes and seas, taking advantage of water routes as convenient means of transportation and an abundant source of fish (Bernadsky & Smirnov, 1957, p.112). Eastern Slavs, the largest group inhabiting Eastern Europe, had developed feudal relations by the ninth century.

Their expansion into the North started with Novgorod peasants who were exploring the new lands as traders. They were followed by their fellow citizens who tried to escape feudal oppression and lack of land for cultivation. One more reason for a wave of immigrants from central Russian regions were the calamitous raids of Mongols and Tatars who consistently devastated Russian villages (Bernadsky, 1957, p.56). Consequently, the intermixing of Finn-Ugric groups with Eastern Slavs in present-day Karelian lands started more than ten centuries ago, which is supposedly another factor in the peaceful interethnic relations in the region.¹¹²

Exploration of and settlement in the North advanced in two directions, from the core Russian territories – eastwards and northwards – to the territories that today constitute the Russian European North, or the region around the Barents Sea. Till the thirteenth century, the local feudal lords of the Barents region were vassals of Novgorod and had to pay a fur tribute. However, after Novgorod was overpowered by Moscow, the people became subjects of Moscow (Armstrong, 1978, p.74). From then on, the emigration of Slavs to the northern lands had been steady. The Middle Ages were times of war and turmoil; starting in the thirteenth century, a constant military threat came from Denmark, Sweden and Northern Germany. The Finn-Ugric tribes joined the Slavs in battles and resisted western invaders, sometimes winning and sometimes losing. In the fifteen and sixteenth centuries, wars with Poland and Finland broke out, in addition to battles with Prussia, Napoleonic France, Turkey, and Japan. During the Russian-Swedish war of 1610-1617, Russians and Karelians were stoically defending the town of Korela from the Swedish army who managed to take the town only after a six months' siege. Under the *Stolbov Agreement* signed in 1617, Russia had to yield

¹¹² First written references to contacts between Slavs and aboriginal Karelian population are found in Slavic chronicles of XII century (Vlasova, 2005).

the Karel Isthmus (stretch of land between the Gulf of Finland and Lake Ladoga) to Sweden, which led to the massive emigration of Karelians from their home lands that were then taken by the Swedes, to the Russian side (Bernadsky, 1957, p.114). Most Karelians remained in the Tver region that remains to this day the Russian area with second largest ethnic Karelian population (around seven thousand people). The important aspect of this story is that historically, over some ten centuries, ethnic Russians and Karelians not only peacefully coexisted but fought together against common enemies, of which there were plenty. I believe this is important to remember when analyzing the inter-ethnic relations in present-day Karelia, the issue of the local identity, its many faces and the roots of local attitudes toward cooperative projects and doing business with Finns and Swedes.



Figure 19 - Solovetsky Monastery (Friary). Photo credit: <http://solovki-monastyr.ru/>.

Since the fifteenth century approximately, Christian Orthodox monasteries have been used not only as centers of spiritual life but also as fortresses and as a military political force used to fight against foreign invaders. The famous Solovetsky Monastery

was founded in fourteenth century; it has been a pilgrimage destination and an actor in history and culture not only of the North but of the whole Russian state. During the first hundred years of its existence, the monastery ambitiously expanded its territory in the present-day Arkhangelsk region and became a major land owner in the Russian North. Its domain stretched from the shore of Arkhangelsk on the White Sea to the Kola Peninsula. Rebuilt from wooden buildings into stone fortresses, the monastery successfully countered attacks from Swedes, Danes, and Englishmen for the next four centuries. The same Monastery was used as a prison for almost two hundred years, from 1718 till 1903, and then as a labor camp for fourteen years in early Soviet times (1923-1933).¹¹³

9.2. The romantic North and its iconography.

The North certainly has a captivating appeal. It has been romanticized, and so have the people who lived there. Perceived as tough, brave, honest, and noble – in a word, full of virtues that those inhabiting the South arguably showed less of. In the 2000s, the Russian film industry produced a range of movies about the north: northern landscapes and people's lives in the north – that included those who would qualify as 'native settlers' as well as transient characters. Such movies as *Territory* (2015), *How I Spent Last Summer* (2010), *The Island* (meaning the Solovetsky Island. 2006), etc., are just some of the widely-known examples. In part, this romantic aura comes from the perceived northern 'spirituality,' which in turn goes back to a distinctive spiritual life and folklore traditions abundant in the territories of the present-day Karelia and Arkhangelsk region.

¹¹³ Morukov Yu. 2004. Solovetsky Labor Camp (1923-1933). *Solovetsky Sea*, 3.

One such phenomena unique to the European Russian North is the so-called 'Northern painting.'¹¹⁴ In the fourteenth century, icons were made not only in Novgorod but in the northern areas as well. In the remote lake and forest regions of the North, clergy, craftsmen and even peasants practiced icon painting as their side occupation (Smirnova, 1967, p.98-103). These people usually worked on their own, did not have any professional training and were not aware of the major isographic trends of their time. They could not compete with the Novgorod masterful isographs¹¹⁵ and they did not start their own schools of icon painting with the unique stylistic features of the Novgorod isographs either. Some researchers used this reasoning to downplay the aesthetic value of these icons. Those art historians introduced the term 'Northern painting' implying their 'inferiority' in order to disqualify them from being called 'icons' (Lazarev, 1978, p.48). It was also implied that the paintings lacked the mastery of metropolitan works but they surely had their own recognizable style, appeal and charm. The dating of 'Northern paintings' is a challenging task because in remote regions the pace of artistic innovation in icon painting was slow. Here, adherence to tradition was a virtue, and some of the traditional styles of iconography disregarded by the Moscow and Novgorod masters, survived in the North for several centuries (Lazarev 1978, p.49).

Indeed, the northern icons can be taken as a guide to local folkloric adaptations of the Byzantine canons that were popular for several centuries (Popov, 1989, p.24). Icons coming directly from Byzantium were very expensive and reached remote northern villages only on rare festive occasions. They influenced the techniques of northern icon

¹¹⁴ "Northern painting is a conventional term adopted by art historians to denote stylistically similar works of iconography created by local isographs of the Russian North from XV to XVIII centuries" (Big Soviet Encyclopedia)
<http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/bse/130875/%D0%A1%D0%B5%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%BD%D1%8B%D0%B5> (last accessed on November 29, 2016.)

¹¹⁵ In this context, 'Isograph' is synonymous to an 'icon-painter' (authors on icon-painting in Russia use these terms interchangeably).

painting technique both directly and indirectly, through the works of those Russian isographs whose personal artistic style was close to the isographic 'Greek manner.' The local adaptation of the classical canon meant the relative simplification of composition as well as the outlines of the saints' dress, hair and background. Also, the forms and ornamentation on the sides of icons were simplified and schematized. We can see the same graphic tendency in Medieval Greek frescos painted in the folk vein rather than in the classical canon (Skawran, 1982). Thus, one of the recognizable features of the 'Northern paintings' is the folkness of the image, in the style of 'primitive realism' and the simplicity of the idea and its embodiment. For example, it was not uncommon for Northern saints to appear in icons accompanied by animals that were considered important (and perhaps, even sacred) by local Russians and Karelians. For example, the particularly revered St. Flor and St. Laur who were painted not only in icons but also on iconostases in chapels, with horses in the background (Smirnova, 1974, p.39-42; Reformatskaya, 1968, p.18-24).¹¹⁶ Saint Vlasii was believed to be a protector of cow herds and the major figure in festivities specifically organized to honor him. So, a cow found its way into the icons beside him (Antonova, 1966, p.82). Perhaps, the most prominent feature of the northern icons is the large number of the local 'folk saints' depicted by them. It is believed that Orthodox Christianity of Eastern Slavs manifested itself as a

¹¹⁶ Karelians honored horses for they played an important role in their lives. As to wild animals, bears seem to have had a special attitude from the locals. For example, Ivanova L.I., a folklorist from Petrozavodsk, points in her article "Tapiola I Hijtkola: dva lesnyh tsarstva karel'skoj mifologii" [Tapiola and Hijtkola: Two Forest Kingdoms of the Karel Mythology]: "Originally, the words "tapio" and "hiisi" were used in the meaning of "forest." The bear was called "a golden king in the forest's armpit." In runes, the forest-tapio was deified; it was perceived as a living being and revered. In some time, tapio was perceived as the spirit of the forest having only positive traits, 'Golden king of the forest, beautiful forest Tapio.'"



Figure 20 - Elijah the prophet in the Desert, icon (comes from the village Pyalma, Pudozhje, Karelia; currently is exhibited in the Museum of Fine Arts of Karelia in Petrozavodsk.) Photo credit: <http://to-world-travel.ru/img/%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B0/2688/26>

dense blend of classic Greek and local folk (pagan) beliefs.¹¹⁷ A distinctive pantheon of the most revered saints formed in northern icon painting by the sixteenth century (Lazarev, 1978, p.75). The most popular figure was St. Nicholas the Wonderworker. There is a saying that has survived from those times: 'From Holmogor to Kola there are thirty-three Nikolas' which refers to the fact that there was hardly one chapel or a church that did not have some icon of Nikolai in it. Also, the saints Paraskeva Pyatnica (Paraskeva

¹¹⁷ See, for example, Alexei Yudin 1999, *Russkaya narodnaya duhovnaya kultura. Hristianizatsia Rusi i proishozhdenie dvojnoj very* [Russian Folk Culture. Christianization of the Rus' and Origin of the Double Faith.] Moscow, Vysshaya Shkola.

the Friday), Elijah, Ekaterina, Georgy, Modest, Vlasiy, Flor and Laur were among the most beloved. The saints Georgy, Modest, Vlasiy, Flor and Laur were associated with the agricultural cycle which was important for farming Slaves and Karelians. St. Paraskeva was believed to be responsible for water supply through rain and clean lakes, while Ekaterina protected the home hearth and women's crafts. Even nowadays, many chapels in northern villages are named after these saints, the distribution of female and male names being about equal (Smirnova, 1974, p.32; Antonova, 1966, p.81).

Although some critics may say that Northern icons lack refinement, to me, they radiate a deep sincerity and plain-heartedness that I could not resist when I first saw a collection of old northern icons in the Karelia Fine Art Museum in Petrozavodsk. One icon is particularly characteristic in this sense, it is titled "Elijah the Prophet in the Desert" (the first half of the fifteenth century; Karelian Museum of Fine Arts, Petrozavodsk). It is painted in the Novgorod tradition which is evident from its well-organized composition, with hills that serve as a background and at the same time as a frame for the seated Elijah (Koltsova, 2005). The grayish moss that covers the rocks/hills looks very much the same as real moss on the real rocks that are abundant in Karelia. However recognizable the Novgorod influence may be in this icon, its northern origin shines through the simple and laconic oval outline of the figure, cubical edges of the rocks and pale ochroid paints that induce the feeling of a desert.

Karelian iconography, runes (epic songs including famous Kalevala), all kinds of folklore besides Kalevala (litanies, laments, fairy tales and songs), distinctive cuisine with its accent on berries, fish and meat, as well as its stunningly beautiful northern landscapes, contributes to the construction of the local identity, pride, and cultural capital that is projected to outsiders (tourists) and is nurtured in local families.

Chapter 10.

Navigating geographical borders.

10.1. Migration and settlement in the Soviet period.

In the previous chapter, I discussed patterns of migration and settlement in Karelia and in other regions of the Russian part of the Barents Region. Here, I explore migration patterns in the recent past as well as the present day in the same localities, and conclude with a discussion of the local ways of crossing the Karelian-Finnish border – set it in a historical perspective.

Prior to the 1917 Revolution, Russia was an agrarian feudal society, while its current economic geography (including territorial production specialization) is a legacy of the Soviet-era industrialization (Blakkisrud, 2006, p.60). Soviet planners had the ambition to exploit rich natural resources to develop the Soviet Union into a self-sufficient state independent from capitalist countries' supplies. The importance of this resource and production autonomy was repeatedly emphasized on regional and national levels. Factors such as: average production, transportation costs and access to the market were taken into consideration but did not have as much weight as they did in western market economies.

The Soviet period of resource extraction in the Russian north-west region started in 1920s when the Murmansk Railroad was built. The necessity to attract more workers marked a new resettlement policy: first workers were prisoners brought to construction

sites instead of serving their sentences in prison.¹¹⁸ The population in the North started to grow rapidly each year. The first five-year¹¹⁹ plan was announced in 1928 and started with mining the natural wealth of the Kola Peninsula, Ukhta, Vorkuta and the Siberian Far East (Denissenko, 2004, p.23). The more deposits that were discovered, the more financial and human resources had to be invested into extraction projects.

After the Second World War, the need for skilled workers in the northern regions became even more acute. The number of prisoners brought to the North as a free workforce was insufficient to cope with the amount of unskilled labor required on daily basis. In early 1950s, the government launched several economic and social incentive schemes commonly referred to as 'northern benefits.' These included: higher salaries, lower retirement age, a better supply of consumer goods, etc. The workers operated on a rotation principle: it was expected that after having worked five to ten years in the North, the migrants would return home (Blakkisrud, 2006, p.64). But after the 1970s, the costs of ongoing migration led to this policy being reconsidered. Significant resources were invested in an infrastructure to make it more attractive for the workers to stay. Massive industrialization was not the only change initiated by the new state; during the times of

¹¹⁸ The social composition of the northern regions' population as highly 'criminal' due to prisoner-workers brought there back in 1920s was widely known in the Soviet Union. This was a source of prejudices and a special aura of the whole place as unsafe or lacking 'intelligentsia' which in certain educated circles sounded like a verdict. When I first told my father that I was going to do my PhD fieldwork in Karelia, he was concerned about my safety, justifying his concern by the common knowledge of how that region was populated – first, the city of Petrozavodsk was built by prisoners who then settled there, while prisoners were the workforce for the first industrial projects. In terms of the historical facts, he was right. However, reality turned out to be much more complicated, and I found Karelia to be one of the safest places on the post-Soviet space that I visited in my life.

¹¹⁹ Five-year plans were a basic instrument of planning the rapid development of national economy in the Soviet Union from 1928, when the first five-year plan was approved. They all were designed and adopted centrally by Gosplan (State Planning Committee) for the whole country. The first five-year plan targeted the rapid (heavy) industrial development of the Soviet Union to enhance its defense capacity.

the Cold War, the Barents Sea region was highly militarized and became one of the areas that were almost absolutely closed to the outer world. Another characteristic feature of the region at that time was its multiethnic population who were younger and better educated than the rest of the Russian population, which was explained by the economic structure of the North and jobs available there (Denissenko, 2004, p.5).

Transition to the market economy was marked by an economic and social depression in Russia while the North, in particular, was badly hit. The privilege of 'northern benefits' was canceled, and transient industrial workers were no longer lured to the inhospitable cold lands. Although the government obligated the new private owners of old enterprises to pay off benefits and other accumulated debts to workers, a lack of funds and administrative control left these obligations unfulfilled. In the twinkling of an eye, large industries in the North became unproductive and unable to compete with foreign companies in the reality of the market economy; migrant workers had to be resettled (or returned) to southern regions of the country.

During this transition period, the Russian part of the Barents Region lost a large part of its population. In total, from 1991 to 1999, the population fell by 7%. However, the outflow was not as massive as it was from the northernmost parts of Siberia, for example; between 1989 and 2002, the Russian European North lost four hundred thousand people to southern territories, including exchanges with other northern regions (Denissenko, 2004, p.8). Most of those who left in 1990s had spent no more than five years in the North and supposedly, did not build strong ties to the land and/or the community. The major reasons for outflow are thought to be the closure of industrial facilities and military bases, which Murmansk suffered from the most, being the most heavily industrialized and militarized city in northern Russia, The initial years of market reforms had a

devastating effect on the North: the volume of industrial production in 1995 shrunk by 25% compared to 1989 figures (Lausala & Valkonen, 1999, p.17).

10.2. Outmigration.

During Gorbachev's *Perestroika*, the policy towards the North was reassessed. The government had issued decrees to move what they called the "unprofitable population" (Denissenko, 2004, p.14) to other parts of the country by terminating workers' contracts and withdrawing from the responsibility of paying off the northern benefits. Skilled workers who once came to the region to earn money, were leaving, and no one came to replace them because of lack of demand and the closures of enterprises. This cohort of migrants never viewed their living in the North as permanent and most of them planned to return home or migrate to some other place anyway (survey done in Denissenko's study, 2004). The surveys conducted by the same group of researchers revealed that migration patterns of the local settled population remained unchanged. It meant that it was predominantly young people who migrated for higher education or to serve in the army in other parts of Russia. Negative natural gain and outmigration were the factors that contributed to the reduction of population in the European Russian North (Heleniak, 1999, p.16). However, according to Goskomstat (Russia's governmental statistics year book) statistics, the main cause for the loss of population was outmigration (Goskomstat, 1999, p.69).

Some other causes that contributed to out-migration seem to be: the legalization of small businesses and later – open borders with neighboring countries. However, it did

not mean that the Nordic countries started experiencing a flow of migrants fleeing the Russian North but rather, individual Russian traders invaded Finnish and Norwegian town markets. To provide a vivid account of the situation, I am citing a Norwegian political scientist who was a part of the Norwegian team documenting the migration patterns of Russians in the Barents Region:

The frontier with Norway and Finland is the only place where Russia has a land border directly with developed industrial market economies. This fact, combined with the structural differences between Western and Post-Soviet societies, has served to create a number of myths about the alleged effects of the gap in living standards between Russia and the West. On the western side, these myths have given rise to the fear that the Russians, driven by misery and poverty at home and irresistibly attracted by the lure of the Western wealth and welfare, would start packing their belongings and crossing the borders in droves, legally or illegally, in pursuit of a better life in the West. So far, this scenario has not become reality. On the contrary, at present there are probably more Norwegians and Finns working in Russia than vice versa (Hansen, 1994, p.63).

The same team recorded the migration history of the respondents and their future migration plans. It is interesting that the major push factors identified by people leaving the North were its harsh climate and pollution, which challenges the primacy of the economic cause. During my stay in Karelia, I observed that in comparison to Canadians and Americans, Russians generally are less prone to follow jobs, within, or outside the country. Statistics supports this assumption: around 49% of Russians live in the region they were born in (Hansen, 1994, p.65). The pull of personal connections and attachment to place are seemingly more important for life satisfaction than migration for jobs. Both Mikhail Denissenko and Niobe Thompson who have studied migration from an anthropological perspective, conclude that human nature is complicated and it is hard to

calculate one's propensity to migrate. In his research, N. Thompson showed how the local identity can be contested by newcomers who after having worked at regional industrial enterprises for about ten years, claim to be no less 'local' than Chukotka's officially recognized 'natives.' These southern newcomers were also claiming belonging and sense of affinity with the local cultural, economic, and social systems (Thompson, 2003). Perhaps, what is true for Chukotka can be true for the Barents Region as well. Anyway, the first sweeping flow of migrants from the North after the dissolution of the Soviet Union consisted of those who had lived in the region for less than five years and have not yet established strong connections with local people and/or the land (Heleniak, 1999, p.20). The same study found that 65% of respondents expressed a desire to move to other regions in Russia, 20% wanted to return to their home in former Soviet republics (mostly Ukraine and Byelorussia), only 3% reported to have Norway, Sweden, or Finland as their desired target destination, while another 2% wanted or planned to emigrate to some other foreign country. These migration wishes were left unfulfilled, otherwise, the Russian North would be deserted by now. However, trade between Russian northern territories and the Nordic countries (mostly Finland and Norway) has proliferated due to the cross-border price differentials that allowed Russian traders to make considerable incomes. When Russian and Nordic local prices for consumer goods essentially balanced, by mid 1990s, such shuttle trade lost its attraction and slowed down (Hansen, 1994, p.64).

10.3. Migration patterns and ethnic composition of migrants.

During the 1970s-1980s, the intensity of migration differed significantly throughout the areas of the Russian northern regions. The flow of migrants did not move only in a

north-south direction outside of the region; quite often, many skilled workers would remain within the same region but in its southern territory where the climate was milder. For example, many migrant workers moved from the polar regions to the southern areas of the Komi Republic that, in addition to a milder climate, had a better infrastructure and more jobs (Denissenko, 2004, p.18). It would be wrong to assume homogeneity of the Russian northern regions in terms of migration patterns. They varied greatly, ranging from outmigration of over half the population of Chukotka, to a very small positive in-migration in Karelia within the same time-period (Thompson, 2003, p.144).

As to the age of the inhabitants of the Russian European North prior to the reforms, the young were overrepresented among those arriving, and seniors were the largest group among those leaving (Denissenko, 2004, p.16). Overall, because of the Soviet migration policy that encouraged skilled newcomers, the population was characterized by being younger, more fertile, and more mobile than average Russian population (Blakkisrud, 2006, p.63). With the fall of the Soviet Union, the distinctive features of the northern population gradually started to vanish due to a lack of skilled workers to replace those leaving jobs in local industries.

In his study, Heleniak suggested that one can predict possible migration destinations based on the ethnic composition of the region and on the migrants' length of stay. Thus, he assumed that Ukrainians and Byelorussians, who constituted 19% of the population of the Russian North, would return to their home countries after their job contracts terminated. However, no more than half of each of these two ethnic groups did so. Other Ukrainians and Byelorussians preferred either to stay in the North or move to southern parts of Russia. One reason for this was demographic politics of the Russian government in the beginning of 1990s. Almost immediately after the break-up of the Soviet Union, the newly emerged Russian Federation issued a law that guaranteed Russian citizenship, for

no cost, and upon request to citizens of former Soviet republics who were staying or working in Russia in 1990-1991. Also, an effort was made to draw those Russians who suddenly found themselves in 'foreign countries' (former Soviet republics) back home.

Heleniak also noted an intriguing trend toward positive in-migration to the region. He stated that the net migration exchange between the North and other regions of Russia was roughly the same in 1996 as it was in 1993: there were almost as many people coming to the North from other regions of Russia as leaving the North for southern regions (Heleniak, 1999, p.9). In 1994, forty-six thousand people more arrived in the North, coming from new independent states. The exchange has remained positive ever since. However, specifically in Karelia, the population has been in constant decline since 1991 up to and including present day (December 2016) with outmigration rebounding by 27.2% in 2016 compared to 2015¹²⁰. Overall, during a ten-year period, more people arrived in the North from Commonwealth Independent States than left, with the exceptions of Ukraine and Belarus (Heleniak, 1999, p.10). This situation of continuous migration in the North raises a question about the consistency of the governmental policy towards the North: while resettling skilled workers from the North because of a lack of jobs, it nevertheless encouraged newcomers. The fact that the exchange has remained positive, challenges the assumption that the major reason for coming to the North was the northern benefits and a developed infrastructure (Agranat, 1992, p.19). Since the early 1990s, the benefits were either canceled officially or simply not paid. So, could it be that even without higher wages and secured retirement payments, the socially and culturally favorable atmosphere in the North was more attractive and in some respects

¹²⁰ Federal'naya sluzhba gosudarstvennoj statistiki [Federal State Statistics Service] http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/population/demograp_hy/# (last accessed on December 12, 2016); Business newspaper Vesti Karelii http://vesti.karelia.ru/news/ottok_naseleniya_iz_karelii_vyros_v_2016_godu_na_272/ (last accessed on December 12, 2016).

healthier than in central parts of Russia, at least for some time? I would think so, for no economy-based argument could explain the choice to make a living in the northern lands during the 1990s.

10.4. Migration today: local ways of crossing the Karelian-Finnish border. Visa regimes.

“Well, I’ve used multiple modes of travel going from Petrozavodsk to *Finka*,” shares Olga, a second generation Petrozavodian, in her early thirties. – “I usually go to Helsinki once a year, for shopping and you know, just to get away from it all. I drive my car, or hire a car with a driver to get me there. It doesn’t take too long, and it’s affordable. But *marshrutkas* [mini buses] work great as well.” Yulia, a mother of two, in her late twenties, tells me about her travel arrangements: “I go to Helsinki every year, I just like it both – the trip, and the city. A couple of my school friends live there, I go visit them. I take my kids along, of course. *Marshrutkas* departing from Ptz are okay but I prefer the St. Petersburg ones, they are bigger and have a TV, so kids can watch and survive the travel better without bugging me all the time.” For some people however, *Finka* is a business destination – in that case, a corporate bus is hired, or, when travelling on one’s own, a car with a personal driver is an option. Most locals who travel with someone else – a friend, a partner, a relative, a small child or children, prefer to use the St. Petersburg *marshrutkas* to Helsinki that run every day. There are six trains from St. Petersburg to Helsinki, four of which run daily; the ticket cost ranges from 2100 to 6500 RUB (47 to 145 CAD). At least six buses leave for Helsinki daily: the trip takes 7 hours and costs about 700 RUB (15 CAD). A local train from Petrozavodsk to Joensuu, Finland, runs every other day and costs about 2200 RUB (50 CAD), although the actual price is dependent on seat category.

While in St. Petersburg the buses leave from railway stations and designated bus stations, in Petrozavodsk the *marshrutkas* (which can be run as a somewhat shady business to bypass taxes, etc.), are not so easily found, and one need to be a local to find them. As shared by my informants, Helsinki is not the only desired destination in *Finka*. North-eastern regions of Finland are quite popular as well – like the cities of Rovaniemi and Oulu, which are quite big administrative centers that have neighborhood agreements with Karelia and joint projects in spheres of healthcare, culture, education, and business.

Helsinki is perhaps the most Russian-oriented metropolitan urban space in Finland, meaning that it has the largest concentration of Russian migrants (and immigrants), and the Russian language is heard on the streets and is visually recognizable on shop signs in the streets. However, besides Helsinki, the region of Eastern Finland also has special business and cultural relations with Russian Karelia. Small border towns' economies in Eastern Finland (such as Imatra) are dependent on business relations with Russians, and often business deals and contracts are discussed and agreed upon in the Russian language.¹²¹ Although the easiest way of making a profit for Russian merchants would be to smuggle cheap cigarettes and alcohol across the border due to high demand, the Karelians living in border towns of Sortavala and Ruskeala who I talked to have engaged in other kind of business. Oleg, 41 years old, is an exquisite wood carver; he and his team consisting of his family members and friends, make custom wooden furniture including inside stairs and interiors for saunas that sell very well in St. Petersburg and in the neighboring Finland, so he never runs out of clients. His wife Maria, originally from a

¹²¹ My acquaintance Oleg (mentioned above) told me about his interactions with his business partners in what he called the 'Russian language.' After he reproduced some parts of his latest conversation, I realized that at least in some cases, business negotiation-type of communication in small border towns between partners occurs in what can be called a local pidgin version of Russian language.

small town in Ukraine, works by his side and is a talented painter; her wooden design objects sell mostly in Helsinki. Another local family that I spent time with in the small village of Ruskeala were engaged in breeding sheep. They told me that after Ruskeala and other smaller villages ended up on the Russian side of the border after World War II, the Finnish population left to the Finnish side of the border. Finnish villagers were once very keen on breeding sheep because the land was not any good except for serving as pastures. That is why locals immersed themselves in all kinds of activities connected to sheep breeding. Local sheep dairy products and wool were well-known and sought after in neighboring places. Once the Finns and their sheep were gone to the other side of the national border, the local Russian-Karelian people took over. Since then, the tradition of sheep breeding, as both passion and stable profit, is popular, though it is not an easy job. Once again, the local sheep dairy products and wool are locally known and even cross the border to reach consumers in Eastern Finland. But how much effort is required to cross the border on the regular basis for Finns and Karelians? The answer is about visa policies on both sides, that have changed often. Yet it seems that these changes are progressively making border crossing easier and more affordable for individual regional border-crossers.

The simplified border-crossing regime has been in effect for Karelia and Leningrad oblast (with its capital St. Petersburg) since 2014. ‘Simplified’ visa regime means that inhabitants of these two regions do not have to have documentary proof of the reason for travel to Finland, or to prove their ability to pay. It is enough to indicate the purpose of the trip, whichever one sees fit, such as shopping, sightseeing, visiting a recreation center, etc. There are four Finnish consulates in Russia: in Petrozavodsk, in Murmansk, in St. Petersburg, and in Moscow. The consulate of Finland in St. Petersburg alone gives

out around one million visas to Russians yearly.¹²² Every day the border posts let through heavy traffic in both directions, and even now with the context of economic sanctions, this stream does not run dry; in part this is explained by the fact that thousands of Russians own real estate in Finland.

Three years ago, several south-eastern Finnish towns put forward an initiative to introduce a '36-hour without visa' policy for Russian passengers coming by train to Finnish border regions. This initiative was included into a draft of the cooperation agreement submitted to the Ministry of Labor and Industry of Finland.¹²³ However, this initiative has not passed. As one of my informants shared, he would have travelled even more often than now (he has a small business in Petrozavodsk and travels to Finland with his family for weekend shopping and for sightseeing) if it was easier to get a visa. But he finds the hassle frustrating.

While Russia adopted the '72 hours without a visa' for Finns, some wonder why Finland would not do the same for Russia. A deputy from the legislative assembly of Karelia, Alexei Gavrilov, shared the information coming from a diplomat in Brussels: at least one reason was Finland's concern about Russian crime that was feared would overflow into Finland once the borders were more open.¹²⁴ Besides Erik Hansen's opinion on trade flow that I have cited above, there is a reason to believe that a softened border

¹²² Consulate General of Finland <http://www.finland.org.ru/public/default.aspx?nodeid=42713> (last accessed October 12, 2016).

¹²³ Karelian newspaper VSE [Everything] <http://vse.karelia.ru/news/?id=21971> (last accessed Nov 11, 2016).

¹²⁴ Karelian newspaper Karelinform: 'Finland doesn't want to embrace responsibility by simplifying visa regime for Russians' http://karelinform.ru/article/society/43058/finlyandiya_boitsya_otvetstvennosti_oblegchaya_vizo_viy_rejim_dlya_rossiyan (last accessed October 5, 2016) (last accessed October 12, 2016).

between Kaliningrad and Poland turned out to be beneficial for both countries,¹²⁵ proving that Russian crime is overestimated.¹²⁶ Another factor that affects Karelian-Finnish travels is euro exchange rate against ruble. At the turn of the millennium when ruble was relatively stable, Karelians used to spend weekends in Finnish cottages on the shores of lakes and rivers. Lena, a 53-year old Petrozavodian, shares: “The nature there is much better cared for... The streets and shores are cleaner - you don’t see as much rubbish along the road sides and on the shores like here. Also, service and infrastructure are so much better, I just feel welcome there! But, it *was* cheaper. You know, I miss those times. Now I can’t afford it anymore, to rent a cottage in Eastern Finland for a weekend. With the ruble falling so dramatically, I can’t afford it, and most of my friends dropped the habit of such gateways as well.” When the euro started to grow rapidly some four

¹²⁵ For further analytic discussion about the unique case of Kaliningrad exclave and applicability of its specificity to Karelia, see *Kaliningrad Challenge* by Hanne-Margaret Birckenbach (2003). However, this book is a bit outdated by now, with Russia’s deploying nuclear-capable missiles to Kaliningrad which brought security concerns on the Polish side. In response to that, Poland, as a NATO member-state, decided to tighten security on its border with Kaliningrad and to build observation towers up to fifty meters high. Russian Kaliningrad is a very special strategic place. Being a German city of Königsberg until the end of the WW II, it was passed on to Russia along with adjacent villages as one of the agreements of the Potsdam Conference (July 17-August 2, 1945). Kaliningrad oblast is called ‘exclave’ because it is separated from the rest of Russia and does not have a common border with it, bordering instead with Poland, Lithuania, and Belarus, and borders with the Baltic Sea. The policy of open border to locals on the both sides of the border (Russians and the Polish) adopted in 2002 which presupposed that Russians could travel up to fifty kilometers inside the EU without a visa, proved to be a quite successful experiment. However, due to the highly strategic location and ever-changing climate in Russia-EU and Russia-US relations, the open border policies do not survive very long. EurActive News <http://xitfilms.ru/online/VzktM05sRHFXUk=> (last accessed on October 13, 2016.) ZeroHedge News <http://www.zerohedge.com/news/2016-10-08/russia-deploys-nuclear-capable-missiles-kaliningrad-near-polish-border> (last accessed on October 12, 2016).

¹²⁶ Der Spiegel online <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/poland-and-russia-test-visa-free-travel-a-847828.html> (last accessed October 12, 2016).

years ago, it posed a barrier much more effective than visa challenges, which, after all were not felt much in Karelia.

In 2015, 1.7 million foreign tourists came to Russia through Karelian crossing points. This is 6.4% more than a year before.¹²⁷ However, these figures do not really reflect the scope of foreign travel in Karelia. Quite a few tourists (mostly Finns) who travel in their cars, finish their trip at the nearest gas station or store on the Karelian border, where they can buy cheap alcohol and cigarettes.¹²⁸ The euro exchange rate closed the gates from Karelia to Finland but opened the doors for those short-time travelers whose major attraction to Karelia is cheap alcohol and cigarettes, while the republic is longing for more serious tourist commitments like staying in local hotels and visiting attractions. As I was told, at a tourist information center in Karelia the summer of 2013, around 60% of those willing to travel to Russia abandon their intentions at the first stage of paperwork. A single-entry visa costs eighty euros for Finns, with a two-week wait time. Meanwhile, Russians can get a two-year multiple-entry tourist visa to Finland for thirty-five euros without an invitation, which is obligatory for foreigners who want to enter Russia.

Migration and settlement patterns in the Russian North (including Karelia) from Soviet times to today demonstrate how local people have dealt with the geographical border; the border between the parts of the Soviet Union, the national border with Finland, and regional borders within the Barents or Baltic Regions. In my view, this is the 'hardest' one out of all kinds of borders to which I refer in my thesis. This border depends on ever-changing policies of the central governments (Moscow, Brussels, and

¹²⁷ Russkaya Gazeta [Russian Newspaper] <https://rg.ru/2016/04/26/reg-szfo/v-karelii-predlozhili-vvesti-vizovye-lgoty-dlia-finnov.html> (last accessed on October 11, 2016).

¹²⁸ From my conversation with a border officer at a conference reception in Petrozavodsk in 2013.

Helsinki); - current security concerns, economic risks and benefits, to name a few factors that have influenced the border-crossing regulations. After Karelia was industrialized by Peter the Great, the dynamic flow of migration in and out of the republic has produced that specific social and ethnic composition of its present population. The legacy of the Soviet migration policies and ‘northern benefits,’ are that the Karelian population is younger and on average, more educated, than population in the regions further south.

The history of the shifting Finnish – Russian Empire/Soviet Russia/Russian Federation border has created close affiliation between people on the both sides of the border. Family ties, friendship, small businesses and personal attractions to vacation destinations are all contributive to these affiliations. With the introduction of the Barents Region in 1998 and other regional structures as well as strongly developing municipal relations, Karelia has become a playground for multiple diverse international cooperative initiatives. That is why the ease of crossing this geographical border, – administratively and financially, is crucial to the sustainable success of these projects. In her doctoral project, *State and Society in Small-Town Russia: A Feminist-Ethnographic Inquiry into the Boundaries of Society in the Finnish-Russian Borderland* (2013), Meri Kulmala from the University of Helsinki, makes a point that the Finnish-Russian borderland (and the border) become even more salient when the targeted region for transnational cooperation is a former Finnish territory (like present-day Karelian province Sortavala). Sometimes, a kind of nostalgia for the ‘core’ Finnish territories that now lie on the other side of the national border propel more funds and initiatives from the Finns that contribute to the development of the civil society through NGOs in Russia, for example.

“Furthermore, parts of Karelia (including the Sortavala district) used to be a Finnish territory until World War II. The Finnish influence is still visible: Several masterpieces of Finnish architecture have survived in the town of

Sortavala. Finland's proximity is seen also in many Finnish-Russian joint projects. In addition to lively collaboration between the Sortavala district and communes of the eastern parts of Finland, many transnational projects have been carried out by civil society organizations" (Kulmala, 2013, p.108).

Yet, we must realize that the majority of such trans-border crossing practices happen on an individual basis, chiefly for leisure, study and business which essentially contributes to the *selective nature* of experiencing the permeability of the border. This becomes even more significant in the context of selectivity of participants in the cooperative projects, especially those who get to travel to Nordic countries on study trips (Cf. Chapters 14-16). I would like to finish this chapter with a full citation from James Scott on the matter of unequal access to benefits of the transboundary regionality that Karelia joined and possible consequences of it,

"The 'regional idea' implies a selective reframing of local structural and political conditions as well as of personal everyday activity spaces. The 'selectivity' of this phenomenon is of critical importance; we by no means even suggest that a majority of Finns or Russians living in Karelia would actively subscribe to the idea that they share an emerging transnational space. Karelia is, rather, a transnational space for those political actors, businesspeople, civil society organizations and 'ordinary citizens' who understand it as a resource and a specific place within Europe with common issues"

(Scott, 2010, p.130).

Chapter 11.

The BEAR as a region and organization.



Figure 21 - The Barents Region. Map source:
<http://www.barentscooperation.org/en/About/Barents-region>.

The Barents Region emerged in 1993 from the political will of several actors. It is Mr. Thorvald Stoltenberg, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs for Norway, who is considered the ‘father’ of the Barents Region (Bärenholdt 2007, p.249). He initiated cooperative integration of the northern territories of the four countries that comprise the area:

Norway, Sweden, Russia, and Finland. The policy document of the newly established Barents Region was signed at the conference in the Norwegian circumpolar town of Kirkenes on January 11, 1993, the policy became known as the Kirkenes Declaration on

Cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region. The conference gathered foreign ministers of the four countries directly involved in the project, representatives from the other two Nordic countries (Denmark and Iceland) and the European Commission; all of them signed the Declaration (Stokke, 1994, p.2). This event was followed with the political institutionalization of the Barents Region. When the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) and Barents Regional Council (BRC) were established. They became the two levels of cooperation in the region, intergovernmental and interregional. The major objectives of the cooperation in the Barents Region were declared to be the promotion of “sustainable development in all aspects of society: economic, environmental and social, and strengthening of comprehensive security in the Region” (BEAC, 10th Session, Høstad, Norway, 2005, Joint Communiqué). The signing parties were united in their optimistic visions of the new European region, unique in its northern location and socio-economic characteristics. As of 1993, the Region was comprised of three Norwegian *fylker* Nordland, Troms and Finnmark, the northmost *län* of Sweden (Norrbotten) and of Finland (Lapland); and Murmansk and Arkhangelsk *oblasti* of Russia. However, other northern territories quickly realized the potential of cooperation and started joining in. Thus, the region expanded to include the Swedish *län* of Västerbotten, Finnish *län* of Kainuu and Oulu, Komi Republics, and Nenets Autonomous *Okrug* (region). The Russian Republic of Karelia joined in 1997, while the most recent member is Finnish North Karelia, who is the fourteenth member and whose membership was approved only in October 2016.

Interestingly, this province applied for membership in 1997 but was rejected; its appeals were repeatedly blocked by the three Norwegian member regions of Finnmark,

Troms and Nordland.¹²⁹ At present, the total territory of about 1.9 million km² is home for a diverse group of ethnicities speaking several languages including Russian, Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, Nenets, Komi, Vepsian, Karelian, and some local Sami languages. The total population count of the region is about six million people, 75% of whom are Russians. Unlike its western partner, the Russian part of the Region is highly urbanized (78%), with most of its population living in cities or towns (Lausala & Valkonen, 1999, p.25). The exception being the Komi Republic.

Although the shift of power from central to local authorities is one of the core policies of the region, the states do not lose their definitive say and do not withdraw from making far-reaching political decisions. The Barents Council was established as a forum for handling intergovernmental issues regarding the region, and for the implementation of centralized management. This Council meets every third year at the level of Foreign Ministers (in the country of chairmanship at the end of its service), and consists of seven participants including Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Denmark, Iceland, and the European Commission. Another nine countries are given the status of observers, namely, the USA, Canada, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, France, Poland, and Japan. The chairmanship of the Council rotates between Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. Finland handed over the chairmanship to Russia in 2015 for three years (2015-2017). The ministerial sessions of the BEAC are conducted in English, Russian, and one of the Nordic languages.

¹²⁹ Barents Region expands to North Karelia: the Finnish Region becomes the 15th Member in the Cooperation, by Atle Staalesen, Nov 9, 2016 <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/life-and-public/2016/11/barents-region-expands-north-karelia> (last accessed on Dec 12, 2016).

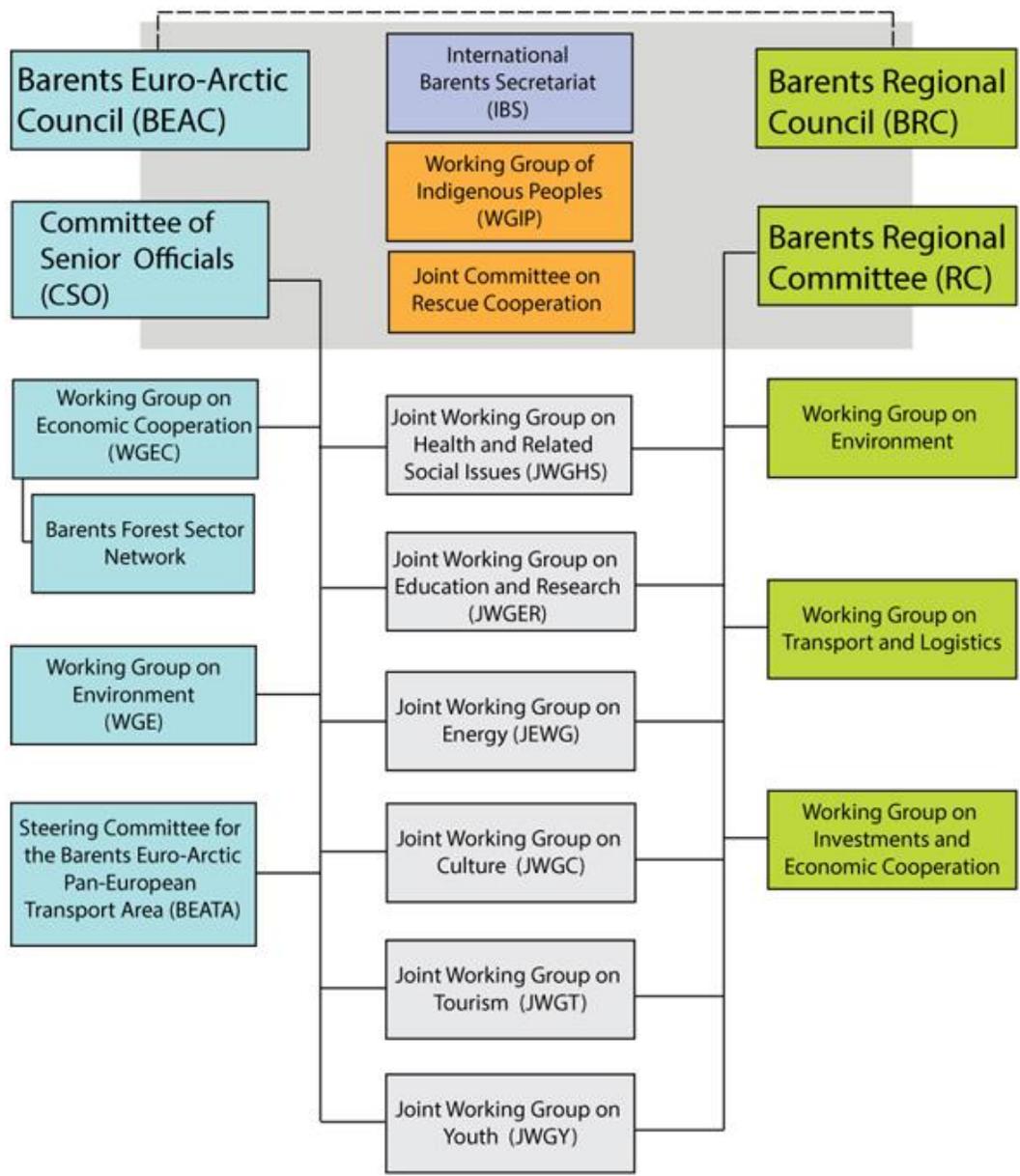


Figure 22 - Organizational chart of the administrative structure of the BEAR. Source credit: <http://www.beac.st/en/About/Organisational-chart>

While usually having meetings only once a year (like the Baltic Council), ministers of foreign affairs keep in touch through the Committee of Senior Officials. Ministerial meetings are held almost every year, with a few exceptions. Thus, in 2016 there was a meeting of BEAC Ministers of Culture in Moscow and BEAC Ministers of Transport and Logistics in Arkhangelsk, while in 2015, Ministers of Environment met in Sortavala, Republic of Karelia. Groups that work jointly, several times a year and embrace

cooperation in area including: economy, environment, rescue cooperation, transportation, culture, education and research, energy, health and social issues, tourism, and youth social issues. The areas of cooperation tend to expand and thus, new international working groups emerge.

The other regulatory body is the Barents Regional Council. It includes governors of the fourteen administrative units that form the Barents Region and representatives of the region's indigenous peoples. The chairmanship of the Regional Council is also based on the principle of rotation and passes to each member in turn every two years. The Regional Council is responsible for approval of a yearly working plan and a common budget. It also appoints members of the executive office, i.e. the Regional Committee that secures development of international cooperation in each administrative unit. Specialized short-term and permanent groups present reports of their activities to the Regional Committee.¹³⁰ The International Barents Secretariat is a recently formed body of government of the Barents Region, established in 2007, at the Ministerial session of the BEAC in Rovaniemi, Finland. The major function of the Secretariat is that of coordination between the Barents Council and the Regional Council. The two years of the chairmanship pass quickly, and the Secretariat ensures the rotation does not cause any disruption in the region's performance.¹³¹ Moreover, the Secretariat uses its vast networks for close cooperation with various institutes and foundations of the European Union, and other international organizations. As expressed in the *Territorial Cooperation in Europe: A Historical Perspective*, "This two-pronged organization of cooperation in the

¹³⁰ The Barents Regional Council <http://www.beac.st/en/Barents-Regional-Council> (last accessed on Dec 17, 2016).

¹³¹ International Barents Secretariat <http://www.barentscooperation.org/en/About/Contacts/International-Barents-Secretariat> (last accessed Dec 14, 2016).

Barents Region – at intergovernmental and regional levels – makes this cooperation form a hybrid, which operates in a similar manner to a cross-border working community” (European Commission publications 2015).

As important as they are, the international and regional levels of authority in the region give way to cooperation at the level of civil societies, which was the point from the beginning of the initiative to create the Barents Region. I believe that no sustainable progress in cooperation and partnership can be achieved unless the political top-down initiatives are supported by the local people who inhabit the region. Also, it is worth noting that the acronym BEAR (which stands for the Barents Euro Arctic Region) is a phonetic twin to the English acronym and is thus pronounced the same by Russian language speakers as English speakers, although there is no translatable meaning in Russian.

A decade ago, a border region researcher Markus Perkmann offered a typology of European regions, although giving a credit to the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) for the analytical contribution of its members.¹³² Thus, Perkmann distinguished four types of regions: “integrated,” “emerging,” “Scandinavian groupings,” and “working communities.” I believe that out of the four, the BEAR can be classified as a working community. As previously stated, working communities are characterized by inter-regional cooperation and include approximately five regions. Also, one region can be a part of several trans-border entities which is true for Karelia – it’s a part of Barents Region, Baltic Region, and Euroregion Karelia.) Also, the Barents Region is close to being a Scandinavian grouping because of its vast territory and its low density of population (in

¹³² Association of European Border Regions. 2000. Practical Guide to Cross-Border Cooperation. European Commission. http://www.aebr.eu/files/publications/lace_guide.en.pdf (last accessed Dec 14, 2016).

the European part of the region.) At the same time, the BEAR is very different from other euroregions in the sense that the major funds have been coming from Norway.

Establishment of the Barents Region as a supranational institution followed the lead and logic of an integrative intergovernmental cooperation that has been developing in Europe since the European Coal and Steel Community was established in 1952 (Guisan, 2011). It was the first European integration institution that, in addition to control over production of coal and steel, was supposed to create a common economic framework for France and Germany to prevent further conflicts between them, with an open membership for other European countries (2013: Research Fund for Coal and Steel RFCS: a European Success Story). The next supranational institution to follow was the European Atomic Energy Community in 1957, and finally, the founding agreement of the European Union (the Maastricht Treaty) which was signed in 1993. The parallel processes unfolding at the same time were sub-state entities through regionalization whose main achievement was the ability to exercise some level of independent foreign policy (Scoutaris, 2012; Geffery 2015, p.43). Regionalism at that time and in that context was understood as a tool of decentralization and giving power and autonomy to European regions in order to boost their economic development and independence.

One characteristic feature of the BEAR is that it is a region and an organization because it has a governing body, the BEAC.) Its functioning as an organization is quite effective when it involves cooperation on the level of the Barents Council along with projects run by different regional structures. Yet there are a few factors that hinder cross-border cooperation in this format. One of them is the separation border between Russia and its northern neighbors that is also a frontier between Russia and NATO. This context has had a significant effect on the original, and to some extent current, rationale for the establishment of Barents Council that continues to be an instrument of

normalizing relations between former and current rivalries in the economic and military sphere. At the same time, the Barents region is evolving and constantly changing (Hettne, 2002), providing an important platform not only for socially meaningful projects, but also for regional security and peace building.

Between the Nordic countries, the cross-border cooperation has been long established, with specific projects developed each year. For example, a physical manifestation of the cooperation and increased exchange between Swedish and Danish provinces became construction of the Öresund Bridge (Hörnström and Tepecik Diş, 2013, p.19). Issues of less developed infrastructure comparing to the one further south seem to be pertinent not only to Karelia but to Northern Europe as well, and that is why provincial transportation, access to services and sustainable development of natural and community resources migrate from program to program, receiving investments from the Nordic funding agencies and the ones of European structural funds. In the Nordic regional policy cooperation program for the period 2009-2012, the primacy of border regions was formulated as following: “The Nordic Council of Ministers believes that the border regions should be highlighted as key players with a new weight in Nordic integration work” (ibid.) At the same time, all three major goals for inter-Nordic cooperation for 2013-2016 were clearly focused on “green” and “sustainable” growth, regional development and welfare, which effected the scope of international cross-border cooperation with Karelia. The project *WASTE* (See Part IV) is a good example of the Nordic values and priorities being exported to the east of the EU border.

Chapter 12.

The regional identity: is there such a thing for the Barents Region?

12.1. 'Glue for the region': construction of the sense of community.

From the onset of the top-down designed Barents project, Norwegian Foreign Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg tried to present something more than solely rational motivation for construction of the new region and so, he justified his initiative by the restoration of historical ties between Northern Norwegians and Northwestern Russians (Stoltenberg, Foreword in Stokke and Tunander, 1994). Some sort of 'glue' that holds the region together (Tunander, 1994, p.40) was needed to secure the newly drawn regional borderlines, to bridge the large territories that were disconnected, unsynchronized, and very different in terms of socio-cultural traditions and practices, politics, religion, language, and the economic indexes. Mr. Stoltenberg appealed to the Pomor trade era that was chosen to be a symbolic consolidating factor. The Pomor trade strived from 1700s till approximately 1910; it was a period of relatively peaceful and mutually beneficial trade between the Norwegian, Russian and a few Finnish settlements along the shore of the Barents Sea (Nielsen, 1994, p.91).

The Barents initiative is sometimes conceptualized in business terms. For instance, Jorgan Ole Bærenholdt writes that "...a crucial problem with region building is whether or not regional projects can meet the expectations of the stakeholders" (Bærenholdt, 2007, p.241). In this context, the major task for region-builders was to make their project 'work' according to their standards and political interests. There is little doubt that a successful business enterprise needs relevant and catchy emblems and symbols as well as relatable metaphors and persuasive public discourses. In the case of the Barents

Region, the widely-promoted myth of the idealistic and romantic marine Pomor trade was supposed to fill in the gap, as far as a regional sense of affinity was absent. However, the need for the intensive construction of the common identity to spin the wheels of the regional cooperation is not justified easily. I relate to Jorgen Bærenholdt's perspective on this issue who stated that, in fact, the EU trans-regional policies did not necessitated the transnational identity constructions, contrary to what the builders of the Barents Region had believed (especially Sverre Jervell 1994, inspired by Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* 1991). Brands, symbols and signs in building trans-regions do not need to fit any "deeper" cultural identification with common communities: they are images only, catering to the projects they symbolize. They may be paradoxical: at the time of its foundation, the Barents Region did not include the sea area, after which it was named (Bærenholdt, 2007, p. 251).

Besides being unnecessary, the identity construction based on the Pomor trade and 'historical cooperative ties' is problematic from the standpoint of the historical accuracy. Indeed, there was a long period of mutually beneficial trade relations between the northern counties of Norway and the Russian part of the Barents shoreline (mostly, Norwegian fish for Russian grains). However, the trade had been neither as conflict-free as sometimes presented, nor had it managed to produce a widely-shared sense of affinity between the trading partners. (Nielsen, 1994, p.92). In the eighteenth and the first part of the nineteenth centuries, when the Pomor trade was at its high, the Barents seashore was scarcely populated. The Russian Pomory, the traders, who sailed to the Norwegian villages, lived in the today's Arkhangelsk oblast, rather far from their Norwegian partners, which made the frequent contact difficult.

The Pomor myth fails to perform its uniting power between counties of the Barents Region other than the Arkhangelsk oblast and the Norwegian fylker of Nordland, Troms

and Finnmark. This idea is best illustrated by Murmansk. This city was built in 1916-1917 as a big industrial center and a port for the developing northern Russian fleet. Murmansk served strategic interests of the Russian army in the First World War. After 1920, when the Bolsheviks gained power over the city, it was quickly and heavily industrialized.

Another problem with the unifying power of the Pomor myth is that other large territories besides Murmansk do not have any relation to it, like the two Swedish *län* and the Komi Republic and the Nenets Autonomous Okrug which joined the region later. However, the fact that Russia and Norway had not been at war for over six hundred years, which is unprecedented for the Europe of the past centuries, fits well into the “historically peaceful relations” underlined by Mr. Stoltenberg. Without a declaration of war, the relations between Russia and Norway did become tense at times during the Soviet period, even though Russia was the first major power to recognize Norway’s independence from Sweden (Nielsen in Stokke, 1994, p.97). Other members of the Region also have no relation to the historic Pomor trade. While Finland and Russian Karelia were episodic trade partners, Sweden was a long-term rival of the Russian Empire and the enemy in a few wars. Besides, Sweden is a part of another recent European supranational formation, the Baltic Sea Region. Sweden’s involvement in it seems to be better grounded than in the Barents Region at least historically, through the common past of the Hanse Merchant Union (if any historical justification is needed at all). On the Russian side, Saint Petersburg and Pskov oblast are members of the Baltic region; judging from attention that this region receives in Russian media, it seems to hit the agenda of the Russian government more often than cooperation with the Nordic countries in the framework of the Barents Region.

For the sake of construction of a specific symbolic frame, some significant historical facts of relations between Russia and the Nordic countries were left out of the discourse. As Bærenholdt put it, “Under the project of identity construction, the general idea was to see the Soviet period of 1917-1991 as a bracket in history” (Bærenholdt 2007, p.250). As presented by Thorvald Stoltenberg, “the peaceful neighborly relations” between the northern communities on the both sides of the border were disrupted by the October Revolution of 1917 (Baev, in Stokke, 1994, p.177). Given as it is, this statement creates an impression that it was the Revolution and Bolsheviks who closed the border and cut off the ties between the local northern Russian population and their neighbors immediately after gaining authority. The official website of the Barents Region, however, recognizes that prior to the closure of the border between Russia and Norway, there was the so-called Intervention of 1918-1922, the event widely known and taught in schools in Russia but hardly familiar to the modern western people. The memory of occupation of some parts of Russia (including the territories of the present Barents Region) by fourteen western states less than a century ago may also be a factor hampering if not economic cooperation then the construction of the common identity.

While the significance of the highly promoted Pomor history was once relevant only for a small part of the population of the newly emerged region, the “historically less distant connections between Norwegian resistance movements and the Red Army in the Second World War were not mentioned but remembered by older generations” (Bærenholdt, 2007, p.251). Thus, it becomes evident that the myth of distant Pomor era associated with sailing journeys, nobility and romanticism of the sea is chosen over more recent but less ‘heroic’ memory of cooperative ties that could help build a more realistically grounded sense of common past and the need to move on. One more

disregarded opportunity to connect the communities using their recent past was the fact of restoration of trade between Russia and Norway in 1950-1980.

The problem with the formation of regions is that the policy makers' efforts must be supported by the population, if the top-down endeavor is to be successful. On the other hand, a characteristic feature of such initiatives is that they provide only certain opportunities for certain people. At the present stage of the development of the Barents project, the category of people that receives the most of this cooperation is well-educated young people as well as a few scholars and researchers who are involved in exchange programs in the fields of political sciences, culture, education, healthcare programs, etc. These people are not the targets of attempts at identity construction because their sense of affinity has all potential to arise naturally due to frequent contacts with their colleagues across the border. However, those people who do not have opportunities other than tourist visits or passive participation in organized performances, become targets of consolidating myths, metaphors, and symbolism that substitute tangible results of cooperation. As Honneland noted, the Northern regionalism created "a sense of belonging in a new multi-cultural European North within some groups" (Honneland, 1998, p.290-291). Not surprisingly, the mentioned groups are class, age and profession-specific. They are promised some real change in their lives, the change that goes beyond visiting another country as a tourist and appreciating facilitated customs regime. On the other hand, those who are not subject to political and economic stimuli may respond well to beautifully constructed and elevated metaphors of present-day realities. This is where the "instrumental myth to justify a regional cooperative approach" (Tunander, 1994) can serve its purpose.

The Barents Region is still very young and it is possible that in some future, the residents of its Russian part will use it as a frame of reference for their identity. But

so far, they feel close connection with the rest of the Russian population further south and the term “Barents Region” remains political rather than used on the daily basis by the people who live in the area (Stokke & Tunander, 1994, p.63). People in the Barents Russia include themselves into the North-Western Federal Okrug (district) which corresponds to the official administrative border. The North-Western Federal Okrug also includes Saint-Petersburg oblast and Pskov oblast, neither of which lies up of 60 degrees of latitude, like the major part of the Barents Region does. Besides, these two territories are already integrated into another political and economic formation, the Baltic Sea Region.

Finnish scholars together with their Russian colleagues have conducted a study to figure out prevailing identification among the young people of Karelia, including different ethnic groups. The motivation for the questioning the identity was historical shifting of the border between Russia and Finland back and forth. Even today, there are groups of Finns who wish to see Karelia a part of Finland. There are similar groups supportive of this idea in Karelia as well, but they are outnumbered by those who would like to include the Finnish Karelia into the Russian Karelia. At present, however, neither group is numerous or influential, and the vast majority of young people in Russian Karelia are satisfied with the present border as it is and hold a strong identity of citizens of the Russian state (Puuronen, Sinisalo, Miljukova & Shvets, 2000). Ola Tunander thinks that the ‘glue’ that holds the region together is the Pomor era that functions as an operational symbol. However, well-established networks and possibility of continuous contacts give a precious opportunity for different peoples to get to know each other, start noticing similarities between them and even feel some affinity. In this sense, developed networks are even better ‘glue’ than any constructed and amorphous symbols. It is possible that people, who got valuable opportunities through networking, will then spread the idea of

benefits of cooperation among other inhabitants of their part of the region and act as agents of cultivated “regional identity”. However, they will hardly choose the regional affinity over the national one, so separatism will doubtfully be an issue here.

By adding the “indigenous” context, the issue of the common regional identity acquires an additional flavor. There are several ethnic groups living in the Barents Russia: Komi, Karelians, Nenets, Veps, and large numbers of Russians as well as comparatively small quantity of other nationalities from bordering countries, especially Ukrainians and Byelorussians. However, they still well outnumber Karelians and Veps who are considered “native” to the territory. Unlike “ethnic”, the term “indigenous” is very open. For example, Karelians, Veps, and Komi are recognized as indigenous only at the local regional level, whereas Nenets and Saami are recognized at the federal level, while only Saami, Nenets and Veps are recognized as ‘indigenous’ in the frames of the Barents Region (Lausala & Valkonen, 1999, p.70).

The specifics of Karelia stems from its borderland location and its being a geographical periphery within the Russian state, and, within another periphery in relation to Europe. The local living conditions are characterized by extremely rich interpretation of the borders in the region – geographical as well as distinct cultural, linguistic (Germanic vs. Slavic), religious (Catholic vs. Orthodox), political, economic (society-oriented capitalism vs. still transforming post-socialist) and military (Russia vs. NATO) realms. Whether these diverse social and cultural contexts can be stitched together, remains unclear. The Barents Region still unfolds its potential with new projects and initiatives realized every year.

Chapter 13.

Personal contacts and professional networking as a driving force for cooperation.

13.1. “We all stay in touch,” or do you have your own “open sesame” magic formula?

During my stay in Petrozavodsk, at some point it brought home to me that the human factor, in the form of networking and informal contacts between participants, was essential to the way the project W.A.S.T.E. proceeded; it also played a noticeable role in other cases that involved cooperation and the good will of potential partners. And sure enough, the same system of knowing-someone-who-knows-someone was indispensable in keeping the snowball effect of my acquaintances and informants going. So, I started asking myself: what is it exactly that gets solved by personal and professional connections in international cooperation?

I found out that the cross-border projects that I paid attention to were to a large degree shaped by individual agents, mainly project managers, who, being at the center of networks, were weaving a net of tiny threads, connecting project participants, partners and other parties crucial for the projects’ success. It was the project managers who had the power to emphasize specific goals for the project, reach out to high officials for help, outline the vision and ways of realization of the project, etc. A distinct aspect of the human factor that is manifested in joint project in Karelia is the use of networking at all stages of the project’s realization. Schematically, we can divide any cooperative project into two components: *formal* cooperation (which is dependent on legislation, official norms of business, and level of autonomy that Karelia has with regard to international relations with foreign countries, etc.) and *informal* cooperation (or practical level efforts which imply the coordination of negotiations with partners, and a number of ways of

persuading those professionals, who do not receive any substantial compensation, to participate). In this chapter, I find it engaging to address the practical, informal side of cooperation and what is otherwise known as everyday life. After having discussed the macro-borders and macro-issues such as population and migration patterns, Barents region structure and so on, I zoomed in to address the softer and more localized topic of the regional identity; here, I am zooming in further to capture specific ways in which local people (whether involved in the projects or not) solve problems, arrange deals and keep the wheels of their everyday tasks turning.

From 1930 to 1990, approximately, the use of personal and professional networks was ingrained in everyday life activities, and not only because of a deficit of goods, or failing institutions, or some other external necessity, but also because seeking help from acquaintances and friends became an accepted, mainstream way of getting things done. In her article *Employee Reciprocity, Management Philosophy: Gift Exchange and Economic Restructuring in Poland*, Elizabeth Dunn starts with a Soviet saying that stresses the pervasiveness of connections, “Not so long ago in Eastern Europe, the worst curse you could put on someone was ‘A Hundred Years of Socialism Without Any Connections!’ “Connections,” or personalized ties which were forged and maintained through the reciprocal exchange of gifts and information, were the social pillar on which state socialism rested” (Dunn, 2000, p.73).¹³³

¹³³ While I fully support the idea of connections playing an important role in lives of ordinary citizens, at the same time, I would be cautious not to overemphasize it. In my interviews with Petrozavodians, networking was often brought up as a side talk; sometimes, they remembered their lives in the Soviet times and would say that although often they could acquire a new fridge or furniture quickly through their friends and acquaintances, they would often choose to patiently wait for their turn to access these commodities. Their reasoning was that they already had *some* kind of a fridge, *some* kind of furniture, so their need for new one was not urgent. The consumption patterns were very different back then, and I believe it is important to keep this in mind.

The use of one's networks for personal and business purposes is a slippery ground. The phenomenon itself invokes mixed feelings. Corruption has been officially condemned in both East and West. Yet, when it comes to specific cases of the use of connections, differentiating between accepted and useful socializing on the one hand, and unacceptable (misuse and abuse of authority) on the other, can become complicated. Corruption and nepotism are portrayed in public discourse as an inherent feature of the Soviet administrative reality (and later, of the Russian state), being virtually absent from the western administrative system. Eventually, public relations campaigns continue to be the field in which Russia loses. There is the smaller scale, where there are employees working in government who use their connections to seek a better job, or to secure partners for projects they work on, or to find out about new policies that can affect them – long before other citizens would know. The phenomenon seems to proliferate on both sides of the East-West divide. In North America, there is a huge body of literature that is sold under a management topic umbrella that teaches the most efficient ways of putting one's contacts to work.

As just one example, the book *Make Your Contacts Count* by A. Barber and L. Waymon (2007) asks the reader, before educating them on how to make and use their contacts, to foresee and address concerns about the legitimacy and acceptability of the very idea of meeting people to be able to use them strategically afterward. The authors try to dispel 'the ten biggest misconceptions' about networking, hitting the commonly perceived negative connotations of it such as 'manipulation,' 'tricks of the trade,' or 'favor bank.' An example close to home is that of the University of Alberta's career center library which has a whole section on networking as a particularly useful career tool. Thus, the use of personal connections is not something unique to Russia or the former Soviet Union where it serves very specific needs of local people.

Abel Polese who studied informal economies in Russia, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, recently published his inspiring article on the informal practices (such as smuggling) that go on across the Ukrainian/Moldovan/Pridnestrovian border.¹³⁴ One of the main points that he is making is that

“The border between the il/legitimate is often blurry (Morris 2012, 2013; Morris and Polese, 2013), especially on the territory of the former USSR. The people’s perceptions of what is legal/illegal are determined by the moral considerations, and are often localized. That is why, any instances of such phenomena [of informal economic activity] must be regarded on the individual basis, while the definitions prevailing in the western world, should be avoided”

(Polese, 2017, p.535).

I could not agree more. I believe that informal activity can act as a market regulator by helping with the more equal and just distribution of resources. Yet, the focus of this chapter is not on corruption or smuggling, but on other types of informal practices, namely, the use of connections in one’s professional activity. Far from having the same negative aura as corruption, in my fieldwork networking proved to be pervading; it united professionals working in Petrozavodsk and abroad. In the city of about two hundred eighty thousand people, active networking was the reason why one of my informants could say, “We all know each other.”¹³⁵

¹³⁴ I met Abel, a socio-cultural anthropologist of Italian origin about ten years ago, in Moscow, in the kitchen of a friend. We did some exploration of the city together. In many ways, thanks to him, I chose a path of Anthropology for my PhD, and not Folklore (my MA degree). As a pure coincidence, we published in the same collection of articles of the Odessa Anthropology University publishing in March 2017. His article that I am referring to is Polese, Abel. 2017. Neformal’nost’ I granitsa: zametki iz elektrichki Odessa-Kishinev [Informality and the border: notes from the electric train Odessa-Chisinau]. *The Human in History and Culture. Memorial Collection of Scientific Articles in Honor of the Laureate of the State Prize of Ukraine, academic RAEN, professor, doctor of Historical Sciences Vladimir Nikiforovich Stanko* (3). Odessa, Irbis, 533-546.

¹³⁵ This was said to me in an interview by a local Petrozavodian, a female in her thirties, an employee (analyst) in the Health Department, Karelian government.

In his *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), Erving Goffman makes a connection between performance, personal ties and the concept of *gemeinschaft* (community ties). In the descriptive piece below, he shows how unspoken rules regulate our behavior when it comes to expression of social and personal ties:

“Similarly, as a current study of Chicago doctors suggests, a general practitioner presents a specialist to a patient as the best choice on technical grounds, but in fact the specialist may have been chosen partly because of collegial ties with the referring doctor, or because of a split-fee arrangement, or because of some other clearly defined quid pro quo between the two medical men. In our commercial life, this characteristic of performance has been exploited and maligned under the rubric ‘personalized service’; in other areas of life we make jokes about the ‘bedside manner’ or the ‘glad hand.’ (We often neglect to mention that as performers in the role of client we tactfully uphold this personalizing effect by attempting to give impression that we have not ‘shopped’ for the service and would not consider obtaining it elsewhere.)

Perhaps it is our guilt that has directed our attention to these areas of crass ‘pseudo-gemeinschaft,’ for there is hardly a performance, in whatever area of life, which does not rely on the personal touch to exaggerate the uniqueness of the transactions between performer and audience. For example, we feel a slight disappointment when we hear a close friend, whose spontaneous gestures of warmth we felt were our own preserve, talk intimately with another of his friends (especially one whom we do not know)” (Goffman 1959: 50.)

A classic research of informal economic practices of all sorts in the former USSR, focusing mostly on one particular type known as *blat*, was produced by Alena Ledeneva (1998). She defines *blat* as phenomenon “aimed at obtaining desired commodities, arranging jobs and the outcomes of decisions, as well as solving all kinds of everyday problems – became a pervasive feature of public life” (Ledeneva, 1998, p.2.) It is assumed that *blat*, or the use of personal connections for the obtaining of scarce commodities or

circumventing formal queues etc. was a wide-spread by-pass that personalized the faceless bureaucratic system. I believe that the most important aspect of *blat* was its moneyless nature, and the strong rhetoric of mutual help based on friendship or at least mutual affection. In her book, A. Ledeneva extended the Soviet period of *blat* to the 1990s while registering the consequences and new guises of this phenomenon. However, almost twenty years have passed since this study was published and many practices have changed, waiting to be discovered.¹³⁶

The informality and the need to personalize accounts with the state machine seem to be ingrained in the evasive ‘Russian soul.’ In Kasianova’s study of the Russian character (Ledeneva, 1994, p.83) she states, “The formal relations are absolutely excluded in our consciousness from the sphere of ‘human’”. And, in Weindle’s observation, “Russians always were inclined to look for a human in the official and, if they did not find it, would relapse into despair” (Ledeneva, 1998, p.84). At the same time, a study of Alexander Tymzcuk suggested that in the postsocialist reality, whenever there is a gap and the personal connection is lacking, there is a need and a connection must be established, i.e. by offering gifts or service to a doctor whose help is sought for (Tymzcuk, 2006). Since 1998 when Ledeneva’s book came out, indeed, the informal chains and networks have undergone structural changes and today’s networking practices and the goals that they pursue, differ from practices of the 1990s. It is also important to keep in mind that Ledeneva’s data comes from central regions of Russia (Moscow and St. Petersburg); and

¹³⁶ A. Ledeneva was very productive and published a number of books and articles since 1998. However, her interest in informal practices of average citizens shifted to the practices of mid- and high-rank officials. Ledeneva, A. 1998. *Russia’s Economy of Favours: Blat, Networking, and Informal Exchange*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Ledeneva A., Kononenko, V. & A. Moshes (eds.) 2011. *Russia as a Network State: What Works in Russia when State Institutions Do not?* Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. Ledeneva A. 2006. *How Russia Really Works: The Informal Practices that Shaped Post-Soviet Politics and Business*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Ledeneva A. 2013. *Can Russia Modernise?: Sistema, Power Networks and Informal Governance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

some of the interviews were done in Novosibirsk and its satellite science town, Academgorodok, which also can be regarded central for Siberia. Yet, Karelian Petrozavodsk remains a largely peripheral city with a multi-dimensional borderland identity. The most significant change in the system of informal connections that occurred in the transition from the Soviet Union to a post-Soviet reality, concerned a shift in values. Whereas in the Soviet times, the desired commodities were those that were hard to find, the products of scarcity, in the new market economy, it was money that was in deficit. Also, the information and access to money became more valuable than commodities.

As Kasianova mentions in her study, the personal nature of relations has had intrinsic value for Soviet and post-Soviet people while they seem to have a hard time grasping the structure and workings of an official administrative system; they seem to seek an intimate, personal dimension in any bureaucratic procedure. The community bonds in Petrozavodsk are strong, and whenever a necessity emerges, the first solution that comes to mind for the locals seems to be, to look for a personal connection, or a connection of a connection. For example, finding a job, a suitable kindergarten for a child, a reliable pediatrician, were all routinely done with a help of friends and acquaintances.¹³⁷

During my three trips to Petrozavodsk, I had informal and more structured talks with various people; however, the phenomenon of using one's connections was never brought up on purpose as a topic worth discussing. Rather, individual cases of when things were getting done with the help of someone familiar instead of 'coming from the street' (as a

¹³⁷ Informal talks with those many local men and women who I met in Petrozavodsk during my stay in 2010-2012. For more information about the development of social ties between fellow mothers through online forums, see chapter 5.

complete stranger) in my fieldnotes were mounting up. Yet, only when I started to listen over and over again to my interviews, did I realize that the use of personal connections was something hardly noticeable by my informants but nevertheless, essential to their everyday practices as persons and as professionals. A. Ledeneva states that the introductory formula 'I am from Ivan Ivanovich' that magically worked in the Soviet times, became obsolete and ineffective during *Perestroika*. One of the main reasons for this change was that financial interests became prevalent, and although the mere presence of a connection lost much of its power, it still provided an advantage. The dynamics of such a shift in values and practices is portrayed in an episode of a recent Russian movie "Dukh-less" [Spirit-less] (March 2015). A top manager of a joint French-Russian company brings his acquaintance Maxim, who once saved his life, to the company director for an informal job interview. His promises to Maxim did not go too far: "I'm bringing you to him [the director], but all the rest will depend on you." This movie showed another interesting trend in the modern Russian way of doing business and establishing connections: since approximately 2014, it became fashionable for Russian elites (mostly coming from major metropolises) to go on 'exploratory business trips' to Bali that became popular as a place to connect with other entrepreneurs and professionals, starting their business in consulting. However, for Karelians, the most frequent business/vacation destinations remain Finland and St. Petersburg.

Focusing on the cross-border projects in Petrozavodsk, I noticed the following cases that involved extensive use of personal/professional connections; some of those cases were successful, while others failed. I have included the cases effective in the networking for the project W.A.S.T.E. and some others:

- 1) Better access to information including tips for successful grant applications. In a climate rich with opportunities for cross-border partnership, the competition for

grants distributed under every cooperative platform, as discussed in Chapter 8, was high. In 1990s, when project management was a necessary skill for stepping into the field of alternative financing for local needs and transboundary initiatives, first-hand information on how to develop this skill as well as tips for strong proposals (at least as perceived as such by the Nordic and European agencies), was essential. I.e., this information was passed from colleague to colleague, that was not a direct competitor, as strictly 'insider know-how.' Later, the access to up-to-date information was sought through officials known through one's professional chains;

- 2) Personal connections helped find local and foreign partners for a specific project who were trustworthy, reliable and easy-going. These three qualities were named to me as fundamental for productive cooperation. Also, these are the personal characteristics that were almost impossible to identify through the usual, impersonal way of looking for partners: online; that is why, personal recommendations were needed. Another reason for importance of the personal traits was that many cross-border projects involved study trips during which project participants had to share the same space (bus, hotel, seminars and daily activities), so it was necessary to make sure that the human factor will not cause troubles during the trip. In the case with foreign partners, to my knowledge, it was even more important to try to pull all available wires to find someone through recommendations. For example, in the project W.A.S.T.E., the main contact person and presenter from the Environmental School of Finland (SYKLI) was a former Petrozavodian who married a Finn and emigrated to Finland. For the project, she

was giving presentations in Russian which facilitated not only understanding of the content of her talks but most of all, facilitated the question-answer time.¹³⁸

- 3) The last type of the establishment of local networks concerns government, municipal and university employees' mobility, i.e. their rotation between these three major recruiters with occasional shift for a regional managerial position. For example, the head of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Info-center in Petrozavodsk previously worked in the Department of External Relations in the city administration; a senior analyst at the Department of Economic Development once headed an office of the Barents Regional Council that was established in Petrozavodsk during Karelia's chairmanship in the Council. This kind of rotation of administrative officials unintentionally ensures that all local managing authorities and bodies are populated by employees who have wide professional networks.

It is crucial to mention here that such connections among Karelian officials worked only in case they were secured by personal good feelings and a history of informal (and pleasant!) hanging out at banquets and dinners. Thus, I suggest that attempts to ask for a favor, a contact, information, etc. from someone in one's network were most likely to be successful in case there were personal ('human') ties between the two. In case there were not, the attempted to request favors or even enforce an agreement, were bound to fail.

Here are a couple of examples of failed reliance on personal approach:

- 1) In the project W.A.S.T.E., the project's administration failed to peg down the municipal waste treatment company Avtospetstrans to abide by its own

¹³⁸ For the project W.A.S.T.E., as for other international seminars and conferences, Russian-Finnish and Finnish-Russian interpreters were hired; I was truly amazed by their professionalism. However, the period of questions and answers after presentations was rarely productive due to the cultural barrier as well as the difference in social context which was difficult for interpreters to translate.

commitment to install metal recycling containers in the yards of member schools and kindergartens.

- 2) Despite all efforts, a bureaucratic issue failed to be resolved. At the end of the project W.A.S.T.E., an interactive Info-center was established at the premises of Avtopetstrans as a part of the educational component of the project. However, as I found out, younger schoolchildren and kindergarteners could not attend it: the Ministry of Education demanded a special bus that would meet special requirements for children's transportation. Not a single bus that would satisfy the strict bureaucratic rules was found in the whole of Petrozavodsk, so the Info-center was left unattended.

13.2. The drinking aspect of networking.

It is known that drinking is a part of Russian socializing practice¹³⁹; as an intercultural phenomenon, drinking as a component of business communication and negotiations is explored in diverse settings of Newfoundland, Austria, Kasai, Tuscany, Poland and others, in the edited volume by Mary Douglas, *Constructive Drinking: Perspectives on Drink from Anthropology* (1987).

¹³⁹ See Bocharova T. 2016. Zastol'noe slovo kak PR-zhanr v korporativnoj kommunikacii [Table talk as a PR-genre of corporate communications]. *Chelovek i yazyk v kommunikativnom prostranstve*, 7(7), 10-13.; Demin Yu. 2006. *Biznes-PR [Business PR]*. Moscow; Vikentiev I.L. 2001. *Priemy reklamy i public relations: 215 primerov [advertising techniques and public relations: 215 cases]*. SPb.

While preparing for my fieldwork, I was sifting through numerous guides; one of the most useful of them turned out to be a guide by Charles Briggs *Learning How to Ask: Native Metacommunicative competence and the Incompetence of Fieldworkers* (1984). It taught me to formulate and frame my questions; at the same time, the context of corporate drinking and socializing taught me the skill of *not asking*, but rather, *participating and doing things along* with people whose ways of life I wanted to learn more about. Thanks to kind and generous help of several senior analysts at the Ministry of Economic Development of the Karelian Government, I was invited to several official meetings/negotiations with delegations from Sweden (counties of Norbotten and Westerbotten) who are partners not only in bilateral projects but also in the framework of the Barents Region. The Russian side at these meetings was represented by Petrozavodsk city administration and the Ministry of Economic Development including the Minister. Two of the meetings that I attended were followed by informal banquets in the evening in a restaurant. At this banquet, there were the Swedish guests, their Russian colleagues and people who I did not see during the official part of negotiations in the morning; it was set up as buffet with alcoholic beverages. By the end of the evening, some of the male attendees were visibly drunk, including the Swedes.

A. Ledeneva pointed that heavy drinking was out of fashion in Moscow back in 1998: “If one is rich, there is no point in drinking. Drinking is the destiny of the poor. People still drink but in more civilized fashion. A healthy life-style – tennis, jogging, and swimming – is now in vogue and demonstrated publicly. It could be imitation of the West again, but this is a useful imitation [Recorded interview with F/38, Novosibirsk, head of the analytical center of the Currency Stock Exchange, divorced, Russian, middle-class background, Degree in Economics, professional career]” (Ledeneva, 1998, p.205).

According to my own unstructured observations of today’s corporate culture in Moscow

in 2014, abandonment of corporate (which included the government) drinking habits was still preserved, whereas the promotion of healthy life style became even more noticeable. I found it emblematic that five of my male acquaintances ranging from mid-level managers to former hippies quitted drinking even on festive occasions, even beer. Petrozavodsk is located not that far away from the both capitals, Moscow (the financial capital) and St. Petersburg (the cultural capital), has well-established connections with them. Yet at the same time, Petrozavodsk is still very much peripheral and differs from the two central cities in many respects including the drinking culture. Hence, the tradition of sealing up the deals with a banquet is very much alive there, including the level of official delegations and the government employees.

For the project *W.A.S.T.E.*, there were five big conferences and seminars that were followed by banquets. There were no ministers there (the highest ranking attendee was a mayor who did not stay for the banquet though and left right after her welcoming presentation); I did not notice anybody drunk, who would be beyond the point of being 'unusually cheerful.' It could be that the alcohol consumption depended on the level of in/formality of the banquet and its size. The Swedish-Karelian celebration was smaller and more informal, with toasting, dancing and overall festive spirit. On the contrary, the *W.A.S.T.E.* banquet was of a more official nature, had more attendees, and females clearly outnumbered males. In this context, large amount of alcohol would have been neither appropriate, nor would it have had enough consumers, since commonly, middle-class Petrozavodsk women do not drink more than a couple of glasses of wine on an occasion.

My colleague sociologist who I met at the Summer School of Postsocialist Studies in St. Petersburg in 2013, Tatiana Zhuravskaya, did her doctoral research on the Russian perception of migrant Chinese entrepreneurs in the Amur region (the far east of Russia), which also included the exploration of relations between doing business and drinking

among Russian and Chinese businessmen.¹⁴⁰ She found that ‘constructive drinking’ on the level of local bosses in the timber business is a default practice that is not likely to change in the near future. The Amur region is more peripheral in federative terms than Petrozavodsk is. Besides other aspects, this means that the trends of the healthy lifestyle (which includes no-alcohol policy) that are becoming more and more popular in Moscow and St. Petersburg, reach Karelia and affect its corporate local and transborder socializing styles.

13.3. A lyric digression: *krugovaya poruka* and the Russian rock as a cultural phenomenon.

13.3.1. *Blat, krugovaya poruka and questionable university ethics.*

Informal practices can evoke mixed feelings because of the variety of meanings that they acquire in different contexts. Using A. Ledeneva’s approach, ‘informal economy’ can mean a range of things from helping out a neighbor to revamp something in their household, to paying in cash to a caregiver knowing that this income will not be reported, to participating in activities that are classified as misuse of public goods for personal interests, on a varying scale (which can be identified with corruption). However, the perception of the level of opportunism in any single case, if not clearly defined in legal terms, is localized, and may differ.

¹⁴⁰ Zhuravskaya, T. 2015. Social’nyj status predprinimatelej-migrantov: vliyanie otnoshenij sobstvennosti (na primere “kitajskogo rynka”) [The social status of migrants-entrepreneurs: the dependency between ownership relations (the case of the ‘Chinese market’)]. Extended abstract of the doctoral thesis. http://pnu.edu.ru/media/disser/%D0%90%D0%B2%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B5%D1%84%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%82_%D0%96%D1%83%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B2%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%8F_06.07.pdf (last accessed on April 11, 2017).

Informal economy can also be a rather sensitive area. While doing my preliminary research of cross-border projects available for study, I tried to find out more about a project on corruption headed by the omnipresent Nordic Council of Ministers in Petrozavodsk, but my attempt failed from the onset. The curator of the project bluntly refused to talk to me about it: it took her no more than a minute of a phone conversation to define whether I qualify for this information and to decide to turn me down. This project (theoretically) was one of many others that used funding of foreign agencies and reported to the Ministry of Education of Karelia. Despite the presumable openness of the information about the project, the manager denied me access to it. Was it the project's sensitivity or some other reason I was denied even a brief introductory meeting with the manager, I will never know. Looking back, I wonder if it made a difference if I approached her through a common acquaintance. I remember my frustration about this, since I sincerely, but perhaps, naively, believed that a social project of high resonance like fight against corruption, that is registered with the Department of Economic Development (that was my source of international projects realized in Karelia at the time, for which I am very grateful), should be available to all who expresses their interest.

While researching *blat*, A. Ledeneva found that quite often, her informants misrecognized their involvement in *blat* practices. They assured her that many of their acquaintances used *blat* and cited specific example, but at the same time, they would insist that they did not do anything like that, and their case was 'special' (Ledeneva, 1998, p.45). I noticed a similar phenomenon that can be regarded as misrecognition – although, not of *blat* in its classic form, because since the 1990s it became obsolete. In my informal talks with undergraduates at some Russian and Ukrainian universities, I learnt about the existence of what they called 'university *ethics*.' In the way they used it, it meant a particular way of resolving issues with grades or attendance through their

fellow students who served as links with the university administration. The word *ethics* implied that university students, professors and administration belonged to the same tribe that stood out to the whole world and shared the responsibility to help each other out. The misrecognition of corruptive practices and the *krugovaya poruka* [mutual cover-up] among this young generation is remarkable:

There are, you know, students who are active in all kinds of extracurricular activities, who are like komsomolci [Komsomol member, Young Communist] and who are the first-choice contacts for our administration in all kinds of needs, whether to represent a university at a meeting, to speak to prospective students at the university open house, to help involve other students to politically-charged conferences or talks when nobody really want to go...

I'm one of such active students and I know how it works from the inside. Other undergrads find it useful to be on good terms with us because we have a good sense of balance and reciprocity. I respond to their calls for help: if there's an issue with a grade like when they failed an exam, I would go to our administration and drop a word for this student and ask that he passes. In return, he would show up when I organize a university conference and need attendees, for example. It's beneficial for the administration too because they need their numbers for the extracurricular activities reports. But, it's important not to cross the line and not to ask for too much. For example, if you fail the exam, you can't ask for a B, that would be arrogant.

I, personally, have never asked for a too much of a favor. It's because we have our ethics of doing things in our alma mater. We stand for each other here. Once I approached my professor for help in getting a job in a business that had a contract with our university. He said, "I'll try to do what I can. But they are not like us, they're of different spirit, outsiders... so I doubt that they'll listen to me." (Alexander, 22 y.o., a 3rd year undergraduate university student, St. Petersburg.)

What students called *ethics* is similar to Soviet *blat* but in the context of a more closed university or college community. Yet I think that the most precise label for this phenomenon is *krugovaia poruka* (“solidarity” or “mutual cover-up”) ¹⁴¹ A. Ledeneva explains it as follows, “Today, the phrase *krugovaia poruka* designates a pattern in behavior or relationship according to which a person is part of a bigger social unit (a group, network, family, or clan) rather than an isolated human being driven by self-interests. Such a social unit is ‘tied up’ by joint responsibility and mutual obligations” (Ledeneva, 2006, p.91). However, in response to my cautious indirect question about the correlation of this type of *ethics* with *krugovaia poruka*, the student who I cited above seemed certain that what they practiced in their university had nothing to do with *krugovaia poruka*. He said, “Corruption is wrong, it definitely is. Dirty and ugly, it undermines the rule of law in our country. We would never tolerate it at our university.” At the time of continuous changes that are hard to predict, and apparently, never-ending transition from the ‘post-socialism’ to another realm that researchers are not yet sure how to classify, it is no wonder that younger students have a hard time connecting theoretical concepts with their everyday life.

13.3.2. *Krugovaya poruka* and the Russian rock.

Krugovaia poruka as a Soviet and post-Soviet phenomenon involving the mutual cover up among governmental authorities, army and police, is hardly researched academically.

¹⁴¹ One of the first references to *krugovaia poruka* is found in “Russian Pravda,” a collection of legal norms and procedural legislature composed on the basis of earlier eastern Slavic legal norms as well as some other similar European and particularly German collections of legislative norms; *krugovaia poruka* in its earliest meaning referred to the manner of tax collection from peasant communities (See encyclopedic dictionary by Brokhaus and Efron, 1890-1907.)

Yet, it has been a part of the public knowledge; it inspired musical hits and was performed from the stage or in private kitchen setting. By the early 1980s, when the 'wind of change' started to blow, a particular cultural phenomenon known as the Russian rock became well established and quickly expanded beyond the limits of a musical genre. It developed from the singer-songwriter tradition inspired by the Western rock-n-roll music through incorporation of the Russian cultural models. The common language of the musical compositions was Russian, but sometimes songs were written and performed in English or even in nonexistent languages. The focus on the conscious and careful choice of words, metaphors and puns accounted for the fact that soon, the Russian rock is regarded a poetic genre.¹⁴² The Russian rock was a landmark phenomenon for three generations of Soviet people, as well as for the new 'transitional' generation of young people of the 1990s. Being politically oppositional in nature and extremely popular, these songs were shaping the doubts, hopes and frustrations, reasoning and decision making of several generations. Revolting against the Soviet pop culture, from their scandalous appearance to frivolous western rhythms, Russian rockers have been performing not only protest songs but also songs of love, death and life philosophy. Their lyrics have used absurdist word play that is somewhat reminiscent of avant-gardist Russian poetry from 1920s-1930s by Daniil Harms and Velimir Hlebnikov. The halo of the nonconformist subculture floating over the Russian rock bands had tarnished by the end of 1990s when the rock music became officially legalized, and playing a quality rock became a way of making good money. Some bands adapted to their new officially recognized stand and flourished, while others left the stage.

¹⁴² Dice, Ekaterina. 2005. Russkii rock I krizis sovremennoi otechestvennoi kultury [Russian rock and the crisis of the modern national culture.] *Zhurnalnyi Zal*. <http://magazines.russ.ru/neva/2005/1/dais11.html> (last accessed on April 3, 2017).

13.3.3. *Nautilus Pompilius and their Skovannye [The Bound] as a voice of the late Soviet/Russian generation.*

One of the most well-known dissent texts with the revealing title ‘Skovannye’ [The Bound] was written by Illia Kormilzev and performed by the rock band *Nautilus Pompilius* in 1986 for the first time.¹⁴³ Both the author of the lyrics (Illya Kormiltsev) and the author of the music (and the lead singer, Vyacheslav Butusov) started their musical career in Ekaterinburg (former Sverdlovsk,) the capital of the Ural Russia. Illia Kormilzev was a prolific poet who wrote texts not only for *Nau* but also for other rock bands from Ekaterinburg, Moscow and St. Petersburg; many of these songs became popular all over the former Soviet space. The composition *The Bound* rendered the despair of and disgust toward the inevitability of the omnipresent cover-up on the highest level of the socialist state – with acute poetic imagery contrasted to a monotonous, even depressive, motif. Each stanza is imbued with metaphors which I claim, are recognizable by the older audience while being not so accessible to the younger generation.

Here is the first stanza in my translation:

Krugovaia poruka daubs like grime

I reach out for a handshake but feel rejected and tricked.

I try to make eye contact but feel watched instead

In the place where a crown goes ahead of the head

While the red sunrise is followed by a pink decline

Refrain:

¹⁴³ The single became a part of the album ‘Razluka’ [Separation] in 1986 and Kniaz’ Tishiny [Prince of Silence] in 1988, but the text itself was written in 1983.

Bound by one chain, tied by one goal,
Bound by one chain, tied by one...

What is worth mentioning, I believe, is that the band was not prosecuted in any way for quit obvious critique of the system.¹⁴⁴ The only amendment that was officially requested from them was to change the original 'brown sunset' to 'pink sunset,' to remove the intended scandalous hint on fascism as inevitable successor of communism.¹⁴⁵ Vyacheslav Butusov commented this edit in the following way: "They suggested changing 'brown' to 'pink.' The editor approved and stamped the text. It turned out to be quite prophetic: the communism cleared a space for capitalism."¹⁴⁶

Other verses go on to condemn the government's power structure based on privileges for people from highest quarters. The song troubleshoots one systemic failure after another including: attempts to make atheism a leading state faith, the system of distribution that removed personal responsibility for one's work, and ever-present security concerns:

...One can believe in the absence of faith

One can easily do the absence of job...

...Here the results of one's work are measured by tiredness...

...You can play the trumpet to yourself

But however you play, you signal the end...

¹⁴⁴ Kushnir, Alexander. 1997. Utomlennye rokom [Beaten by the rock.] Moscow, Terra. <http://www.ytime.com.ua/ru/50/1380> (last accessed on april 14, 2016).

¹⁴⁵ 'Brown' refers to fascism through an association with the brown color of the Nazi Brownshirts.

¹⁴⁶ Kushnir, Alexander. 2002. Nautilus Pompilius. Vvedenie v Nautilusovedenie [Introduction to Nautilogy.] <http://www.e-reading.club/book.php?book=32285> (last accessed on April 14, 2016).

...And if there are those who come *to* you
There will be those who'll come *for* you –
Those bound by one chain...
...There are no jerks in luxury rooms
Those the first are much like the last
And are sick no less than the last of being
Bound by one chain, tied by one aim...

The song had a big resonance which was evident from a number of covers. Illia Kormilzev's poetic collection entitled "Bound by One Chain" that included the namesake poem and was accompanied by graphic drawings by Vyacheslav Butusov came out in the early 1990s. Later, a permissive interpretation of this composition was made into a final song in the 2002 Wits & Humor Competition games [In Russian, Klub Veselyh i Nahodchivyh]¹⁴⁷ held in Moscow. Another cultural use of the original song was made in the 2008 movie *Stiliagi* [Hipsters] by director Valerii Todorovsky. This is a musical portraying a young people's subculture of 1950s and their relations with the official regime. The movie's characteristic feature is the use of the Russian rock hits in jazz and rock-in-roll adaptation. The scene in which the song is used represents a case of the so called *tovarisheskiy sud* (comrades' forum) to discuss and condemn a student who is accused of betrayal of communist ideals and betrayal of his fellows. The reinterpreted refrain lines went as follows, "You won't succeed and our chain won't break – we'll easily leave you behind and we'll go on happily, bound by one chain, tied by one aim..."

¹⁴⁷ The Wits and Humor Competitions games are a tradition originated in the Soviet era that has been popular since the 1970s till today. Almost every relatively big university in Russia and in some other former Soviet states have student teams who compete in humorous performances. Some of the most successful members move on to become stand-up comics or participate in TV shows.

Yet, it would be erroneous to believe that the Socialist party officially encouraged *krugovaya poruka* or made assumptions that this was acceptable. The official party's discourse was confirming utopist communist ideals that were impossible not to agree with: the equality of all Soviet citizens, justice and primacy of law. However, it is the discrepancy between the words and the deeds that undermined credibility of the Soviet higher authorities.

Part IV.

Recycling waste and trafficking values in the Karelian periphery.

Chapter 14.

Waste recycling as a case of Karelian-Nordic cooperation.

14.1. The pilot project: introduction of domestic waste sorting in Petrozavodsk (January 2009 – January 2010).

The project *W.A.S.T.E.: Waste Awareness, Sorting, Treatment, Education* became one of the main areas of my research in Karelia. The first attempt at launching centralized recycling started with a pilot project in 2010: *Introduction of Domestic Waste Sorting in Petrozavodsk* that fell under the civil society category of cooperation according to the Nordic Council of Ministers' classification. As I found out, this project as well as other similar ones that involved cross-border cooperation with the Nordic neighbors in the sphere of civil society, worked in the following way. First, someone comes up with an initiative – usually it is an official working in the Karelian government, the city administration, Petrozavodsk State University or other higher educational establishment (which was the case in all of the five project managers that I got acquainted with). Yet in theory, any interested person can apply for funding of the project including NGO representatives, businessmen, and so on. The next stage was to find partners, both local and foreign; for example, to qualify for the Nordic Council of Ministers' funded projects, Russian teams were required to find at least three partners from at least two Nordic countries. After submitting the proposal to the funding body (NCM, Euroregion Karelia, the Barents Regional Council, the Baltic Council, or, in case of the bi-lateral cooperation with an institution such as municipality or university, applications had to be submitted to the Petrozavodsk city administration), the decision was expected within a month.

In the case of the pilot project on the introduction of domestic waste sorting (as well as the follow-up project *W.A.S.T.E.*), the project manager was an employee at the Petrozavodsk municipality, Department of External Relations. The recycling projects were some of many others that she was supervising. In fact, her job was to start and develop cross-border cooperative projects for the benefit of the city and its citizens, in which, I believe, she succeeded. The idea of the pilot project was to unite officials (the city administration and the municipal waste removal/treatment company Avtospetstrans) with the two model homeowners' associations¹⁴⁸ to install recycling containers in its backyard and educate its residents on how to use them properly. The pilot project ran for one year, from January 2009 to January 2010. The time when I first touched the base with the project's manager, the project was nearly over. Hence, she advised me to wait and see if the follow-up project (*W.A.S.T.E.*) was approved, at which point I could join as a volunteer. The Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) approved the application for the follow-up project, and in September I actively joined, with participant observations, interviews and planning of my classes on waste sorting and recycling with kindergarteners. As to the financial aspect, I have the data regarding the costs of the pilot project but not the project *W.A.S.T.E.* Thus, the total cost of the pilot project (*Introduction of Domestic Waste Sorting in Petrozavodsk*) was 82,000 euros. The co-financing by the two Nordic partners

¹⁴⁸ Homeowners' associations (in Russian, *tovarischestva sobstvennikov zhilja*). "According to the article 135 of the Russian Housing Code, homeowners' association is an NGO that unites owners of apartments in an apartment block, for communal management of the real estate complex, by maintaining, tenancy, exploitation and disposition of property in the accordance with the procedure established by law. The homeowners' association is confirmed at a general meeting of an apartment block. Herewith, it is necessary that the majority of tenants vote for the establishment of the association. The voting is carried out on the basis of the proportionate principle: the bigger the floor area belonging to a voter, the more votes he/she has. The homeowners' association is a legal body since the moment of its state registration and owns its own stamp, bank accounts and other requisite details." From *Homeowners' associations: what are they? Their rights and duties, membership, etc.* <http://www.vnv.ru/articles/25/> (last accessed on April 2, 2017).

(the Swedish municipality of Elsinore and the Finnish Environmental School of Finland, SYKLI) constituted 10,000 euros, the co-financing by the Russian partners was 37,000 euros, whereas the NCM's share 35,000 euros.

What the project strived to introduce new methods of waste sorting in the residential sector, and thus to enhance the environmental performance of Petrozavodsk. The project manager was one of my key informants. I worked closely with her on regular basis for over a year, until I had to leave Petrozavodsk in April 2012. I am indebted to her for the rich data that she helped me collect, for our talks and contacts that she referred me to. Specifically, I am grateful for the written records about the both waste projects, such as her applications sent to the NCM, lists of events in the projects, project participants, brochures, invitations to seminars, seminar schedules and presentations of the presenters, etc. It was highly useful for me to see the application forms because they gave me a good idea of what the NCM is looking for, what questions this institution finds necessary to ask and what background information it considers relevant to make a decision whether to support or reject an application. Specifically, the application form required explanation of justification for the project, problems that it was going to solve, objective, key stakeholders, beneficiaries, implementation strategy, activities and expected results. It was interesting to find there a question about the provision of equal opportunities for the two genders to participate. While the concern about gender equality is routine in the west, in the Russian context it seemed off. Suffice it to say that the both waste projects were managed and moved forward predominantly by women with occasional male partners or guest presenters. Yet, the gender aspect is not something that is consciously pushed or otherwise advocated for. The statement about equal opportunities for the two sexes to participate remained a line on the application form – it was the 'right answer' that the NCM wanted to see; at the same time, the gender question

is just not on the social radar there. In the programs, projects and campaigns that target civil society, women prevail, which was also noticed by Meri Kulmala during her field research of the civil society organizations in Sortavala, Karelia (Kulmala 2013).

In fact, the background problem that both the pilot and the follow-up projects tried to attend to, was the same: the dire situation of the Petrozavodsk waste management facilities including the city wastes landfill. The acute issue of waste is not only something that is occasionally spoken about, it became real by hitting the townspeople's senses directly: approximately every other year, the landfill burns producing poisonous emissions into the year. The landfill is only about thirteen kilometers from Petrozavodsk, in a locality called Orzega. The situation with the burning of the landfill complicates because of local bureaucracy and unclear division of responsibilities between the city authorities. On March 26, 2015, the smoke from the landfill was well felt in several city districts; however, the burning was not combatted by the local Rescue Service because "it is not an open fire but smoldering, and thus, it does not pose an immediate danger to people."¹⁴⁹ Later, when the open fire was spotted, it was put out but smoldering was going on for at least a week. During my stay in Petrozavodsk, the landfill was burning too (in June 2011).

Here is a commentary by the head of the regional office of the Federal Service for Supervision of Natural Resource Usage (*Rosprirodnadzor*), Oleg Sheinovskiy:

The dump in Orzega is thirty-six years old. This fact alone means something, whereas a normal landfill should be exploited for thirty years, maximum. Nobody knows what processes are going on there. First, the dump fails to meet the safety regulations. There are repositories there that

¹⁴⁹ Petrozavodsk Rescue Services press release, March 31, 2015: <http://ptzgovorit.ru/content/pozharnye-ne-stali-tushit-svalku-v-petrozavodske> (last accessed on December 12, 2016).

were established in 1976, and they are overfilled. Second, we simply don't know the composition of those waste products that are located in Orzega now. They bring it all there, from luminous lamps to combustive and lubricating materials. But there are ground waters there, and petrochemicals get right in there. What kind of processes this triggers – nobody knows. And, it's hard to say what's getting from there into the nature. The oil-contaminated wastes were sent to Orzega dump till 2005.¹⁵⁰

It is estimated that 61% of the total amount of waste produced in Petrozavodsk annually (around 130,000 tons) can potentially be sorted. Waste collection and transportation is performed by the municipal enterprise Avtospetstrans, and so there were hopes that with the help of the project, the current ways of waste collection and treatment can be modernized. In 2009, prior to the pilot project, Petrozavodsk citizens commonly disposed of their domestic waste in 750-liter iron containers that were located in the yards of apartment blocks. Yet, many houses that had more than 5 floors had a system of trash ducts, and it was unclear how to get rid of them – if not for the sake of waste sorting and recycling, than at least to improve sanitary condition in the basement of these houses. The waste was thrown into the containers unsorted except for cardboard that was often put beside the containers. In 2007-2011 there were public consultations about building of an incineration plant in Petrozavodsk in order to solve the problem with the outdated landfill, while a Danish company Umeå Energi offered its services. However, the obscurity of the benefits of the incineration plant as well as its ecological viability were of concern, so this idea was abandoned. Some limited waste sorting was done by Avtospetstrans at their sites after the waste was collected from citizens.

¹⁵⁰ Vesti Karelii, an interview with Oleg Shejnovsky, the head of the of the regional office of the Federal Service for Supervision of Natural Resource Usage (*Rosprirodnadzor*) http://vesti.karelia.ru/social/otsrochennaya_katastrofa/ (last accessed on March 30, 2017).

The first goal of this project was: to upgrade the process of waste collection through purchase of new dump trucks, marked colorful containers as well as sites for containers, which was supposed to be done in partnership with Avtospetstrans and NEFCO¹⁵¹ foundation. The second goal was to engage the dwellers of the two model condominiums in waste sorting through educational work and economic stimuli. And finally, there was a goal to increase waste treatment competence of managing organizations such as Avtospetstrans and smaller private companies that handle waste. The project manager reached out to the heads of homeowners' associations who then passed on the information and the details of the offer to tenants. Also, the project targeted specialists working in the sphere of communal services who were responsible for carrying out technical maintenance. Below, you can see the cover page of the brochure issued by the Petrozavodsk City Administration, The brochure does several things: it introduces the innovation (special bins for sorting domestic waste to be set up in yards of apartment

¹⁵¹ NEFCO is an international financial organization of the countries of the Northern Europe operating from 1990. It actively participates in environmental projects in Petrozavodsk such as in sewage water treatment. In March 2011, its local representatives made a presentation in Petrozavodsk in the city administration, which I attended. Here are some notes about NEFCO's activities that I made during their presentation: 1) They are interested in credit provision and cost sharing in environmental projects in the Eastern Europe; 2) They work with municipalities and private companies; 3) The maximum loan that they can give for a project is 5 million euros; 4) In the last twenty years, they realized over four hundred projects; 5) As far as this is a commercial organization, they have firm criteria for the project (the projects also have to be bankable).

blocks), describes the economic benefits for residents from the new system of handling waste, explains how to use the bins properly, and gives contact information.

Interestingly, the makes no appeal to the sense of environmental responsibility of the



Figure 26 - “Let’s Become the First in Waste Sorting!” (brochure cover page issued by the Petrozavodsk City Administration to target tenants of homeowners’ associations.) Photo credit: KP.

tenants but focuses instead on the economic gain. Here are selected translated pieces of information from the brochure:¹⁵²

“Dear residents!

In our city, we started transition to household waste sorting.

At the usual container site at your backyard, the municipal company Avtospetstrans (for the first time!) will set up new containers designated for collection of different types of waste. These containers are:

1. Container for paper and hardboard collection
2. Container for all types of bottles (plastic, glass, aluminum)
3. Container for mixed wastes.

What benefits does the new system of waste collection offer?

- Containers for the separate waste collection will be set up for free

¹⁵² You can find the full version of the brochure in the Appendices.

- Sorted waste will be removed from containers for no charge
- Sorting will allow to reduce the volume of mixed waste and therefore, will lead to the reduction of the fees for removal and utilization of household waste.”

As per the requirements of the Nordic Council of Ministers, international projects that they fund, must involve at least three regions across the border: a Russian region (or more than one) and two Nordic regions. Hence, in the case of the waste sorting pilot project, three regional partners participated; on the Russian side, there were Petrozavodsk City Administration (International Relations Department, Ecological Department and other local actors such as Avtospetstrans, managing organizations, two homeowners’ associations and private waste collection companies). The Danish partners included the Municipality of Elsinore and a local waste management department. The Finnish partner (the one that has been previously involved with Petrozavodsk ecological initiatives and projects) was Environmental School of Finland (SYKLI). Also, traditional for Karelian-Nordic cooperation projects, the activities for the project included study trips for Karelian stakeholders to the both Nordic regions (Helsinki and Elsinore) to familiarize with advanced methods of waste collection and waste sorting. Further, the guest ‘students’ were supposed to learn how to educate residents of apartment blocks to sort waste properly. The study trip took four days (two in Helsinki and two in Elsinore). Study trips for selected representatives of Russian stakeholders were followed by trainings in Petrozavodsk that were organized for managing organizations, waste collection companies and homeowners’ associations (targeting those who did not go on a trip). In the second half of the project, the new containers were set up in the of the two apartment blocks whose tenants had undergone training on how to use those containers and received the relevant background information. At the end of project, the participants calculated the approximate amount of waste that can be diverted from the landfill as a result of sorting and recycling.

It is worth to note that children were not targeted, and no activities related to children's education on waste sorting were in the project proposal. Yet, in the course of the project, the SYKLI ended up visiting a local youth center where they gave a talk on waste sorting to high school children and played an environmental board game with them; they left the game at the youth center; later, some schools and kindergartens learnt about the game and borrowed it for their students. Having spoken with several residents of the model apartment blocks, I heard varying opinions regarding the effectiveness of the introduced sorting and usability of containers. Concerns were raised that Avtospetstrans did not do its job properly and broke the schedule of waste removal, which resulted in the overflow of the sorted waste. Especially, this concerned cardboard as far as people were not used to folding boxes flat, and were in fact 'recycling the air,' so a part of responsibility rested upon the dwellers of the houses. The cardboard/paper containers were not big enough, and so a part of cardboard and paper that tenants put there, did not fit into those containers. It took Avtospetstrans a while to figure out the waste removal schedule. This company was notorious for its slow bureaucratic machine and reluctance to change its ways. The heads of Avtospetstrans changed three times while I stayed in Petrozavodsk, which surely caused disruption to the company's commitments to the cooperation with the City of Administration on the ground of introduction of recycling. The whole operational cycle of sorted waste management is a rather complicated process that necessitates specific sequence of procedures. It was shared with me at Avtospetstrans that they had trouble finding enough buyers of sorted cardboard and plastic. Without sufficient sales of all the sorted waste that they picked up from recycling stations at the yards of the two model apartment blocks (while the plan was to help all city houses switch to recycling), they would operate on deficit budget.

However, this problem relates more to the follow-up project that involved more homeowners' associations, and was of a bigger regional scale.

Overall, the pilot project was successful and achieved the goals of raising awareness about waste sorting in ways common in Nordic countries (setting up containers with distinct markers and signs, with further removal by a waste managing company). Besides, a partnership network was established between Russian and Nordic stakeholders in the sphere of waste treatment and education. This network was used later in the project W.A.S.T.E., and hopefully, the former partners still stay in contact now when the project is over.

My next chapter is devoted to themes that are rooted in the project W.A.S.T.E., and translation/export of values is one of them. It seems to me that the whole idea of revival of recycling that was commonly performed during Soviet socialism but ceased to be an everyday practice from the early 1990s as well as equal participation of man and women – are some of the examples of the promotion of the Nordic values and views on the legitimate organization of society.

14.2. The follow-up project W.A.S.T.E.: Waste Awareness, Sorting, Treatment, Education (September 2011 – October 2013).

Whereas the pilot project targeted only three apartment blocks in terms of changing residents' waste management habits, the follow-up project was much broader in scope and included a substantial educational component to raise public awareness of the importance of eco-friendly behavior. The new project included model districts of Petrozavodsk, Sestroretsk and the island of Kizhi. The Kizhi Island is located in the Republic of Karelia, while Sestroretsk belongs to St. Petersburg's metropolitan area, in Leningrad oblast (which borders with Karelia). Other Russian partners, St. Petersburg, Murmansk and Pskov region were involved as observers who were learning from the ongoing cooperation and planned to install recycling containers later, as a part of a different initiative. One of the goals of this project was to strengthen connections between the Russian actors: citizens, communal services, environmental NGOs, municipalities and other local authorities. Also, the project strived to prepare a report that could be used for structural changes of regional laws on waste treatment regulations. Yet, this goal was never reached (and speaking realistically, it could not have) under the certain circumstances.¹⁵³ The Nordic partnership was essential in terms of disseminating the advanced technologies in waste sorting and treatment. The Petrozavodsk landfill that was poorly equipped and did not meet regulations of environmental safety continued to be a burning issue, and in case at least some volume of household waste could be diverted from the landfill with a help of recycling, was sure to make a difference for the city.

¹⁵³ Later, it was shared with my that the attempts to change the waste management legislature failed because of counter-lobbying.

While the Nordic countries are recognized leaders in green technologies and sustainable management of natural resources, transferring of their experience to Northwest Russia meant not only improved environmental conditions but also an opening of new sales outlets for the Nordic manufactures and accompanying services. During the pilot project, Avtospetstrans purchased forty anti-vandal containers for plastic, glass and tin, a dump truck and equipment for paper recycling; all of this was purchased from the Nordic partners. The containers were installed in the yards of three participating apartment blocks whose residents started to sort their domestic solid waste. The municipality invited to participate all interested homeowners' associations and did not pose limitations, which produced an unforeseen result. It turned out that there were more interested homeowners' associations than was feasible to accommodate by the equipment purchased by Avtospetstrans.

All three participating Russian regions (Petrozavodsk, Sestroretsk and Kizhi) are located on the 'big water' and therefore, have similar challenges. The Kizhi Island is an open-air museum that possesses monuments of wooden architecture, which are world cultural heritage recognized by UNESCO. Sestroretsk is a resort municipality of St. Petersburg, a town of about 40,000 citizens which in summer grows to half a million. The project grew to engage multiple stakeholders in the three Russian regions, including but not limited to: specialists of Petrozavodsk City Administration (Department of International Relations and Department of Ecology), Avtospetstrans, Karelian Research Center, Ministry for Natural Resources and Ecology of the Republic of Karelia, environmental NGOs, Swedish-Karelian Business and Information Center, Center for the Development of Education (NGO), schools and kindergartens in Petrozavodsk including teachers, children, managers and communal services, and homeowners' associations. I did not include here detailed description of participants from other Russian regions like

St. Petersburg and Sestroretsk, Murmansk and Apatity City Administration (Murmansk Oblast), the Island of Kizhi, and the town of Pskov.

The Nordic side was represented by SYKLI: Environmental School of Finland, Helsinki, who coordinated the project from the Nordic side, liaised with the participating organizations, organized study trips and developed training materials; Mariehamn municipality of the Aland islands who hosted a study trip and provided its experts for workshops; Miljøpunkt Nørrebro, Denmark, who hosted a study trip and participated in training activities; and finally, Avfall Norge, Association of waste management companies of Norway who provided experts from training activities and workshops. The two years of the project were divided into phases of seminars, trainings, practical work in the pilot districts, study trips to the Nordic countries, the information campaign and the final seminar in Petrozavodsk. Some of the practical goals set up by the projects were to open a Recycling Info-Center in the premises of Avtospetstrans. This happened only at the very end of the project due to inner problems in Avtospetstrans and visions of its directors who rapidly replaced one another. Seminars, trainings and workshops were targeted at the local authorities from St. Petersburg, the Republic of Karelia, Murmansk and Pskov regions, residential managing companies, homeowners' associations, environmental NGOs on waste management (with a specific interest in separate waste collection, utilization, recycling and legislation on waste treatment), as well as school and kindergarten educators.

I should mention that at the time of the start of the project (September 2011), the NGO involvement was rather weak. Environmental NGOs in Petrozavodsk at that time barely existed, and hardly anyone locally heard about their activities. The only NGO that joined the project from the start was the *Green Wave*. It seems ironic that the project programs and previews mentioned the participating “activists from the environmental

movement *Green Wave*” while at the time, it consisted of only one member, a young female, who became my companion in our classes for children. By May 2012, however, the situation changed and a couple more female students joined the movement and participated in some educational activities.

There were four study trips to the Nordic partner organizations that strived to establish networks between Nordic and Russian specialists working in the sphere of waste management. They also provided training in Nordic approaches and methods in waste sorting, utilization and recycling, and were instrumental in preparation of the review of the Finnish, Norwegian and Danish legislation in the sphere of waste management. And finally, the trips aimed to promote cooperation between local authorities, residents of pilot homeowners’ associations and owners of private waste management companies (on the level of government-business-citizens). Study trips were an essential part of the project and targeted different groups of participants. From informal talks with project managers of other cross-border projects I know that inclusion of study trips to the project plan is traditional. They were particularly important and beneficial at the beginning of the renewed cooperation with the Nordics at the beginning of the 1990s, when the vast majority of Karelians have never been abroad yet. However, later, after many of the locals have visited Finland, the study trips stopped being a magically luring promise to spur participation. I heard that such study trips started to bring disappointment and even frustration about impossibility to change the situation in Karelia after coming back (see chapters 15 and 16).

The first study trip within the project was organized for representatives of local authorities (from St. Petersburg, Republic of Karelia, Murmansk and Pskov regions), for residential managing companies and homeowners’ associations to visit the partner

organizations in Finland and Denmark. The thirteen participants went to Helsinki and Copenhagen for seven days in March 2012. The second study trip was organized for specialists of the Kizhi museum to learn about similar issues of waste treatment on the insular territories and ways of overcoming them. Thirteen members of the Kizhi museum team went to Helsinki and Mariehamn municipality in the Åland islands for seven days in March 2012. The third study trip was organized for representatives of companies and enterprises involved in industrial waste treatment, to the partner organizations in Finland and Norway. Thirteen participants went to Helsinki and Oslo for seven days in September 2012. The last study trip was organized for a group of educators of schools and kindergartens of Petrozavodsk, specialists from the Ministry of Education of Karelia and the Center for Development of Education. Thirteen participants went to partner organizations (SYKLI, schools and kindergartens) in Helsinki for four days in March 2013.

The public awareness campaign was one of the last initiatives in the project. It included creation of a website devoted to waste treatment and environmental solutions, environmental contests in secondary schools of the model districts (which included waste-related projects, logo of the website, posters, etc.), environmental contests among the residents of the Kizhi archipelago, and distribution of PR materials, such as booklets, among residents of the model districts of Petrozavodsk, Sestroretsk and the Kizhi island. Also, some teaching aids for educators and their students were created and published on the website, along with seminar materials.

14.3. Youth involvement: educational component and my role of a volunteer in the project.

Although marginal in the project proposal, the youth involvement through schools and kindergartens developed into an essential component of the project *W.A.S.T.E.* Due to my interest in early education, children-adult relationship dynamics and environmental focus of their joint work, I decided to focus my participatory research efforts on this aspect of the project. While I was following the situation with installation of recycling containers in yards of the homeowners' associations, attended meetings and seminars and did interviews with several homeowners' associations' heads and residents, my major interest was in the kindergartens. The fact that I have a degree in Education, also helped to be fit for this role.

The educational activities started soon after the kick-off conference, in November-December 2011, with a seminar organized for school and kindergarten educators who expressed a desire to participate. The project manager sent out emails to kindergartens' head mistresses and schools' principals (who were all women) with an offer to participate in the project. Once the representatives were chosen (voluntarily or by appointment), the schools and kindergartens sent them to the meeting at the Center of Development of Education to learn firsthand about the project's benefits. By the November 7th meeting, there were three kindergartens and nine secondary schools who subscribed to the project. About half-way (by summer 2012), a couple more kindergartens joined. The forms of work and events for schools and kindergartens were prepared by the Ecology Department of the city administration in partnership with SYKLI, Environmental school of Finland. The proposed plan of activities was outlined at the meeting with educators on November 7th, 2011. The following five phases were proposed:

- 1) Informational phase that would consist in installation of information boards in school/kindergarten halls which would be regularly updated to reflect the proceedings of the project.

- 2) Theoretical phase that would include training events for heads and educators of involved educational establishments in environmental issues by two local experts; interactive training for schoolchildren and kindergarteners by “local activists” (which included myself); development of teaching aids for educators (I also actively contributed); and finally, participation in training events and seminars in Petrozavodsk to learn from the Nordic experience.

- 3) Practical phase that aimed to achieve the installation of recycling stations in the yards of schools and kindergartens. Specifically, the types of containers to be installed would include containers for mixed waste that would be dumped in the landfill as well as containers for all kinds of bottles (plastic, glass and aluminum tin cans) and containers for paper and cardboard. It was promised that in the beginning, Avtospetstrans would remove the separated waste for free; it was also promising to install those containers for free as long as schools and kindergartens provided concrete pads/foundations for those containers; organization of the process of sorting school/kindergarten waste with the participation of students and the housekeeping units; organization of competitions between groups of students for the best decoration of the waste sorting bins; excursions to the Info-center at Avtospetstrans’ premises; and finally, student participation in various kinds of campaigns organized by the Ecology Department of Petrozavodsk, such as collection of waste paper, used batteries, etc.

4) The active research phase aimed to engage students in doing research projects on topics related to waste management with the following participation in an inter-school conference; it was also decided that the three best projects would receive funding for their realization in respective schools.

5) The study trips phase (though not the last one in terms of the project's timetable) was to send educators to a study trip to Finland in order to familiarize them with approaches, methods and teaching aids regarding ecological education. The trip was planned on March, 2012.

However, it happened so that there was no unanimity as to how to proceed with the educational component. At a meeting with Petrozavodsk educators on November 7, 2011, there was a moment when opinions divided. Those more experienced in practical work with children on the topic of environmental protection and waste management offered to show their own materials to the Finnish experts first and then see what the other side has, whereas those with scanty experience were more inclined to rely on the foreign models and methods from the beginning. The situation was even more complicated because the representatives of the Ecology department pushed their agenda, which annihilated the cooperation spirit of the first meeting (for more on the breakable wires of (mis)communication, see chapter 16).

As I mentioned, I decided to focus on the kindergartens' involvement and volunteer to conduct classes on waste treatment in three kindergartens. In fact, the reason why small children became targeted by the project was because the Finnish side (experts from SYKLI) believed that the change in mentality (more precisely, ecologically responsible thinking in this case) should be cultivated from early age, for it to take roots and

influence the behavior of these children when they grow up.¹⁵⁴ As far as only three kindergartens subscribed at the beginning of the project, I decided to cover them all in my volunteer work. I suggested to volunteer back in 2010 when I first learnt about the pilot project. I met the project manager and we agreed that I would volunteer for the educational component. My rationale was, first, to help with educational activities for kids as far as I was the only one in the team with a degree in Education, and second, to get an opportunity to do participant observation and study the project from the inside. It was interesting that the project manager was introducing me as “our volunteer, a PhD student” to other Russian members of the project, but my actual affiliation or name was never stated in press releases or official papers. While I took over the three kindergartens, another volunteer took over schools (there were four schools in the beginning, but their number grew with time which became challenging for her). This volunteer (MA., initials changed) formally belonged to the interregional ecological movement *Green Wave*, and at the times when the project started (September 2011) she was its only local member. However, whenever our volunteering with interactive classes for students was mentioned in press releases or conference programs, we were collectively regarded as “Green Wave’s activists.” I did not mind, as long as this formulation seemed to work better for the project manager and did not raise extra questions. For the period of September 2011 – April 2012, we were the only ones conducting interactive classes with children. At times, I would help her with school classes when she was overwhelmed – I would help her develop lesson plans, substitute for her a couple of times, and was a second teacher for her class. We went along very well and acted as a well-coordinated team to make sure that we cover all the necessary material to familiarize children with the issues around waste globally and locally as well as teach them how to separate waste properly in the

¹⁵⁴ This focus on early education can be attributed to one of the aspects of the Nordic societal model that has assumption that responsible society starts from responsible early education.

local context. My classes with kindergarteners were playful and interactive, we did multiple activities and games, and I showed them short clips about removal of sorted waste and the process of paper making at a factory (my lesson plans are available in the Appendices).

Our classes were practically oriented and were preparing children for separate collection of waste in their respective schools/kindergartens once the containers are installed (whether it happened or not, see chapters 15 and 16). While kindergarteners were very open and interested to learn about everything regarding the landfill, problems of pollution and waste management that I had to tell them, high school students were quite skeptical about it. Many of them had a hard time believing that Avtospetstrans will actually install containers in the yards of their schools (and, they had good reasons for these doubts). M.A. I tried to explain that this was a complicated issue that involved many stakeholders besides Avtospetstrans; I even shared with them some of the information that I got from the director of Avtospetstrans regarding those problems that they were facing in terms of installation of containers. On the other hand, the practical aspect was crucial because there is no point in learning how to sort waste if you will not be given an opportunity to do it. The residential sector still largely did not have containers for separate waste collection, and it was not something to be changed in the near future, while only several model houses participated in the project. Another important aspect was the supposed economy of school/kindergarten budget: Avtospetstrans promised to remove sorted waste for free, which meant that schools and kindergartens would have to pay only for the waste they did not sort. It was supposed that money saved thanks to the joint effort of students, teachers and the housekeeping unit would stay in the school/kindergarten and be used for the realization of some of

environmentally-driven students' projects or for buying stationary. I discuss the pitfalls on the way of these plans in Chapter 15.

The last point that I want to make in this contextualizing overview is that the project *W.A.S.T.E.* was not a unique environmental initiative in Petrozavodsk that targeted children. The City Administration (with its Ecology Department), the Center for Development of Education, the Youth Center *Rovesnik* [Peer], to name just a few, have been regularly organizing educational events for schoolchildren. Development of environmental consciousness has also been on the school's agenda in the frames of regular educational process. The uniqueness of the project though consisted in targeting three broad audiences within the city: model homeowners' associations (including educational activities for residents and heads and installation of containers for separate waste collection), schools and, for the first time – kindergartens (with planned interactive activities for children, study trip for teachers, informational campaign for all who would pass the school hallway, and again, installation of containers for separate waste collection), and finally, creation of the Info-Center in the premises of *Avtospetstrans* that could be used for a long-term effect of the project when it is over.

I should note that M.A. and my classes for students were introductory, aiming to get the ball rolling, with an assumption that later, educators from schools and kindergartens would pick up. Hence, multiple activities and projects were organized, such as a program "The future of the planet is in our hands" that aimed to raise the environmental culture of students through new knowledge and practical activities related was management. This program was developed for schoolchildren from the first to eleventh grade.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ In Russia, schools are not separated to separate buildings for primary, middle and high school. Instead, one large building accommodates all grades at once, with primarily school classrooms located on the first or second floors while older children are moved to higher floors. Such an

My impression was that kindergartens are extremely busy with all kind of activities for children that are educational and at the same time, socially oriented. and have meaning for the world around them. This means that the project *W.A.S.T.E.* did not come as a unique opportunity to learn from the Nordic neighbors, but rather, provided a no less valuable opportunity to learn from local minds (like volunteers and senior experts).

organization of educational process provides an opportunity of smoother division between grades and encourages communication of younger and older children. For example, high schoolers become mentors to youngsters and received bonuses for being active and helpful to those who need their attention. I find this particularly beneficial when the school/class is involved in extracurricular activities such as those through *W.A.S.T.E.*

Chapter 15. Crossing micro-borders: translation/adaptation of values across the social boundaries.

15.1. Importing values.

One of the strongest themes that emerged from my fieldwork on the project W.A.S.T.E. is the process of importing and exporting values and knowledge across the regional Karelian-Finnish border in the day-to-day life through larger visible and smaller not so noticeable practices, sometimes involving perpetuation of cultural cross-border stereotypes. I will not claim that the values and practices in focus are originally, intrinsically or exclusively Nordic, but rather, my point is that but for the international cooperative projects such as the W.A.S.T.E., they would have most likely remained in the shadow, on the periphery of the social life of Petrozavodians due to lack of governmental funding as well as lack of driving organizing force.

It would be a demanding, ambitious, and virtually impossible task for a researcher to try to determine whether any conscious attempts from the side of a sponsoring agency were made in order to import (or export) its particular values and beliefs and as such, this task is outside of the scope of my thesis. I will leave aside the question about possible purposeful implantation of values or pursuing specific goals by the Nordic Council of Ministers with this project. Instead, I will focus on the messages sent in the course of the project to different audiences. My primary sources for this end are first of all, open-end interviews and informal talks with the local officials, participants of the project, and people not directly involved in it, documentation produced in the course the project, presentations and discussions occurred at the project's events such as conferences, seminars, round tables, etc. It should be noted that in none of the public relations (PR) materials targeted at the general public, including brochures for educators

and handouts for the associations of homeowners, were there found any specific references to Nordic values' or 'Nordic priorities', or synonyms. The need for recycling, along with its moral imposition and its potential economic gain, was postulated as a purely local concern and mutual citizens' responsibility.

A new perspective opens up if we introduce the category of degrees of information disclosure when a particular type of message is selectively revealed to particular groups of people who are involved in the project in one or another capacity. The key points were highlighted quite differently in some project descriptions aimed at the Nordic Council of Ministers, in PR materials, and in interviews with media. For example, in one of the official descriptions of the project that was not immediately available to the general public, it was stated that one of the goals was to introduce Nordic environmental technologies and environmentally adapted solutions to the Russian market. On the other side, the goal of educating citizens of the model city districts in application of methods of waste sorting and raising public awareness of the importance of eco-friendly behavior was widely distributed through all possible media to anyone interested in the project. Achievement of the earlier goal meant profit for the Nordic partners and was consistent with the follow-up project focused on the entrepreneurship in the field of waste collecting, sorting and recycling in Karelia through local and Nordic partnership. Interestingly, the cooperation with kindergartens adjoined after the project was underway had a marginal role in the original project proposal. Ultimately, it proved to be one of the most productive directions taken by the project.

15.2. Petrozavodsk as a gateway to the West.

In general, Petrozavodsk is a fertile ground for inclusion in the broadly defined conceptual field of ‘western values.’ In many respects, the Nordic countries are the point of reference for Karelia due to a number of factors including a shared territorial border with Finland, which presently also means a common border with European Union that is regularly and, for the most part, quite easily crossed. Despite the mutual economic sanctions adopted by Russia and Europe on the basis of Russia’s government’s external policy in regards to Ukraine, the relations between Russia and Finland remain consistently warm without hardening of the political border between the two countries. In a word, “the international relations litmus test” has been passed (Donnan & Wilson 2010:6). The European presence is obviously felt in Petrozavodsk with its contemporary art monuments displayed on the Quay and a selection of European menus in local restaurants. The European influence is heard in the Nordic languages spoken on the streets, in the repertoire of the local cinemas, museums and art centers, and in the wide selection of goods, from detergents to adult’ and children’s clothing. Because of the long and cold winters, many local parents consider it a badge of honor to dress up their children in overalls or two-part costumes, both new and second-hand, by Finnish brands such as *Reima*, *Kerri*, *Luhta* and *Lassie* respected for their cold, mud and rain resisting fabrics and quality make.

There are reasons to believe that in 2011, at the very beginning of the pilot project, Petrozavodsk citizens were susceptible to what was at that time considered trendy green initiatives. At the same time, the empathy towards environmental activities initiated by others did not mean automatic commitment to changing one’s way of life and adopting new patterns of behavior, which can be a lengthy and complicated process. In my

educational classes for children ages four to six in local kindergartens as well as in my colleague's presentations for school children, we provided statistical and visual information about the dire and even dangerous condition of the landfill that was used to dump wastes from Petrozavodsk and adjacent areas. The pictures of the site and graphic representations of the amounts of waste produced daily along with the comparable weight of trucks, train cars and even people always evoked emotional response on the part of children and teachers. This sense of involvedness and empathy helped keep the interest high through the end of educational activities for the day but, on its own, was insufficient to launch a stable movement towards changing practices. For this end, more serious motivation was needed.

15.3. Selecting imported values.

Solidarity with 'western values' can be manifested in various ways that are not always straightforward or explicit. In October 2014 while continuing my remote research, I learned from the city administration newsletter about the *money-free market* day (free exchange of goods and services) to be held on one of the October weekends. This event was coordinated through a public group on the platform of the social network *Vkontakte*. By the time of this campaign, the group gathered 591 members living in Petrozavodsk. The campaign's slogan reminded me that anti-capitalist and downshift philosophy had currently more power and appeal in the West than in Russia but in some cases, like this one, were reintroduced. The slogan went: "No Money, No Trade. Capitalism must die."

The aspiration to introduce Nordic environmental technologies in waste treatment and recycling in the North-western Russian market goes back at least several dozens of years.

Since the iron curtain, Russia was perceived by its Nordic neighbors, and particularly by Norway, as a potential security threat (Stokke & Tunander 1994). With the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia's northern neighbors received more specific data on the dire situation with the utilization of nuclear and other types of waste, mainly in Murmansk Oblast, just across the border with Norway. The hazardous emissions spreading westward from the Russian territory by the air and water became a concern that called for action (Dellenbrant & Olsson 1994). Since then, the environmentally-focused cross-border cooperation became one of the strongest priorities for Norway who lobbied for hot-spot elimination funding through the Barents Council, the ENPI cross-border cooperation and the Northern Council of Ministers. Thus, the intention of the project W.A.S.T.E. to open a receptive market for Nordic environmental technologies and facility equipment did not come out of nowhere but was supported by the earlier strategies adopted towards the North-Western Russia. In this, transmission of knowledge base and particular understanding of ecological imperatives and promotion of green values as known in Northern Europe became a platform for these larger goals. Most likely, arrangement of new sales niches is potentially beneficial for both parties. However, to date, there are few players in the recycling business in Karelia, which was addressed by the director of the local company Ecolint in the following way, "This [collection of sorted waste with further utilization or transportation] is not a very profitable business... From time to time, new entrepreneurs try to enter this niche but mostly fail. It is a hard work for money that is never secured."¹⁵⁶ Perhaps, these are some of the reasons for the focus of the follow-up project on entrepreneurship in the sphere of waste management along with involvement of the Nordic business partners. Based on my participant observation data and analysis of the project's accompanying documents, I selected several focus areas/values/priorities

¹⁵⁶ Interview taken on 18.06.2014.

that stood out in the course of the project's development, although not necessarily directed emphasized. These values, or priorities are: (early) ecological education, development of environmentally sustainable behavior in children and adults that has potential to develop into a new greener identity/ more responsible civil society, volunteering, and distant learning. Of special interest is the question of cross-cultural adaptation of imported values in daily and professional life of local people as well as local agents of this adaptation. Education and public participation are named among the key factors of sustainable development in a number of EU policy documents.¹⁵⁷ The tactics for achieving sustainable development in this case are convergent with the instruments outlined by the Nordic countries, including the establishment of the foundation for ecological modernization, transition to energy-effective and resource-saving production models, innovative technologies and forms of management, and the spread of ecological socialization and education. In this sense, the project W.A.S.T.E. was directed at the development of social and environmental sustainability.

15.4. Distant learning.

The distant learning component was not something suggested by the Nordic partners but sprang out from the interests of a lecturer/educator participating in the project.

¹⁵⁷ See, for example, 2009 Review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy – Presidency report, available at <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2016818%202009%20INIT> (last accessed on June 5, 2013); **Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Mainstreaming sustainable development into EU policies: 2009 Review of the European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development, available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52009DC0400> (last accessed on June 12, 2014)**; Home page for Environment of the European Commission, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/> (last accessed on June 6, 2014).

However, her excitement and appreciation of the distant learning arose from her work on a Cleaner Production project with Finnish partners approximately ten years before the W.A.S.T.E. project started. N.A. has had a vast experience in creating online courses for schoolchildren including a project echoing the idea of the summer field school of Ethnographic Sensibility that runs in Belgrade, Serbia, by the department of Anthropology, University of Alberta, under the loving supervision of Dr. Marko Zivkovic. The goal of the course was to engage schoolchildren of all grades in sensorial exploration of Karelian forests (under the adult supervision, of course) followed by taking photos of everything that deserved their close attention, with the goal of creation of the common 'treasury' of photos that could be used in classrooms. This is only one of the projects executed by N.A. She felt so enthusiastic that she even joined a school in a village nearby Petrozavodsk as a biology teacher (she has a relevant degree) in the hopes to introduce distant learning there: "I felt so optimistic! I believe that we all need to communicate, and our republic is so scarcely populated... technologies make communication and effective teaching so much easier!" N.A. is such a fan of technologies of distant learning that she hoped to use her involvement with the project W.A.S.T.E. as a platform for introduction of online communication between teachers on the moodle platform with the goal of creation of the common pool of resources that can be used in environmental education in schools and kindergarten. She created a forum for exchange of ideas, and even registered the educators participating in the project, and sent them invitations, several times. No response. The technology did not root, and her hopes remained unfulfilled. A possible reason for this could be that there existed a kind of barrier towards the use of online technology for the two-sided activity of communication and work. In Petrozavodsk, the social network VKontakte is highly popular among youth and adults alike, it is used for personal communication. On the other hand, as I learnt, browsing for educational

materials and learning activities is a common strategy in teachers' preparation for a class. This means that the Internet is eagerly used for separate activities of personal communication and for professional purposes. Yet, the suggested (and I would say, even a little pushed) use of the moodle platform for combined personal/professional communication (as a way of exchanging ideas, resources and informal chats) did not find support. Can it be that one reason for it is perceived impurity of this combination of personal and professional activities mediated by technology, which are supposed to be kept separate? Impurity in the sense that Mary Douglas developed in her study (YEAR) in situations when a combination of two activities/matters become incongruous, as if crossing an invisible line? Although this is just an assumption, to me, it makes sense after talking to teachers in schools and educators in kindergartens with an attempt to find out the reason for not embracing the moodle forum. Unlike with my other inquiries, I was not able to get a definite answer, a straightforward reason out of my interlocutors. The most frequent response was shrug in the shoulders and a pensive look, and finally, "I don't really know."

15.5. Early ecological education.

Early ecological education has had a steady position on the Russian kindergartens' and schools' curricula for at least twenty years under different guises, some of which have been "The World and I," "The World and Humans," "Nature Study," etc. From the beginning of 2000s, there was "Ecology" subject in kindergartens that was removed from curriculum in 2009. It did not mean though that the 'nature' component was gone. My position as an educational volunteer in kindergartens provided me with a unique opportunity to observe the kindergarten routine, classes and children in classes, and

facilitated my access to class plans. It is certain that kids in kindergartens get a good share of environmental ‘studies’ through involvement in activities, games and ‘projects.’ And, it is the ‘learning through projects’ that can be considered a direct western influence on the way small children are educated from kindergarten to high school. I find that younger teachers accept this relatively new trend as given, not questioning much its effectiveness and methodological foundations, caring mostly about the feasibility of specific projects and ways of reporting successfully executed projects to the boss, the kindergarten’ head mistress. It was only through speaking with more experienced and critical-minded methodologists that I realized a presence of a hidden conflict in this sphere. It seems like project management invaded all spheres of life of Karelian citizens, from kindergarten to adult work. Five/six-year-old kids are expected to actively participate in ‘projects.’ Some of the major critiques of the “obsession with project activities” related to me was the stated but doubtful connection to the real life and “burdening the children with adults’ problems” which should not be happening. I will explain the two critiques in a more detail. In one of the participating kindergartens, under the project ‘We’re Saving the Planet’ children went for a field trip with their educators to the shores of the small river Lososinka running nearby and took samples of the water. When back in the kindergarten, they examined the samples of water from Lososinka and sample of bottled water to see the difference in how clean the samples were under the microscope. Discussing this incident with a former Republican methodologist of environmental education in schools, I heard the following comment that I believe is important to quite here in full:

Okay, they took water samples and looked at them under the microscope. But what’s the point? What were they to see there? It’s not easy even for kids in 5-6 grade to make sense of what they see using the microscope, and for kindergarteners... it’s ridiculous. I think that such ‘projects’ and activities that we adopt from the west (instead of really best practices that they surely have) are about

achieving pedagogical or administrative ambitions of the institution: look, our kids looked in the microscope... I believe in environmental upbringing that is based on the real real life situation for kids, not staged by adults; the situations that arise spontaneously, every day. And, there is no need to make a project out of this.

For example, while working with paper, teach the kids to be economical with it and how to do it like how to organize shapes on paper while cutting so that not to waste big pieces of paper, talk to them about why it matters... Or, the classification games are so important – this approach could be used in games on recycling. I remember, about six years ago, when I was actively involved in development of educational materials, we played a game to teach the circuit of substance in nature. All substances participate in the circuit, and that's why the life exists. All elements travel, and that's why life is infinite. But when we dump stuff at the landfill, it doesn't come back, i.e., the normal natural circuit gets disturbed and disrupted. That's why we have a problem with the landfill. To teach them this idea, kids and I set in a circle and started to pass pencils to each other. After each round, I would take out one pencil as if dumping garbage. The moment came when we ran out of pencils which metaphorically symbolized running out of resources and the tragedy that this posed. This is how, in my opinion, you teach responsibility to your environment.

When outside, you tell them not to remove stones because they are homes for bugs, not to disturb the natural environment and be considerate of lives and wellbeing of other creatures. But projects... like in a normal adult life nowadays, they are rushed and never come to the root of things. What we're truly lacking now, which makes me very sad and feeling helpless is that there is no much understanding of crucial differences in cognition between children of different ages... They talk about "adaptation of the projects for different age categories" but that's a mere demagoguery. The 'project with microscopes' for five/six-year-old kids demonstrate that. What's the point if the child finds out that the water in the river is dirty? Did those educators account for the children's psychology and cognitive peculiarities? Why do we think that we need to burden our children with our adult problems instead of showing them how they can indeed contribute and do what is feasible to them like being economical with paper, water and electricity they use, and care that they can show towards the grass beside their homes."

More on the projects: In one kindergarten, an educator told me that their educational activities are based on projects that change every week. One such project encompasses all classes (environment, math, reading, writing, art, etc.) For example, if the common project is about birds, by the end of the week the children are expected to prepare a 'final

product' such as an album of drawings, birds made of clips of color paper, handwritten captions to their drawings of birds, etc. Or, another example: February 23rd is an official holiday, the Defender of the Motherland Day.¹⁵⁸ The creative drive for this week's project is supposed to be the children's fathers' "photos in service caps, at the place of service, etc."¹⁵⁹ If a child's father did not serve (and serving in the army is still an obligation for men in Russia that is rather hard to go around) then the child will collect photos of his/her father in other 'moments of glory' such as successfully fishing, succeeding at work, etc. This system of weekly projects reminded me of thematic weeks in Steiner/Waldorf kindergartens, although in a quite reduced and simplified version.¹⁶⁰ According to my interlocutrix, the federal requirements of changing over to the 'project-based learning' in Russian kindergartens and schools were issued in 2008, but this particular kindergarten adopted them only in 2011, right before the examining committee

¹⁵⁸ This holiday is one of visible ones on the scape of routine working days after the celebration of the Old New Year on January 13th. The Defender of the Motherland Day goes lived through several name changes and goes back to 1918 when the Lenin decree about the creation of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army was adopted. After the Second World War (in 1946), this holiday was renamed into the Day of the Soviet Army and Navy. The heroes of this day were the servicemen (and women) who defended their country and fought against the Nazi Germany – at that time, almost every male citizen could be regarded as such. As time passed, this holiday became a kind of a male holiday (to counterbalance the widely-celebrated March 8th, the Women's Day) when even boys were congratulated. In 2002, the State Duma adopted a regulation to rename the February 23rd into the Defender of Motherland Day and made it a holiday.

¹⁵⁹ N.I., a kindergarten educator, interview.

¹⁶⁰ Steiner/Waldorf schools and kindergartens that sprang worldwide including Russia (although not Karelia but centers like Moscow and St. Petersburg) are educational centers that promote children's self-learning, immersion in 'real life experiences' meaning active participation of children in daily activities of the adults around them, like baking, gardening, cleaning, etc. A special attention is devoted to connecting of all those experiences into a meaningful whole. For this end, such kindergartens have what they call 'epochs' devoted to in-depth exploration of one specific theme from various angles including modeling, dancing, drawing, instrument playing, reading, writing, etc. As the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America put it, they aim for "predictable rhythms through the day, week and year that provide security and a sense of the interrelationship and wholeness of life. Seasonal and other festivals are celebrated according to the cultural and geographical surroundings." Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America, <http://www.waldorfearlychildhood.org/articles.php> (last access on March 23, 2017). For some more information about the Waldorf educational system, see IASWECE, International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education <http://www.iaswece.org/waldorf-education/what-is-waldorf-education/> (last accessed on March 23, 2017).

from the Karelian Ministry of Education was about to come for a check-up. The transition was undertaken with difficulties and unwillingly due to the raised expectations of teachers and educators which in turn, meant more time to invest in daily preparations and the change of the whole educational approach from the more traditional approach of ‘frontal activities’ (the whole group together) to the currently more preferred activities in small groups.

15.6. Encouragement of volunteering.

While volunteering has long become an everyday practice in the Nordic countries as well other western welfare states, in Russia, and specifically, Karelia, it has local interpretations of a ‘luxury’ affordable for those who have spare time on their hands, or ‘crazy’ activity for those who do not have more important (and personal) stuff to do. However, this is not to expel or undermine the efforts of all those volunteers who wholeheartedly help changing the everyday life of their fellow-citizens for the better. (For a detailed discussion about NGOs and volunteering in a Karelian border town of Sortavala, see Meri Kulmala 2013). As a relatively recent development, primarily in the context of international involvement, the very word ‘volunteer’ is simply transliterated in Russian and becomes a local equivalent of [volontyor] – masculine, singular. The linguistic and cultural connotations here are significant for production of a desired image of a person who is contributing their work for free, for some beneficial societal cause. Sure enough, there are better adapted and longer used Russian words that signify a ‘volunteer’ referring to them as *obschestvenniki* or *rabotayuschie na obschestvennyh*

nachalah (those who willingly contribute their own time for common good and are not paid for it). However, I noticed that these words are for the most part avoided when foreign forces are involved; a possible reason for this can be that this vocabulary evokes the Soviet past with its *subbotniki* and other kinds of volunteer or seemingly volunteer but in fact obligatory unpaid work. In any way, while not bearing immediately negative connotation for the locals, this vocabulary is avoided in public materials, presentations, and media releases of the cross-border projects. Instead, the words [volontyor] and [aktivist] are used.

Whereas the very concept of volunteering is well familiar for Karelians and in theory, has a noble aura for unselfish and benevolent contribution of one's skills, efforts, and time. In practice, the attitude to volunteering (which is rarely transposed on specific people though) has a tint of suspicion in either hidden material or status interest of a volunteer (which if present, makes them more like other human beings and denies them a crown of those 'fighting for the peace in the whole world instead of minding their own business') or, suspicion in compromised mental health for involving in activities that have no relation to their personal wellbeing. The reason for treating volunteering as a 'crazy' activity is rooted in the never-ending struggle for material resources like secure jobs and secure income, emotional and nervous energy to deal with other, personal aspects of one's life, and it seems like those struggles and hardships come one after another without giving much of a break. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the Russians survived two financial crises, while job security has started to belong more to a mythological domain rather than life experienced by people. Most men in Petrozavodsk who I talked to, worked two or three jobs at the same time, and if it was just one, it could be as demanding as forty hours per week; the benefits packages were available almost inclusively to governmental and city employees (unless they were on the

contract, see Chapter 14). At the same time, Petrozavodsk women worked several jobs as well but having the primary responsibility for their children and home on top of work duties. In this situation, volunteering was almost completely out of local people's radar. Yet, I was observing various situations when a little help was willingly provided by those who could give it, if it did not require a committed time investment. For example, spontaneous help to neighbors in their moving, or taking their child to the kindergarten if it is on the way to their work and the neighbor is sick, etc. However, volunteering such as participating in a project, with or without foreign involvement, required commitment that only specific social groups could do.

Specifically, in the project W.A.S.T.E. there were two recognized volunteers, M.A. who was conducting a series of classes for children in schools and myself, with a duty of delivering educational activities on waste management with children in kindergartens. Later, a couple of other volunteers took over for several extra classes when M.A. exhausted her availability and in fact, ran out of steam, and I returned to Canada. For the most part, the kindergarten educators and school teachers and especially their bosses appreciated having extra help and saw our lessons as "a good thing – when outside people come to communicate with children, play with them and help them learn in games. Also, communication with outsiders is good for children's socialization" (a kindergarten assistant manager). I should note that my first degree in Education as well as my experience of being a mother of a toddler significantly helped me in preparation for my classes, selection and adaptation of material activities. I am also very thankful to a methodologist from one of the involved kindergartens who earned my sincere amiability and respect for her professionalism and devotion to kindergarten education. In 2013, she left the kindergarten to accept a new job in the municipality. I was very fortunate to get her help for my lesson plans as well as her insightful advice on doing activities with a

group of small children. My peer volunteer (who I could also call a friend) was less fortunate and did not get much help on her classes; it was even more crucial because she had a very limited experience with giving classes to children, with no degree in Education. I attended her classes and noted that some methodological and background help would not hurt but teachers were too busy to spend their own time on helping her prepare. At the beginning of the project there was a common understanding that teachers and volunteers would be provided with basic material and methodological recommendations, but it did not happen at the stage of waste management-related classes that we, volunteers, conducted for children. Closer to the end, a compilation of 'best practices' with contributions from the Finnish (SYKLI) partner, several kindergarten educators and myself was published and distributed among Petrozavodsk schools and kindergartens. As such, it has a potential of being used after the project was over. However, with the sense of messiness and uncertainty about the following steps, funding and availability of educators, my understanding was that while separate pieces from this methodological guide would be used, a holistic educational program that would focus on waste management, would hardly be feasible.

I conducted a series of three classes for each of a 'secondary group' (4-5-year-olds) and a 'senior group' (6-7-year-olds) in all three Petrozavodsk kindergartens who joined the W.A.S.T.E. project as of November, 2011. My peer volunteer was called to conduct classes in schools: at the time, eight schools decided to join but she could cover only six of them; the remaining two had to figure something out on their own, or to wait for her availability. As far as the kindergartens were smaller and more manageable communities with the same couple of educators working with my groups of kids, it was easier for me to negotiate the time of my classes, their content and mode of delivering. For my colleague in school, the process proved to be much more demanding in terms of negotiations with

the principle, the teachers who were assigned to supervise the participation in the W.A.S.T.E. project in their schools and the teachers responsible for those of groups (classes) of children that were selected for these 'extra learning sessions' with my colleague volunteer. For some teachers who were expected to contribute their work and time for the project with no return of status or material compensation, the whole idea of participation was seen as an unnecessary burden that leaned heavily on them. Hence, they were not inclined to help with research for my colleagues' classes but agreed to find a suitable time for those classes as well as be physically present to help with students' discipline. Sometimes, these recycling classes were held in place of regular Biology or Chemistry classes, sometimes even Literature, depending on the specialization of the appointed (or, rarely, volunteered) teacher. Although everyone was well aware that the volunteers' work was not paid and that creating classes on waste management from scratch was a demanding task for a non-specialist, some teachers and even principles expressed dissatisfaction with classes and criticized my colleague of falling short of their expectations. It was not unclear, however, what their expectations were based on, but it created tension in several schools, and finally, two officials from the Ecological department of the city administration, who were involved in the project, had to come and talk to the respective principles. The tension was released, and the classes continued; however, my colleague volunteer made a decision not to go back. The major critique of her classes focused on insufficient interactivity (teachers found pure lecturing unsuitable for schoolchildren) and lack of adaptation of the presented material for different ages/grades. Teachers expected that projects' educational consultants would help her, but such a consultant was never hired (I address this in my next chapter on the issue of power imbalance within the project). She tried to accommodate requests for interactivity (although considering interactivity as a way of covering up the lack of discipline). I helped

her with selecting appropriate activities but interactivity does not mean just random games on the topic of recycling, there is much more to them. Play is considered one of the crucial means of learning, even for adults, and especially children. A good educational play requires a set task, for instance, classification, with adaptation to specific age of the players, and adapted to the bigger goals of the class. To come as a stranger to new groups of schoolchildren, with a ecological topic of a lower prestige in a subjects' hierarchy (with first places occupied by math, physics, English and Russian languages), is a challenging task for a young woman. When I talked to school teachers asking for their feedback, the majority of them suggested that the idea of volunteers coming to school to conduct lessons, is fine. What is needed, however, is a more serious approach on the part of the project's administration – they believed that volunteers had to be trained first. Yet, it was unclear who and how would train a volunteer, on what time and budget. Having said that, I should note that overall, my colleague was welcome in schools, and teachers were satisfied with a contribution she made.

The absence of pay in volunteer work sometimes seem so odd to other people that they keep inquiring, trying to wrap their head around it. In this way, my peer volunteer was regularly asked how come she was doing this for free. Her answer, that she cared for our common environment and was willing to help, did not deem satisfactory or trustworthy. Another story about adults having a hard time accepting or understanding their co-citizens doing volunteer work (even coming from children) was told to me by a representative of a youth NGO during my follow-up trip to Petrozavodsk in June 2014. She was so thrilled at the high rates of participation in campaigns on the part of the local youth in a village close to Petrozavodsk, that she decided to organize an activity for local children, planting flowers at a flowerbed. She took her friend along, received a small grant to buy all necessary equipment including seedlings, and took them over to the town

where she gathered her team of children aged 9-14 to plant flowers at two flowerbeds at a central square. She told me that when the planting work was afloat, adults that were passing by, would look at them and go, “What are you doing, are you crazy? Why would you bother? And you, teacher (pointing at her) you use children to do the *dirty* work!”

The recruitment of volunteers deserves a special attention. However the educational component was planned, it turned out that it lacked hired professionals who would be responsible for its implementation. Thus, all work with kindergartens and schools was done by two people, M.A. and myself. While I volunteered even before the project started, to help with any aspect of the project as a way of give back to the project’ manager who was very understanding and accommodating to my needs of gathering the data, M.A. became involved quite differently and, spontaneously. I would like to give her voice here:

For my ambitious character, it is useful to remain in the shadow sometimes... They tell everywhere about the “volunteers of the Green Wave.” Yes, ‘We, Napoleon.’ They are embarrassed to say that all work is hung on only two of us – I’m taking care of schools, and you (K.P.) are involved with all the kindergartens. Even in the both TV commentaries and when they were shooting your class in a kindergarten, they said, “Green Wave’s activists.”

They grimed to me like a burdock. When I came to the opening conference, I heard in their presentation, “The ecological educational component was realized by the Green Wave.” Decided this without me. First, when they called, they asked if I was interested, and I said yes. No details discussed. Now I’m finding out about the amount of work that they expect me to do. I’m glad to, but they could’ve asked first, more specifically. I didn’t expect it that they’d put it all on me only.

I started my involvement with environmental activism with subbotniki with my friends. We issued a call, I put up ads in neighboring areas, on bus stops and poles, and others joined us. Later, a girl I know told me that in the city administration there is a Housing and Public Utilities department, and I started to cooperate with them. Then, I got acquainted with people from the Ecology department, and started working with them, they were inviting us to their environmental campaigns. A couple of months ago, I came to the EcoCup and met other people from the same department. They invited me to the Hyperborea Festival. So, they’re calling me and asking, do you want to conduct [a lecture session]? When they called me, I was on my way to Finland, my friend was driving, I was feeling great. So, I said, sure, why

not. When I got off the phone, I was thinking, what the hell did I do? Why would I agree to give a lecture to first year college students on something I have to research? There was an environmental session, I've never done anything like this, but my friends helped out, and it went well. They remembered me and invited in this project.

Only because I'm a dependent [smiles: this word in Russian has a derogatory connotation but she is using it intentionally; another meaning of the same word is a mistress], my parents' dependent, live off the money they give me, I can afford to volunteer. If I was leaving autonomously, I wouldn't be able to do this. I'm lucky that my parents are so kind and are still taking care of me, from Finland. But if I was working from nine to five, I wouldn't do this stuff. When would I prepare then, at night? What employer would've let me out during the working day to conduct free lessons at schools?

15.7. Encouragement of eco-sustainable behavior of adults.

Among school teachers and kindergarten educators there is an agreement that the environmental education should start with kids, if the attitude towards waste production and waste management is to be changed in Karelia in near future. At the same time, I heard many of them saying that there was a need to embrace parents as well because “The parents are the main pattern to follow, not us [educators]. What's the point to teach kids to sort waste and be responsible in the kindergarten while at home they would just throw away stuff they don't need without any sorting, not even thinking about it. Or, they throw things around on the street, and their parents won't say a word, I saw this so many times... So yes, it's important to work with kids but we also should engage adults” (S.K., a kindergarten educator).

The goal of adult engagement in waste sorting through installation of recycling containers in backyards of model condominiums was a priority for the project W.A.S.T.E. Following the proceedings of the pilot project (2009-2010), three condominiums were selected for installation of the recycling stations. The factors that played out in the choice were the willingness of the majority of tenants to participate, the good will and availability of the elected heads of the condominiums, the presence of a suitable lot in the yard where the containers could be installed, and agreement with Avtospetstrans to install those containers for free (which was observed by the company towards kindergartens but broken in respect to kindergartens). From my interviews with two of the three heads of condominiums as well as three tenants I learnt that after Avtospetstrans installed recycling containers, or better to say, recycling enclosures, a new life with new challenges



Figure 27 - Recycling station/enclosure in the yard of the model condominiums with overflowing garbage due to unstable waste removal schedule. Photo credit: KP.

started. Specifically, not every tenant was indeed ready to start following a diversified system of waste separation. Unlike in Edmonton, for example, where all residents' recycling is limited to a 'black bag' with supposedly unrecyclable garbage and organic waste and a "blue bag" with everything else (glass, plastic, paper and cardboard), Petrozavodians were expected to separate all those substances to different containers, with the confusion arising every time when having to decide about an item made of a combination of materials (such as pen made of plastic and rubber, or a juice package made of foil and cardboard). Another problem concerned the waste removal schedule which did not work for either of the three newly established enclosures. As you can see on Figure 1, there is no lack of initiative on the part of tenants. Conversely, at least at the beginning, many tenants joined enthusiastically. The code on the door made sure that only residents of the respective house could access the station, which they considered beneficial for several reasons. First, they liked the private nature of this station with an exclusive access which "made it feel like a part of their house, something of our own"; second, it made it impossible for outsiders to "mess with our garbage and flush down the toilet our efforts to keep this place clean"; and third, the lock "enabled us to get a return on our investment – we paid for the concrete base, and Avtospetstrans removes sorted waste for free. Ultimately, it's our *own way to be civilized* (cursive: KP) – if the neighboring houses want to do the same, they'll have to invest first." In this way, while adults became engaged in an eco-friendly practice of sorting waste, it made them feel better about themselves and their contribution to the environment, gaining economically from this activity in the meantime. On the other hand, establishment of garbage enclosures stimulated the production of societal boundaries and the process of othering (see section three of this chapter).

After the signing of the agreement with Avtospetstrans, the tenants (or rather, the heads of homeowners' associations as responsible representatives) were at the mercy of the workings of Avtospetstrans and its schedules which, in turn, were shaped by the director's understanding of profit and efficiency. During the project, three directors of Avtospetstrans came off duty, which certainly impeded the cooperation between this company and municipality on the installation of containers on the territory in the three condominiums. I managed to talk to two of the directors, while the third was untraceable. The story of the messy nature of negotiations that proceeded with mixed results for the goal of installation of containers, deserve a separate chapter of its own, with its power dynamics, economic motives and other complicating factors of which there was no lack of. Suffice it is to say here that although the enclosures were installed after the condominiums provided the concrete stand of specified measurements, the schedule of waste removal (contrary to prior arrangements) was taking into account only 'efficiency' as seen by Avtospetstrans and not the speed with which containers filled. Avtospetstrans promised to react within a day to a call that containers were full and needed to be emptied. However, they followed this pattern of agreement for the first couple of weeks only. After that (as I found out from tenants and from my talk with Avtospetstrans' director), the schedule of waste removal was adjusted to fit the general schedule of the two large dump trucks that worked for the whole city. This depended on the amount and the cost of the diesel fuel, so they needed to make sure that the trucks were making 'efficient' trips. This 'adapted' schedule meant that often garbage was overflowing to utter frustration of the tenants who started to lose faith into the more 'civilized' look of their yards. One little step was not enough for them as far as it involved not only their money for the concrete base but also everyday effort of a changed life style, accommodating to sorting. The efforts were as bigger as Avtospetstrans demanded the place where the waste

station should have been installed – and in two cases out of three, the place was inconvenient and away from the usual routes of tenants – for example, away from their pathways to the nearest bus stop. However, it is clear that although not perfect, the big improvement was indeed achieved through the project and persistent efforts of the project manager to negotiate the best possible solutions and schedules with Avtospetstrans. On figures 28 and 29 you see the usual look of the regular trash containers intended for mixed waste.



Figure 28 - Trash containers intended for not separated waste. These ones belong to three neighboring apartment blocks. Photo credit: KP.



Figure 29 - Trash containers intended for not separated waste. These ones belong to one of the schools participating in the project; it has never received the promised waste recycling station.

Figure 30 represents new blue and green containers for mixed waste that replaced the old ones. Certainly, Petrozavodsk has a long way to go before at least 15% of the old containers can be replaced with new ones, but that is a good start. Also, on Figure 31 you can see Petrozavodsk and Eastern Finnish versions of recycling stations. The picture of the Finnish one was presented by a representative of SYKLI in her presentation at a seminar for waste management for managing companies, waste management companies and homeowners' associations that I attended. The discussion was lively and many questions were discussed. This included the issue of appearance of the recycling station. The transparent 'grid like' walls were designed purposefully, to provide a better security

for people using them, and to raise awareness of the recycling initiative of the city.



Figure 30 - A new blue container for mixed waste standing beside a recycling station. Photo credit: KP.



Figure 31 - the 'waste houses' in Eastern Finland. Photo credit: Nataliia Ripatti.

The fact that big changes, especially the ones involving people's mindset and long-established patterns of behavior do not change overnight and need some patience, has not been readily accounted for by the locals. On purpose, the expert guests from Finland, while making their presentations, stressed several times that it took Finland close to thirty years to get their recycling program on track; and even now, they have to fight with those who lack civil responsibility to engage in recycling; years of well-planned environmental policies that carefully combined the carrot and stick approach, were bringing it up to the Finnish citizens, the need to be responsible and recycle. Petrozavodians wanted to get everything at once, becoming frustrated with set-backs, pit falls in negotiations with Avtopetstrans, not readiness of their neighbors to engage in sorting waste with the same vigor as they felt. Those who spend more time with this, understand it better who long the change can take and that it is a *normal* incremental process. I heard from one of the consultants for the project who had been involved in environmental education for twenty years that although she knew so much about ecology, sustainability and the right way of doing things, she was still using disposable diapers for her granddaughter because it was so much easier. But, in other spheres of life, whenever possible, she was trying to remind her home folk to turn off the light in the closet, not to let water run longer than needed, etc. She also pointed out that the change of the mindset can take a while, and that it's important to have realistic expectations.

Also, while it is important to target adults and talk about sustainable behavior, sometimes the lack of thinking about the audience led to awkward situations when during presentations of the western guests for kindergarten educators and school teachers, there were thoughts expressed on how we all had to tighten our belts and reduce consumption to achieve a more environmentally sustainable situation. Teachers are notoriously underpaid in Russia, with an average salary of ten thousand rubles (235

CAD) per month with duties to teach classes in five or six groups of students, thirty children in each. Part-time salary, on average, is 4,500 RUB (105 CAD). Hence, when the presenters went on to preaching about reducing needs as “our common duty” and how to achieve it – for example, to turn off the motor of your car. This situation was awkward for me since I understood this economic gap not in terms of numbers but as the lives of people who I was meeting every day. I could hardly sit quiet and not to exclaim, “Guys, do you know your audience? Do you think these teachers have cars? What motors are you talking about?!” The economically disadvantaged teachers, who apparently needed to hold on to at least some of their needs to keep their self-esteem afloat, kept their status at least through consumption. There was a clear discrepancy between the goals that were supposed to be about providing practical tools for teachers to contribute themselves and teach their students about more sustainable ways of behavior. But instead, the presenters demonstrated demonstration of the ignorance of the audience.

When the same thing was done in a local consultant’s presentation, it was also awkward, but produced a different effect – it estranged the audience who knew (from the presenter’s look) that she did not have a car but it meant that she did not do much thinking about her presentation and how to reach out to her audience. This is an example of othering (for more, see section 16.3).

My peer volunteer even said, after working in schools for a month:

School teachers are almost exclusively female. If she is not married, she will die in three months because it’s impossible to survive on this money. If she dresses well, it means that her husband has a decent salary. Or a lover. I mean, she’s not doing this on her own. And it’s natural that they don’t want to kill themselves over those extra projects and other stuff. And, the chance to go to Finland means a lot to them, even if it’s not a vacation. I think, this

is one of the major motivation why they didn't resist the project that much. I can understand them. I also can understand principals who want to engage to raise the score, the status, prestige of their school and not to be reprimanded by their own bosses at least once.

Chapter 16. Bordering through othering and entitlement to power.

16.1. Preamble.

“Borders have and will continue to serve as barriers of exclusion and protection, marking *ho me* from the *foreign*. In this sense, they still provide the function of separation and defense that is expected of them” (Donnan, H. & Wilson, T., 2010: 11). Although Hustings Donnan and Thomas Wilson meant nation state borders, the idea of marking *home* from *foreign* is equally applicable to the space of a much smaller entity, such as a condominium, a round table in a discussion room, or a flowerbed, if construction of the border (or more precisely, the boundary REFERENCES) intersects with the construction of the *other*. This chapter explores three domains of *bordering* through *othering* which in turn, involves power imbalance between the stakeholders of the project W.A.S.T.E. First, I examine construction of the cross-border *other* through the dynamics of relations between Russian professionals and Nordic experts; second, I turn to the power imbalance and broken wires of (mis)communication between the Russian stakeholders; and finally, I conclude with exploration of the relationship dynamics not between individuals but between institutions such as schools and kindergartens, municipality, Avtospetstrans and homeowners’ associations. Using vignettes from my fieldwork, I look at how members of a homeowners’ association can become insiders or outsiders in the apartment house they live in depending on their recycling behaviour; also, I analyze the way in which cross-cultural stereotypes perpetuate at international meetings in the city administration and become carried over to the level of media; and finally, I address the way in which municipal ecological campaigns become channels through which *us* versus *them* proliferate on the smallest piece of land on which the

construction of boundaries can be established. Also, I see this chapter as a bullhorn, a space where I humbly yield the power of voice to my informants, to some of those people who I met and who generously shared with me their perspectives, their concerns and hopes.

For the analysis of the ‘soft boundaries’ that emerged, shaped and proliferated during the realization of the project W.A.S.T.E., I am using the data gathered during my participant observation at seminars, discussions, roundtables and conferences of the project (the discussion time was priceless), lessons in schools and kindergartens, interviews with Russian stakeholders of the project including administrative staff, engaged employees as well as those who did not directly participate. All in all, I witnessed several types of attitude towards the project’s activities and initiatives on the part of local people who were directly involved in the project as givers, receivers, or were its passive observers. These approaches can be deciphered in terms of the (un)intentional treatment of the space as *home/alien*. In this way, the perspective that I noted are as follows:

- 1) Scepticism. Scepticism towards the suggested plan of action (waste sorting, installation of containers for homeowners’ associations, schools and kindergartens, etc. – see Chapter 14). It implied acknowledgement of the authority of the Nordic experts in environmental technologies and environmental education. Nevertheless, project participants who tilted towards this approach openly doubted that following the Nordic model would help change the situation for the better in Karelia. In this view, the Nordic (Finnish) side of the border was perceived as “other dimension” that was absolutely incompatible with the “Russian realities.” Besides, the skepticism was fed with practical reasoning of lack of funding:
 - *What can we do here without money? Finns have a working governmental model that finances the big change, but our government doesn’t. Why would*

we go on a study trip? I mean, what is there that we haven't seen yet? In 1990s and after, all those who wanted to see the West, already went there and saw for themselves.

- *Yes, but those people did not visit the waste sorting facilities and waste management centers...*
- *So, what? If we go to those facilities, walk there, we are not going to get a similar facility, are we? Those foreigners mind their own interest: they don't invest money into our technologies or our tangible change directly, what they do is they bring their experts here who teach us how to live our lives... But we don't have the ability to build all those facilities, production and manufacturing plants that they show to us on slides. **We** are no worse than **them** but nobody asks for **our** expert knowledge...*

(March 2012, notes from a heated discussion at one of the project's seminars for educators and homeowners' associations).

- 2) Optimism. Alternatively, the response from younger, not so mature public who was in clear minority, was more in line with keeping the faith. Readiness to join and invest time and effort expressed by a significant share of those involved into the educational component was evident at the start of the project. However, their ranks were thinning out as the project proceeded.
- 3) Conformity vs. hard/hurt feelings. I called the next type of the response coming mainly from school teachers and kindergarten educators that of 'conformity of bound subordinates.' In the words of one of the school teachers,
*"We don't have much of a choice. The principals say: it's waste sorting now, so, we do the waste sorting. We have tons of extracurricular work anyway, everybody is well used to it. I agree that ecology is important but everything is important! Memory development, logics, emotional education... **All** of it requires time investment, at the very least, to reach even modest results. On top of that, we stage children's performances and organize festivities for parents to show that we are taking care of*

their kids... Besides, not every parent will understand why their children need this waste sorting if they don't engage in it at home and are not going to... And, recycling containers are not installed in the yards of their apartment blocks and hardly ever will be” (November 2011, from a talk with a school teacher).

In this way, the diverse responses to the project's suggested goals and activities inspired my research on the manifestations of boundaries triggered by the issues of power imbalance and othering across the regional border as well within the limits of the Russian team. In the course of the project, I heard stories of frustrations, unfulfilled expectations, hurt personal and professional feelings along with hopeful (and even idealistic) perspective, healthy competitiveness and enthusiasm. As an illustration, some sense of frustration and disappointment came from unfulfilled (yet unfounded) expectations on the part of the Kizhi island team who was hoping to obtain some facilities and equipment for waste treatment in addition to the strategic plan of how they would use some extra facilities or reorganize waste management in case they had money to buy those facilities. As shared with me by a member of the Kizhi team,

“What is the use of that ‘exchange of experience and expert knowledge?’ Words, and words again. Under the cross-border cooperative projects, it is customary for the Nordic partners to get two thirds of the funding while we receive only one third. Thank you, of course, but on the other hand, none of us wants to go on a study trip. We have been there many times, we know what it's like over there. We understand it even without their expert knowledge that we need a mini-tractor instead of a large tractor that we have now for effective collection of garbage from dump sites. But such mini tractors are not manufactured in Russia, and the problem is that we can't order one abroad. We don't have a legal right to do it if analogues tractors are manufactured domestically but they're just too big for us. You can spend eternity looking round those Finns, it won't change a thing. And managers are getting irritated with this approach because we can never step beyond that ‘exchange of expert knowledge.’ But I admit that we need that study trip anyway, if for nothing

else than just to be changing the people's mindset and their thinking about waste, little by little."

16.2. Russian professionals vs. Nordic experts: drawing cross-regional boundaries.

16.1.1. Unrecognized Russian educators.

I believe that the tensions and ultimately, perpetuation of the boundaries between Russian and Nordic stakeholders of the project were rooted in a pre-decided distribution of roles as those of donors and those of recipients – mostly, of expert knowledge as far as the direct funding was not available to the Russian side. I was observing how the tension was developing around the issue of status. While the expert status of the Nordic guests was predetermined (and almost naturalized by the project's very logic), the Russian professionals had to fight for acknowledgement of their expertise; what mattered was that they had to convince the managerial staff of the project in their proficiency, not the Nordics.

Contrary to suggestions of senior Russian methodologists, their best practices, guide books and recommendations based on rich long-term experience in environmental education, were not adopted by the project's administration and not distributed among school teachers or kindergarten educators under the project. Their advice on the phases of the educational component was not followed either. They proposed that the Petrozavodsk team first shared their know-how and groundwork with their Nordic colleagues, and only after would they familiarize with the Finnish experience through consultations and a study trip. Yet, the project proceeded in the reverse order, which

maintained the 'balance of forces' and pre-set bipolar roles of donors vs. recipients. In turn, this affected the flow of dialogue between Russian professional and Nordic experts. It was Finnish SYKLI that was the educational Nordic partner, and so all joint sessions concerning educational component were conducting with their presence. In their presentations, the SYKLI members shared their experience in connecting the schools and kindergartens' curriculum with local authorities' regulatory acts that spins the wheel of waste utilization starting with production, to collection, to sorting, to removal, and finally, to final sorting at a waste management facility. They also shared some general information and strategies (working in the Nordic welfare state context). These presentations were insightful but applicable only in case the 'waste education' was going to make its way into the regular school and kindergarten curriculum, but it was not. Although the Finnish-originated educational games and activities were practical in implementation in class during the project, the Russian methodologists had no less experience of working in classroom; the major value of the project, however, would have been in marrying the curriculum with municipal administrative solutions to put the waste recycling on stable wheels. Senior Russian educational professionals and younger teachers equally painfully experienced the power imbalance, but for different reasons: the former felt frustrated because of the discarded knowledge that they offered, and the latter were overburdened with extra curricula activities (like the project W.A.S.T.E.) and high expectations of their superiors. The authority asymmetry also manifested in funding distribution: as is common for Nordic Council of Ministers' cross-border projects, the major share of allocated resources is released to the main partner from the Nordic side (in this case, SYKLI) which are mostly used to pay their salary as consultants, their trips to the Russian partner and "expert time." Yet, it is the Russian side of the border where the social/cultural/environmental change is expected. In the project W.A.S.T.E., the

funding aimed for the Russian side was transferred to the Karelian-Swedish Business Center that assumed the role of the treasure of the project. The Russian partner, on the contrary, has a long list of activities, events and other mechanisms that are crucial for the success of the project. The Karelian government (or municipality if it is the main partner on the Russian side like in the project W.A.S.T.E.) contributes its share of co-financing of about 5-10%.

It is worth noting that in terms of construction of cross-cultural boundaries the two target groups within the Russian team responded differently to established authority of the Nordic guests. In the part of the project that was realized in Petrozavodsk, two main groups of adults were targeted as beneficiaries: school teachers and kindergarten educators on the one hand, and heads and tenants of homeowners' associations, on the other. While methodologists and senior teachers were dissatisfied with the way the educational component unfolded and felt unrecognized and underestimated, at the same time they did not turn their frustration against the Finnish partners. The tension seemed to be an internal issue within the Russian team, between educators and the project leaders. The Finnish partners were "doing their job, sharing what they could, in the frames that were provided by the management" (S.A., a senior teacher). In this way, although the cross-regional and cross-cultural boundaries did emerge and were perpetuated, they were not hostile by nature and did not challenge the good understanding and attitude between regular project participants on the both sides of the border. Instead, these boundaries marked unequal access to power, financial and governmental opportunities.

Thus, while Russian educators did have an extensive background in ecological education but were not credited for it, the heads and tenants of homeowners' associations were uninitiated in waste recycling and could indeed benefit from the

‘exchange of knowledge’ part of the project. At the end, however, many of them seemed as disappointed as the educators: certainly, Finland is another world, and unless the waste treatment legislation in Karelia is challenged, there is only so much that individual condominiums can do. With Avtospetstrans still being the monopolist in the area of recycled waste removal when it came to stable metal containers on the concrete bases, the condominiums fell into a position of dependence in terms of price for sorted waste removal (which was introduced after one year after the installation of recycling containers), schedule of waste removal and other technical peculiarities. The problem here is not only economical but also moral. As a tenant explained to me, when people start sorting waste and get used to it, they also get hooked to the implication of ‘doing the right thing’ and are more susceptible to agree to the new rip-off terms of Avtospetstrans. If a satisfying agreement cannot be achieved, the trust of tenants will be lost, which ultimately means arriving to an even gloomier point than the starting one was. The trust was also named as the most treasured component of adult-children relations. If children positively respond to adults’ initiative concerning waste sorting, attend classes, learn about waste treatment and the bigger picture of the effects of their contributions for the planet, but adults botch or sabotage (even if unwillingly) the final, practical stage that takes one step further from the classroom, the trust is lost, and the dark hole of cynical attitude to adults’ world becomes even darker. Here are the words of an educator concerned about the *practical* application of the project’s objectives:

“It will be catastrophic if this all remains in limbo... If M.A. [the Green Wave volunteer, KP] will be going to schools alone and saying how good things in Finland are... but we’re fed up with hearing how great things are there and how crappy they are over here. We know this for ourselves but can’t change it because it’s a big society and not a unity of private households like in Finland. So, decisions on different levels are required - legal solutions, federal laws, and municipal. The city has ability to do a lot, actually. It would be catastrophic if it’s only words. ...

You know, our teachers, and my mentors in particular, have developed brilliant guidance materials and teaching aids... But with words, we played enough. She asks me [a friend, also participating in the project, KP]: do you want to go to Helsinki? I say – no, why would I? I was there many times, I know they have worked their way but so did we. And yet, our conditions are unique, and we can't copy their experience, unfortunately, because it involves bureaucracy. We can adopt some educational methodologies that would complement ours... But really, we can teach them teaching methods too. The major difference between us is that they can go implement out of the classroom what they are teaching in the classroom. Here, we cannot. Here, it's all in a wild barbarian form. Dysfunctional, inoperable system.

16.1.2. Polluting Russians and baffled Europeans.

The issue of separate waste management is discussed not only at round tables and conferences that are specifically devoted to this topic. A seminar in the honour of Mr. Egon Bahr became a platform for cooperative cross-cultural problem-solving in the spheres of ecology and youth politics in Karelia at a meeting of Russian and German young politicians and community workers. In this case, it was the copy writers working for the city's administration website who contributed in just another case of erecting the boundary between *us* and *them*.

According to the report about the seminar, its foreign participants were indeed surprised to find out about spontaneous dumps in and near Petrozavodsk. The text read, "It was unclear for Europeans how one can consciously litter and **make** one's own city

dirty.¹⁶¹ It went on to portray the German guests as exemplary environmentally-minded individuals who in fact, were nothing else than true representatives of the “civilized West.” In this story, the Europeans are represented as not even understanding the acts of littering that probably occur more often in Russia than in Germany, indeed. It also suggests that nothing like this could happen on European grounds where littering is viewed as something unnatural and not customary for Germans. This prejudice of *exemplary them* versus *uncivilized us* reconfirms the topicality of A. Yurchak’s (2006) research on the meaning of the idealized West for the Soviet citizens in the current post-soviet reality. The perspective on littering versus keeping the space clean made me wonder about another social borderscape that draws a line between a home and alien space where it is acceptable, not shameful to litter. The question is then, where does this alien space start and where is the borderline between *my home* and everything else? What other borderlines are coincident with the exemplary/uncivilized *us* versus *them*: the nation state border, the regional or city limits, or one’s threshold at the entrance doorway? This little example illustrates how cross-border stereotypes keep being perpetuated at international meetings organized by the city administration of Petrozavodsk in hope to diminish those boundaries.

In search for insights about *home space* during my final visit to Petrozavodsk in June 2014, I was talking to my interviewees and key informants who were involved in the project in 2011-2012, those who had nothing to do with it, and random people who I met in local cafes and coffee houses. I heard repetitive speculations along the similar lines of

¹⁶¹ “Today the participants of Egon Bahr seminar summarized their work” published on October 2, 2014 on the Petrozavodsk city administration web-site, <http://www.petrozavodsk-mo.ru/petrozavodsk/index/news/more.htm?id=10753232@cmsArticle> (last accessed on October 5, 2014).

the inherent differences between *us* and Europeans, the difference in their testimonies was who was better, cleaner, or more loving towards their country. I find it most relevant to quote a volunteer working in a youth NGO who shared her perspective on *home space* and its limits:

I think, we really differ from Europeans. As designer Artemy Lebedev¹⁶² says, it's all about comfort zones. Here, for some Petrozavodians, the entrance lobby and staircases of their own apartment house belong to the outside area. At the same time, when you start to clean it, like sweeping the floor, the neighbors will say – oh, well done, good for you. But if you tackle something bigger like painting walls, they'll get all nervous and will keep asking you – what's in it for you? Why are you doing this? As if worrying that you'll charge them for your volunteer work in the lobby. I think, our comfort zone is wider than those of Europeans. When we're cleaning the street, or water flowers at a flowerbed, we're benefiting ourselves. So, we teach kids at our center to look through a broader lens, to look deeper.

Yet, so much depends on adults. For example, we're planting flowers, and adults passing by would say, "are you crazy? What are you doing?" The kids don't really know how to respond, they stun and can't understand what's wrong with those adults. Yet, the same adults lament that the streets are dirty, nobody cares, and so on. How would anyone care if our initiative is killed like that?

...I think, it's all about our civil involvedness in the city life. Officials don't owe us anything. If they can't lay out flowerbeds for us, we'll do it ourselves.

Some say that Europeans' comfort zone is bigger than ours, that's why it's cleaner outside in Europe. This is because the home zone is bigger for them, and they care about it. School teachers are all focused on successful exams and tests and they don't really support volunteering because it entrenches upon the study time. But the

¹⁶² Artemy Lebedev is A well-known Russian designer, inventor, blogger and traveler. His 'Artemy Lebedev studio' made the homepage of the most widely used Russian-speaking browser and email service, www.yandex.ru. He is known for creative approach to all spheres of life as well as creative design. He is married to an oppositionist, one of the organizers of the Marches of the Discontented in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

result is that kids don't know what's going on in the world and in their city. There is a problem in Finland: they have very well-equipped youth and community centers but they are empty. The youth is all out at shopping malls and gas stations. Our kids are susceptible and I believe that our work is not in vain.

16.2. Insider othering: breakable wires of (mis)communication on the Russian side.

16.2.1. Power imbalance and opposing groups.

As the project unfolded, the boundary between cross-regional *us* and *them* was gradually shifting towards the internal space within the Russian team. This initiated the process of distancing among certain members who were dissatisfied with how the project was realized – they were specifically concerned about the aspects that pertained to their area of interest and expertise which they were called to contribute. For instance, there were school teachers unhappy with the lessons/lectures that the Green Wave volunteer conducted, other teachers were disoriented with the messy proceedings when it was unclear who was responsible for what, and what exactly was expected of them. This created a barrier between teachers and administration of the project: due to the fact that the program for schools' participation was rather vague and did not go beyond suggestions of competitive projects for schoolchildren, it hindered the teachers' participation and created confusion. While the diplomatic negotiation job done by the manager was appreciated, other involved authorities such as the Ecology department of the city administration became the main target of teachers' critique. Kindergartens differed from schools in the sense that they were smaller discrete entities and did not expect much of the project management in terms of teaching aids or other methodological

help. It was schools where the messiness was felt and objected: with the ambitions to embrace grades from 5th to 11th, in the absence of clear guidance, teachers had to do a huge amount of work using their own judgement, on their own time. On average, three teachers from a participating school became involved in helping their students to compete in small projects planned by the project's management¹⁶³. Yet, only one of them could go on a study trip to Finland, which sometimes created tension and raised concerns about fair decisions. To be clear, not all teachers wanted to go on this trip, for personal and professional reasons, so this trip was not necessarily seen as a desired prize/motivation for all. Thus, it would be a simplification to see the cross-regional, cross-national and cross-cultural border between Russia (Karelia) and Finland as the only salient frontier that emerged in the course of the project. As much as the external, the internal boundaries emerged through the inner dynamics among the Russian participants. There were enough contradictions and antagonism within the Russian side to mark the invisible yet salient borders, while the coherence of the 'Russian team' should not be assumed, and the construction of boundaries should not be reduced to the 'Nordic vs. Russian' opposition.

First, the developed tension between school teachers and project's management seem to illustrate the inner dynamics/tensions quite well. As a rule, teachers and school administration including the principal came out in a united front that at times directed the 'weapons' of their disappointment at the project's management team. Once I witnessed a conflict between a school and the Ecology department. The school (represented by two teachers, a principal and her deputy) called for the head and deputy

¹⁶³ An example of a 'creative project' realized for an interschool competition in one of the schools was sewing of eco-bags by high school students for their little peers in elementary school (in Russia, classrooms for students of grade 1-11 are located in the same three/four-storeyed buildings.)

of the Ecological department of the city administration who assumed the leadership in the educational component of the project W.A.S.T.E. The reason of the school's concern was M.A.'s waste-awareness classes conducted in that school. I happened to be at that school that morning and was able to observe the negotiations. The teachers and the principal voiced their complaints about the lack of "interactive approach," "dryness" of lectures, the general "inapplicability of the lecture format" for schoolchildren and "M.A.'s inability to discipline the students." Whether or not these complaints were justified, the very fact of their existence addressed the concerns of "fuzziness, ill-preparation and inconsistency" of the educational component itself that were brought up by other educators, rather than M.A.'s individual mistakes or flaws in her teaching style which she has never acquired in the first place.

Second, teachers did not feel free to say 'no' to teachers' training seminars that were obligatory for those who committed to the project. So, some of them sabotaged silently by missing classes, or sitting quietly at the back, texting. I found the training quite informative and engaging but I could also understand the perspective shared with me by one of the kindergarten educators,

"This project was literally dumped on me by the head of my kindergarten because other girls were busy with other commitments. I'm glad that you're conducting lessons here, it helps a lot to take some burden off me. Those teachers' training seminars last for three hours. I have to leave work early and run there. This time is not paid. Also, I have to ask someone to pick up my son from kindergarten, bring him home and wait till I come back from that training. After that, I'm exhausted, and I'm owing to the friend who helped me out. No wonder I'm not thrilled about this whole thing."

However, this is not to undermine the enthusiasm of those few teachers and kindergarten educators who did have time and energy to invest to the project. Also, I should note that sometimes, the lack of commitment came from reasons unrelated to the project's merits or flaws.

Another opposition on the Russian side of the project consisted of the senior methodologists vs. administration, with the conflict over the disregarded environmental teaching aids and guides. The issue of handling waste deemed important by all participants, so the discrepancies arose not over the topic but over the ways of presenting it to children. The local experts developed a solid base of the environmental teaching and wanted it to be acknowledged. They did not oppose it to the Finnish approaches or claimed its supremacy. What they cared about was that this knowledge was included in the program developed by the Ecology department for Petrozavodsk schools, which was not done. The Ecology department's response was that these guides and aids were unnecessary; however, not to escalate the conflict, these materials were requested... but never used.

I wish to remind here that Karelia is an arena of multiple short- and long-term projects, two- and multisided. Often they presuppose a firm contact of individual participants and regular visits across the border. In this way, when delegations of municipal officials (like during the meetings for cooperative initiatives between Petrozavodsk and several Swedish municipalities), singers, dance collectives, painters, craftsmen, or scientists¹⁶⁴ come to Petrozavodsk, the relations of equality are practiced,

¹⁶⁴ In the first three months after my arrival to Petrozavodsk in 2010, there were two international scientific conferences held, each gathering about one hundred fifty participants. One was 'Harmony of the North' devoted to the ways of development and promotion of northern territories in Russia and in Nordic countries. Dr. Mark Nuttall was invited to be a key note speaker but unfortunately, this came into conflict with his other travels. The other conference was called 'Mentorship: The Choice of the Path for Youths and Adults.' I took part in both conferences.

with the full recognition of the fortes of the both sides. However, in the context of the project W.A.S.T.E., the relations of power imbalance were pre-set even before it commenced. Only a few of the Russian/Karelian experts were recognized as such at the joint Russian-Nordic events and were given voice. At the same time, presenters from Moscow were brought in to speak at the joint conferences which seemed like power pressure from two sides, the foreign Nordic and the central Moscow, with silencing the local Petrozavodsk professionals.

Unfortunately, there was no preliminary achieved consensus as to what kind of Finnish expert knowledge would be indeed beneficial and needed. The SYKLI representatives brought presentations on what they considered their best practices that helped move forward the waste management and engage educational establishments. In this way, there was an attempt of a dialogue but it hardly happened. Many of the methods and teaching approaches that Finns suggested were already known to the Russian educators and quite sophisticatedly developed and argued in those booklets that I found in teachers' libraries. On the other hand, the Finnish know-how that did make an impact in their society was closely related to the administrative decisions in respective municipalities, waste handling laws enforcement and economic motivations for schools and kindergartens. In Karelian context, however, it would require years to reach similar achievements rooted in bureaucratic change. In Finland, waste management policies were backed up by corresponding law base and technologies that made it possible to realize the gradual shift to more sustainable environmental and societal practices.

Continuing giving voice to my informants, I wish to quote some of their reflections about the realization of the project W.A.S.T.E:

“They [the project’s administration, KP] refuse to change the situation in society by doing their job directly (like negotiating between the municipal, republican and federal authorities) but instead, they mingle into other professionals’ zone but don’t feel bad about burdening kids with extra information that they will hardly use”

(K.L., a school teacher; interview, March 2012.)

“This situation is truly painful: some seven-eight years ago, there were many teachers who were focusing on the environmental education. They developed unique teaching aids that worked not only in theory but had a practical value because they were thoroughly tested. We were working with Finns a lot at that time, and I remember their appreciation of our work; they eagerly borrowed some of it. Now, only a few of those teachers still work in schools. Some of them went for promotion and now work in the city administration or in the private sector at environmental risk assessment, some retired, some burned out. Back then, the environmental education was fashionable. Now it lost its vibe. This is how our federal educational ministry operates: when something is trendy, they fund it. When they receive new orders, they drop what they were investing to, and it becomes forgotten, unappreciated, and dusty. The new younger teachers don’t even know what richness have been created before they came!”

(A.N., a school teacher; interview, March 2012.)

“All words that we tell our kids should be backed up by practice. No lip-service should happen, or we are gonna lose our kids’ trust – they have to see the results of their efforts (even if it concerns sorting waste). Whenever a systemic approach exists (like guiding notes and leaflets that are put next to recycling containers in Finland, explaining how exactly to use them) people respond to it and behave responsibly. But when there is no system as with this project’s educational component, the good intention gets lost. Something is achieved but it’s largely spontaneous, unsystematic, disorderly and without a clear point.

I even fell out with the Ecology department at the stage of preparation of the educational program. The former head of the department was appreciative of

professionals but the girls who rule there now, don't. One of them was working at the department as an ecology specialist; she didn't find a common ground with the head, and left to work at an ecological department of the Segezha factory. I don't doubt her environmental professionalism a little bit but she's not an educator. And, to write educational programs, you must have substantial experience. It turned out that the project manager didn't know that I had such an experience, but that's not the point. The point is that she didn't engage professionals in education... She had to look for them, to persuade to participate and help with that educational program that the Ecology department sketched.

They should've found someone who would be the leader of the realization of that educational component. By they didn't do it. I insisted, but the manager either didn't understand why it was necessary, or simply couldn't do it, I don't know. Education is a sphere in which you have to invest all of yourself for many years, to be able to say that you've achieved something. Yu.S. [the head of the Ecology department, KP] doesn't have a teaching experience but she and her associate wrote the 'educational program' for teachers, I don't know why they thought that they had enough skills to do it. When I read that program, I came over shivery. The terms, approaches, assumptions – all was highly unprofessional, amateur. It is even more frustrating because we do have people who could've done it so much better. Everyone should be in their place. Her job was to negotiate with Avtopetstrans, to make sure that the dialogue is happening between all of the stakeholders. As local authority, she had the powers to do it – this would really make a difference. But she didn't do it, she didn't challenge the stakeholders, Instead,, she assumed that she could do our job, the methodological job. Why? Perhaps, she knew she would fail the negotiations and decided to do the methodology – for non-specialists, it's hard to figure out what is wrong, so she got away with it. She was really upset with me when I told her that she shouldn't have done the program since it's useless. We haven't talked to each other ever since. I told the project manager that I'm willing to help out, discuss things, but not with those who don't hear me... what's the point?"

(L.F., a senior educational methodologist; interview, February 2012).

“There is almost nothing to take because almost nothing was given to us. They had to invite a person who would be responsible for implementation of the program in schools. We have so many in-depth studies and teaching materials but they are unrecognized and abandoned. Our heads only demand the activity reports from us, to show off for the project manager. They don’t care when and how we write those reports.”

(L.M., a kindergarten educator; interview, February 2012).

16.2.2. Head-administrators and subordinates: who crosses what boundaries?

Investment in innovations can be certainly called one of the Nordic priorities that manifests in the project *WASTE*. It should be noted that participation in this project means taking over responsibilities for extra curriculum. Fulfillment of these obligations, as a rule, is shared in the following way: the head of the kindergartens is responsible administratively, while a couple of educators bearing the bulk of work on their own shoulders with an average extra pay of 500-700 rubles per month, or they get nothing¹⁶⁵. I encountered an exception though, when a head of a kindergarten actively participated and coordinated all activities personally; she was also the one who went on a study trip to Finland. Yet, this situation may be motivationally discouraging for teachers/educators and assistants as much as the burden of sole responsibility.

The division of power and roles between the heads and their subordinates definitely plays out in organization of work. In relation to the project, this was reflected in the

¹⁶⁵ 500 rubles equal about 11 CAD. I am not sure why some educators were paid extra for participation in the project, while some were not. The information about extra pay (or lack of it) comes from interviews with educators of three participating kindergartens.

choice of the kindergarten's representative to go on a study trip to Finland. Often, several educators were working on the implementation of the project's activities, and the choice of only one of them to go on a trip abroad (as required by the sponsor) was not always straightforward and occasionally induced tensions inside the kindergarten, especially if the input of each participant was relatively equal. When asked about the grounding for choosing a particular educator, the heads consistently mentioned that educators' salary was lower than that of heads or that younger educators needed to "see the world." Also, the 'justice factor' was evoked: the one who works, goes on a trip, i.e.: "She [an educator] is fresh from college, and it will be good to motivate her with a trip," or "This is our most experienced teacher, so she must be rewarded for her work," or "In our team, she's the most active participant, so it would be fair to send her." Sometimes, study trips are viewed as an occasion to travel for free, without major commitment. In an interview back in 2010, a newly-minted politician in the Petrozavodsk local government who came from the youth policy made a point of his party's campaign directed toward advancing opportunities for regular employees instead of heads who used to misuse their office. This could be one of the reasons why kindergarten heads chose not to go on this study trip but to send one of the educators. There is some evidence of the practice of sending abroad high ranking participants even if they are not directly related to a project. In the project *Development of Youth Entrepreneurship through the Partnership Network of the North-West Russia and the Nordic countries* (2011) financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers, out of the eight participants who went on the study trip, there was not a single young entrepreneur. Instead, the trip-goers were local government officials, three representatives of high educational establishments of Petrozavodsk, one high-ranking bureaucrat from the municipal youth occupation center, the project manager and a media coverage person.

16.2.3. *The passion of trash containers.*

The process of othering can touch even members of the same homeowners' association that are labeled as insiders or outsiders in their own apartment depending on their recycling behavior.

Heads and tenants of the model condominiums in Petrozavodsk in which recycling containers were planned to be installed, were one of the adult target groups in the project WASTE. In my talks with two heads and three tenants, we discussed multiple aspects of sorting household wastes as well as obstacles that were faced along the way. An unexpected and recurrent topic that emerged in the interviews with residents of different apartment blocks was the boundary between residents of the same condominium that emerged (or became salient) when the condominium engaged in recycling. The categories of *us* versus *them* were introduced depending on the degree and 'quality' of residents' participation in the waste sorting activities in the yards of their apartment blocks: "We took pains to become members of the project and have the containers installed... I personally put up notices for residents with instructions how to use the containers, I notified them about our gatherings... You think they come? You think they make an effort not to confuse a container for glass with a container for plastic? Well, many of our tenants are conscientious but those who mess up... *They're only renting here and don't give a damn.* Some of apartment owners are also having a hard time understanding what it is all about."¹⁶⁶ Another head was outraged by the mess around the recycling station in his yard: "Look, look here! It's all messed up! I got a notice from Avtospetstrans that our recycling containers are not good enough, the waste has been mixed up! People use the containers in improper way. I think, even children could have learned by now... *I can*

¹⁶⁶ A.S., a head of one of condominiums participating in the project.

name all my neighbours who do it right, and those who mess it up.” As much as the commitment to separate waste collection was initially a solidifying factor among the residents of an apartment house, as the process of waste separation started, a separation line was drawn between those who conformed and those who did not care enough. In response to my question about the means of locating all the ‘delinquent neighbours,’ one of the condominium heads shared that he was spending a couple of hours in the mornings and a couple of hours in the evenings observing his neighbors from his apartment window that faced the recycling station. During the day, several ‘responsible old ladies’ [*babushkas*] were taking over. After several months of close observations, the neighborly relationship in the apartment blocks became considerably strained.

16.2.4. Invisible planters at a flowerbed.

A drawn borderline between ‘insiders’ and ‘intruders’ can be traced even within the tiniest pieces of land that emerged during municipal ecological campaigns. Planting flowers on several flowerbeds in Petrozavodsk by interested citizens was scheduled for June 16, 2014. In the afternoon, I took off on my little ‘field trip’ hoping to kill two birds with one stone. First, I presumed that this would be a good occasion to learn more about the local residents’ perception of domestic vs. alien space, and second, I wished to introduce my two preschool children to a socially meaningful activity (i.e., planting flowers) working alongside other conscientious citizens, which would provide a sense of immediate gratification.

The three flowerbeds that we visited were located right next to apartment blocks, on the outer side of the buildings, facing the street. Each flowerbed was taken care of by a group of people. As we found out later, they were residents of the adjoining houses; they

were kept company by representatives of a community-based NGO. When our gardening team arrived at the first site, the planting was already underway, and the flowerbed was quite obviously divided into two unequal sections. In my estimation, the two thirds of the flowerbed was occupied by the residents who came to “decorate *their* space around *their* own house”¹⁶⁷ The remaining one third of the flowerbed was adopted by two other groups: the first one consisted of workers of *Karel’skaya Dacha* (an organization that was sponsoring this particular flowerbed), while the second was an NGO *Mama* [Mother]. The *Mama* people, besides planting, were videotaping each step of their participation: later that same day, they posted the video they made on their VKontakte webpage.

At no point did the three groups mingle at the planting site, while the help of my children (as well as the children of my friend who came with us) was not welcome by the residents of the house. I had an impression that we, two moms and five kids were seen as trespassers in a ritual; our own inventory (toy shovels and buckets) seemed to have induced irritation on the part of the older ladies. Pushing for our participation, I politely but firmly insisted that the kids do their share of planting job. It took some diplomatic skills to have this negotiated. My friend, myself and our kids were perceived as fellow Petrozavodians but still alien, not having the right to intrude in planting flowers on the flowerbed that was ‘attached’ to a particular house on the central Lenin Avenue. The older ladies who lived in that house were very reluctant to “let the children spoil the careful geometry of planted flowers, which I will have to observe for years by coming by every day” (as put by one of the most active senior planters).

At the same time, the members of the *Mama* NGO who did not live in that house, helped us out and moved to make room for the kids after they realized the benefit of our

¹⁶⁷ Quote by V.L., an elderly woman, a resident of the adjoining apartment block, who was planting flowers right opposite her kitchen window.

participation: the kids looked good on the video made to gain publicity of *Mama's* activities. Because of the expressed hostility of the house residents towards the *Mama* and *Karel'skaya Dacha's* groups, the three ended up completely ignoring and not even speaking to each other, as if they were invisible. However, if one party violated the borderline inside the flowerbed demarcated with a string, the other party would respond with sincere indignation. Every group knew how to plant flowers; but only the residents' groups consisted of elderly women and middle school children (most likely, grandchildren of those ladies), knew exactly "how to plant flowers at *their* flowerbed." The official municipal website advertised the flower-planting campaign five days in advance and invited all interested citizens to participate.¹⁶⁸

16.3. Power imbalance between institutions: schools, kindergartens, city administration, Avtospetstrans and homeowners' associations.

While doing my fieldwork with schools and kindergartens, I noticed the difference in their standpoints regarding participation in the project W.A.S.T.E. These standpoints can

¹⁶⁸ "All are welcome to come and participate in the flower-planting campaign. Please call the Ecology department at city administration for details, come straight to any of the planting sites." Petrozavodsk municipality website, <http://www.petrozavodsk-mo.ru/petrozavodsk/index/news.htm?f=61&fid=2&blk=10528684> (last accessed on October 12, 2014).

be categorized as ‘thumbs-up optimism of the poor’ versus ‘skepticism of the rich.’ Specifically, this refers to the schools and kindergartens heads’ estimations of benefits from participation in the project. The two positions represent extreme ends of the spectrum, while the three kindergartens and eight schools that I did my work with can be found somewhere in the middle. The first position represents an overly optimistic view on the outcomes of participation in the project, in the spirit of ‘keep my eyes on the prize.’ In this, much of the pressure to succeed was put on the shoulders of children and their parents who were supposed, in the minds of my interviewees to unanimously support the idea of waste separation not only in the respective educational establishments, but also at home. Children were expected to be ready to use paper leftovers for crafts and thereby, help the kindergarten to win prizes in competitions that were organized by the project’s manager and administrative staff. These prizes included money for implementation of specific recycling projects as well as merit certificates important for the institution’s prestige (for example, the Green Flag which is an award for sustainability that was copied from the Finnish model; the entitlement to it has to be reconfirmed every year). I found that these high expectations of children and their parents as well as eagerness to participate and fight for prizes and certificates was more apparent in poorer equipped kindergartens that were located on the outskirts of the city, in the poorer neighborhoods.

A more cautious approach that revealed de-prioritization of participation in this project, was characteristic of those schools and kindergartens that were exceptionally active in a number of other municipal as well as international projects. They regarded the W.A.S.T.E. project as nothing more than only one of many initiatives like those in which they were already involved. These educational establishments had a more business-oriented approach and first wanted to make sure that the benefits of participating were greater than expenses. While the differences in approaches to participation in the project

on the part of schools and kindergartens did not directly affected winning or losing in competitions, it did influence the learning environment for children with the obvious correlation between the level of commitment and received outcomes. The educational institutions that were in straitened circumstances were also those that had less status and prestige in the city and used the project as a way to earn some social capital through winning in competitions (such as competitions of students' projects regarding waste treatment solutions). Not only better-equipped schools have had a better access to up-to-date equipment, funds for repair and maintenance, etc. They are also find it easy to reach out to the local authorities for help. In this way, the only school (actually, a higher-ranked lyceum) that was able to get the metal recycling containers promised by Avtospetstrans was the one that provided a concrete base for those containers, as per Avtospetstrans' conditions. The lyceum had its local deputy to pay for it. Otherwise, schools' budgets would not permit such investments. The limitations of school budgets as well as allowed expenditure items became clear when the project was underway.

The power imbalance between schools/kindergartens and Avtospetstrans manifested in the lack of ability of the former to take control over their own solid waste. One of the luring promises to educational establishments in return for their participation was the installation of recycling containers in their yards which would enable them to separate their waste: Avtospetstrans committed to remove sorted waste for free, thus helping schools and kindergartens to save money on waste removal. However, the governmental system of central financing of schools and kindergartens would not leave a window for flexible managing the costs of waste removal and possible earnings in case this process was optimized. This meant that educational institutions would not have any monetary gain from the efforts invested in waste sorting (as teachers would emphasize, the waste sorting that was done with "our children's hands".) However, it took about seven months

until it became clear that Avtospetstrans' lack of commitment was going to seriously undermine the educational efforts. As educators pointed from the start of the project, the practical aspect of the project was crucial for making a real change. By 'practical' they meant installation of recycling containers in educational facilities that would logically follow up the classes on waste management with children. Concerned about children-adult trust, educators stressed the importance of keeping their word to children that the containers will be installed. It was quite a happy circumstance that the small company Ecolint stepped in and indeed provided interested schools and kindergartens with containers – yet, they were light and plastic, not as solid as those that Avtospetstrans promised. In an interview, one of its directors told me that he actually did not intend installation of any containers for schools and kindergartens, only for homeowners' association – out of considerations of pure profit. He told me, "You're an adult and should understand that in this world, nothing goes for free. I have no idea what commitment is expected from me. I agreed to provide containers to homeowners' associations but I'm not so sure about schools and kindergartens – I simply don't have as many customers to buy from me all that sorted waste." Thus, the installation of recycling containers became a weak spot for the project. Had the Ecolint not stepped in at the right moment, the overall results of the project could have been offset. I also found out that in order to install anything on the city's property, there should be a decision adopted by the respective department at the administration. However, no such decree was ever signed. As stated by discussants at every gathering, the forte of such cross-border projects as W.A.S.T.E. was in bringing together stakeholders of different backgrounds, from private, to municipal, to legislative bodies, in order to achieve sustainable change. In the situation when the project stakeholders did not report to a common higher authority, they were free to pursue their own interests, in the first place. In this way, there was no leverage to force

Avtospetstrans to do its share for the project's success. The study trip to Denmark and Norway for the representatives of managing companies as well as the waste managing municipal company Avtospetstrans (represented by its director and the chief engineer) did not do the trick: the director was discharged from his position a couple of months after he returned from the trip, while some interested employees (who talked to me about this case) could never force the chief engineer to share materials that he brought back from the study trip. The only successful negotiation that was done with Avtospetstrans (apart from installation of recycling stations for the three condominiums) is the opening of the Info-center at its facilities. However, from the moment of its opening through the next seven months, only one trip for schoolchildren was undertaken, while the excursion was conducted by one of the former directors of Avtospetstrans. He was discharged soon after that, and an employee volunteered to conduct tours for children in case there was interest. She requested materials from the chief engineer but never received them. No tours were conducted ever since. As I was told by two kindergarten heads, they could not bring children to the Info-center because of lack of legislation regulating field trips for kindergarteners. To do this, they would need to hire a specially equipped bus, and none of the existing buses in Petrozavodsk correspond to the federal standards. All field trips that kids were doing were by foot. In this way, only schoolchildren, theoretically, could benefit from the trip to the Info-Center, in case it was arranged for them.

Chapter 17.

Representation of the project W.A.S.T.E. in the online mediascape.

The concluding conference of the project W.A.S.T.E. took place on October 8-9, 2013 in Petrozavodsk and gathered seventy-seven registered participants. I was observing the final phases of the project remotely by keeping in touch with my key informants and following the local news related to international cooperation, environment and youth involvement. Since I was not ready to give up the research part of my studies yet, I looked at the online media representations of the project since its beginning in October 2011 up to the end of December 2013. Discourse analysis has its niche and appeal, and hence, I found it insightful to try to tackle the texts that represented the project to the larger audience targeting those who did not personally participate in the project's activities. On the one hand, I focused on the ways in which the constructed representations of goals, measurements of success, perceived barriers of cooperation continued borderscaping/othering that was taking place throughout the realization of the project, and on the other, I asked questions about the interrelations of power, representation and their agents that I hope to unravel. Having migrated to the virtual domain, the project obtained a new life that followed the rules of the online news mediascape with its succinct and somewhat dry descriptions and preselected foci which made the constructed realm of the project (along with achieved goals, represented scope and overall successful international cooperation) seem even "more 'real' than reality itself" (Lefebvre 1991:81).

Jussi Laine and Miika Tervonen researched editorials and op-eds in Finnish media from 1990 to 2010 to question the Finnish-Russian imaginary border as seen from within Finland as well as the image of Russia, which as they concluded, was undergoing

constant change. This must have been a laborious endeavor of exploration of the border imaginaries with over two thousand articles related to the topic of the Finnish eastern border and the eastern neighbor (using a weekly magazine and a daily newspaper as their primary sources). Arguably, the change in representation of the Russians (and Finnish relations with them) over time meant the shifting of the border itself.¹⁶⁹ Here, I am interested in online media coverage of the project W.A.S.T.E. and the process of borderscaping/othering through representation of the project and in particular, its final conference. Although quite limited in scope and direction, such an undertaking reveals other relevant causes such as who publishes on the environmental topic, whether it evokes response from readers, who remains chooses not to broadcast this kind of news. Taking this one-step further, we may ask what such an approach to publicity on the part of the stakeholders involved in the project does for the cross-border nations' imaginaries of each other. By looking at the media representation of the project, I aim to question the borderscaping themes that I was seeing in the unfolding of the project on the physical plane. The media coverage of the project was rather moderate despite its longevity (more than two years with several follow-up sister projects), involvement of partners from three Nordic countries and the Petrozavodsk municipal authorities as the leading partner. Some sources duplicated (reprinted) each other, while most of them were limited to description of selected areas of the project and did not leave room for questions or comments. Although the pool of articles on the project was rather narrow, I selected nine

¹⁶⁹ Laine, Jussi & Miika Tervonen. 2015. Remaking the Border: Post-Soviet Borderscapes in the Finnish Media. In: Brambilla et al. 2015. Borderscaping: Imaginations and Practices of Border Making, pp.65-77.

sources for the purposes of my inquiry.¹⁷⁰ Out of those, five themes emerged that I found relevant for my exploration of fractal bordering of the everyday life through the lens of environmental initiatives, involvement of the youth and international cooperation (see Chapter 16). My sources reveal the perpetuation of the inherent divide between the locals and the Nordics through the image of ‘polluting us,’ “incapable of carrying our own garbage to a regular container, to say nothing of specialized recycling bins.” Next, the construction of credibility and markers of success of cooperation tends to be based on quoted “experts”/powerful narratives while framing the Nordic collaborates as “friends,” “partners,” “colleagues,” and “experts.” Finally, it is thought provoking indeed to see how the all-permeating ‘human factor’ seems to act as a consistent element of the inherent messiness of “how things are done here”.

¹⁷⁰ I chose nine articles devoted to the project W.A.S.T.E. published in the Russian online media in the period from October 2011 December 2013. They are: “In Petrozavodsk, the Nordic Council of Ministers’ project on Introduction of methods of solid domestic waste sorting continues.” <http://www.petrozavodsk-mo.ru/petrozavodsk/gorod/link/events/gd2004.htm?id=10231984@cmsArticle> (last accessed on December 11, 2013); “This fall, two new projects of the Nordic Council of Ministers start” <http://www.norden.ru/NewsPreview.aspx?id=586&lang=ru>; “Environmental School of Finland (SYKLI): Waste sorting in Petrozavodsk continues” <http://www.norden.ru/NewsPreview.aspx?id=586&lang=ru> (last accessed on Dec 12, 2013); “PiM activists took part in the ‘Waste’ conference in Petrozavodsk” <http://7x7-journal.ru/post/33192> (last accessed on December 13, 2013); In Petrozavodsk, there starts an international conference in the frames of the project Waste: education, sorting, treatment” <http://www.waste.ru/modules/news/article.php?storyid=2593> (last accessed on December 12, 2013); “What to do with waste? – Petrozavodsk city administration invites schoolchildren to participate in a competition” <http://mir.karelia.ru/index.php?MT=9434> (last accessed on December 11, 2013); “Waste and waste treatment: new approaches” <http://karelinform.ru/?id=238356> (last accessed on December 13, 2013); “Karelian Resource Center: News on Waste” http://nko.karelia.ru/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=337&Itemid=1 (last accessed on December 13, 2013); Karelian Fund of Development of Education on Waste” <http://kfro.karelia.ru/> (last accessed on December 14, 2013).

Most of the sources focus on descriptive information about the project, its stages (concentrating mostly on the start-up seminar and the final conference), its effectiveness and scope. My assumption is that the online coverage of the project (or lack of it) is representative of the public response to the project itself, its topic and its outcomes. The Internet coverage of Karelia including its peripheral rural areas grew 15% in 2012, which yielded over two hundred thousand people in Karelia using the Internet daily¹⁷¹. As the review of Creative Industries Agency concluded, the online news resources, services and social networks became a daily life for Karelian citizens which attracts Internet providers to the region (as of December 2013, there were as many as five Internet providers in Petrozavodsk alone)¹⁷². In researching the media coverage of the project, I found it instructive to look at whether the Karelian/Russian partners of the project posted any news/opinion essays about their participation in the various phases of the project (such as study trips) or the concluding conference. Coming from the opposite angle, I was wondering whether the Nordic partners spread a word about their participation in a collaborative project with Russians. To find this out, I did the first language (Finnish, Norwegian and Danish) search as well as search in English of the Nordic partners websites. I was using key words with the intention to seek help with translation when I find relevant posts. This concern was redundant: I did not find any mentioning of the project on none of the partner's websites. The only exception was a brief note on the events and phases of the project at the environmental School of Finland's website.

¹⁷¹ According to K. Volkov and his report on Days of Internet in Karelia <http://interso.livejournal.com/7314.html> (Last accessed on November 7, 2013).

¹⁷² Creative Industries Agency: "Creative Potential of Petrozavodsk and Socio-Cultural Portrait of a Petrozavodsk Citizen" http://www.creativeindustries.ru/rus/projects/creative_city/creative_city_petrozavodsk/creative_city_research_petrozavodsk (Last accessed on November 8, 2013).

The final conference of this long-term project, unique for the region that gathered all Russian and foreign stakeholders as well as other interested parties, was a quite noticeable event. One would suppose that the members of the partner network who made their contribution to the development of the project would credit themselves for good work and spread the word about achieved results on their web pages. However, not all participants took this opportunity to promote themselves. The informational bureau of Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) in St. Petersburg, the major representational body of the Council in Russia that lent significant financial and administrative support to the project, is usually very quick to post updates on its activities in the North-West region in its newsfeed. It posted updates about the intermediate phases of the project (which is one of many that go through NCM) within one to five days after the event such as a conference, seminar, contest, or a study trip.¹⁷³ However, both the closing conference that represented a valuable occasion for promotion of and credit for the bureau's involvement in cross-border cooperation with Russians, and Mika Boedeker's¹⁷⁴ speech went unnoticed for the media space. When I called the bureau's office in St. Petersburg on the morning of October 15, 2013 to inquire whether there are going to be updates about the conference and the office's participation in it, I was told that the staff member who does the marketing job was on a business-trip and that the updates would be posted

¹⁷³ News from 30.01.13: "Project on Waste Management Continues in Karelian Capital" (about the retreat for school and kindergarten staff members with the participation of Finland experts) <http://www.norden.ru/NewsPreview.aspx?id=842&lang=ru> (last accessed on February 5, 2013);

News from 06.04.12: "Helsinki presents new ways of eco-education for kids" (about a study trip that took place on March 26-29, 2012) <http://www.norden.ru/NewsPreview.aspx?id=708&lang=ru> (last accessed on February 5, 2013);

News from 10.02.1012: "W.A.S.T.E. Project in Petrozavodsk" (about educational events that took place on February 8-9, 2012) <http://www.norden.ru/NewsPreview.aspx?id=686&lang=ru> (last accessed on February 5, 2013).

¹⁷⁴ Mr. Mika Boedeker is the director of the informational bureau of the Nordic Council of Ministers in St. Petersburg who came to Petrozavodsk to give a welcoming talk.

within two days. Yet, they have never been, and the next issued newsletter did not contain a single word about the conference or results of the project in which the NCM's office was the major investor. Norwegian and Danish partners (the environmental consultant Miljøpunkt Nørrebro and the Avfall Norge, association of waste management companies) did not post a word about their involvement into the project W.A.S.T.E. either, despite hosting the Karelian delegation and participation in the concluding conference. The only partner, who posted a brief (three-sentence) note about their collaboration with Russians on the matter of finding solutions to dumping solid domestic waste, was SYKLI, Environmental School of Finland. Could it be that the reason for acknowledging the partnership was the fact that the primary contact/leading expert from SYKLI was an expatriate, a former Petrozavodian, who still held attachment to her native city?

When I called the Chamber of Commerce and Industry's marketing office to find out if they were aware that one of their employees was volunteering for the W.A.S.T.E. project, helped develop and taught a lecture course for school and kindergarten educators on safe treatment of solid domestic waste and the clean production technology, it turned out, they were not. However, they assured me that they were going to make a post about the project's concluding conference. Is it worth mentioning that such a post never saw the light? Employees in the municipalities of Sestroretsk and Apatity complained that doing their best to keep up to date was not enough because "you know, all depends on people. We depend on the person responsible for preparing news for publication; then, we depend on the proofreader, and finally, on the IT team as well as an external company that maintains our website. I can't tell you for sure what's going on with each link of this chain. It's out of our control." Such disconnectedness between staff members and external employees is quite characteristic of big companies or governmental structures

and is not unique to Russia. I think it will be fair to say that individuals (and I do not mean acknowledged leaders but rather, common citizens with good will for volunteer work) can have a much bigger influence on the current state of affairs that is commonly recognized by others, or even by themselves. As an illustration of this, a youth non-governmental organization *Nature and Youth* originally from Murmansk, consisted from only two members by November 2013. One of them came to the W.A.S.T.E.'s concluding conference to Petrozavodsk and promptly reported on her experience, her thoughts and doubts in connection to the feasibility of introduction of recycling in the North-West Russia on the website of her NGO. For half a year, the only member of the Green Wave environmental movement (however ironic this title sounds) was carrying all the burden of teaching waste-related lessons in local schools while I was responsible for lessons in all kindergartens that subscribed to the project.¹⁷⁵ Her and me expressed our desire/agreed to develop the curriculum and teach at the last moment, so sometimes it made wondering what solution would the project manager have come up with if she did not have us. It turns out that the opinion article wrote by the leader of the *Nature and Youth* NGO was the only one in the history of the media coverage of the project that evoked readers' comments.

Another possible reason for the disconnectedness within the whole structure of a Karelian governmental institutions is the mode of employment. The two Chamber of Commerce and Industry's employees involved in the project W.A.S.T.E. (the head of the Quality and Environmental committee along with her assistant) significantly enriched the educational component of the project with their lectures and consultations, and yet this

¹⁷⁵ Later, almost at the very end of her teaching, this volunteer from the Green Wave was rewarded with 3000 rubles and participation in the study trip to Helsinki. A fully assimilated Ingrian Finnish by descent, with parents emigrated to Finland a couple of years before the project started, she took this opportunity to learn about the waste sorting in Finland and to visit her parents without having to pay for the trip.

was not reflected in any way on the Chamber's newsfeed. These two employees were not permanent but worked on contract. At my very first interview with a governmental official in Petrozavodsk she told me how proud she was to be permanent because "it gives so much more job security. And at the same time, it makes you feel a part of the team, makes you feel appreciated."¹⁷⁶ I cannot be sure about how appreciated these two employees felt, however, no acknowledgement of their contributions (and even their profiles) could be found on the Chamber's website under the section 'Employees.' Apart from the human factor (such as editor's absence on business trips, high workload, etc.), I am inclined to think that for those stakeholders who did not find time or space to spread the word about their participation, the W.A.S.T.E. project was not of great importance or the overall topic of ecology was not a priority.

One of the unexpected developments in the second half of 2013 became close cooperation with individual entrepreneurs as well as small and medium scale businesses in waste removal and utilization. The Avtospetstrans gradually bowed out of the project and kept it word for installation of recycling containers only on the property of the three homeowners' associations on amended terms. The new direction of cooperation proved to be efficient enough for triggering the next follow-up project. Its suggested timeline was 2013-2014 with a focus on support of local 'waste' business (sure enough, in cooperation with the Nordic partners). The possibility of making income from solid household waste attracted eight presenters coming from business (Karelian, larger Russian and Nordic) to the concluding conference. Such visible presence of the interest from business and a

¹⁷⁶ N.M., in her early thirties, an employee in the Ministry of Health of Karelia, just returned from her maternity leave. ¹⁷⁶ I find it relevant to mention here that the manager of the project W.A.S.T.E. who works at the International Affairs department of the Petrozavodsk city administration has also been employed on contract. This means that despite her excellent performance and primary position in a number of consequential international projects, her position is not secured.

separate panel on business solutions in utilization of waste was noticed by the media and was covered as “the burning need for cooperation between the government, society and business.”¹⁷⁷ The monopoly of Avtospetstrans has been challenged by small enterprises and individual entrepreneurs for several years but the only successful one was Ecolint who finally took over and substituted Avtospetstrans in fulfillment of its commitments to schools and kindergartens. Comparing the lists of participants of the kick-off and the concluding conference, I noticed the change in ratio of representatives of profit-making organizations interested in collection and utilization of waste versus engaged homeowners’ associations that were supposed to be the main client of waste utilization businesses. Thus, the opening conference was attended by representatives of eight interested homeowners’ association and only two representatives of businesses, the local small company Ecolint and the municipal Avtospetstrans. However, only two heads of homeowners’ associations made it to the concluding conference two years later while the number of business stakeholders grew four times. Although the conference program and attendance can serve as circumstantial evidence of change of the priorities in the course of the project, my talks with several homeowners’ associations including heads and regular members suggest that due to broken promises on the part of Avtospetstrans, lack of competent communication between the contractor and its clients (for example, delayed process of installation of recycling containers in the places inconvenient for tenants) the initial drive on the part of the homeowners’ associations faded. At the same time, the optimism of the incoming smaller companies had the potential of striking a new spark. The article by the Swedish-Karelian Business Center called the support of small business in the sphere of collection and utilization of certain types of waste in Petrozavodsk and

¹⁷⁷ “Karelian Resource Center: News on Waste”
http://nko.karelia.ru/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=337&Itemid=1 (last accessed on December 13, 2013.)

Karelia regions “a promising topic that needs attention.” It concludes with the statement that “it is necessary to build the cooperation on the guiding principle of collaboration between government, business and society.” This call to action seemed a little hopeless after the proposal for the republic’s legislature amendment regarding waste utilization was stuck in the Karelian Legislation Assembly and could not get even the first hearing. It is also worth noting that almost all articles mentioned the then upcoming follow-up project focusing on the business involvement into the waste utilization while hardly commenting the results of the work done with homeowners’ associations that could have been regarded as a good start. My understanding is that the achievements of this work were less than expected.

Out of the nine sources that covered the concluding conference or mid-stage of the project, five used direct citations of references to those participants who could be considered ‘powerful figures’ whose opinion mattered and was worthy citing. On the one hand, reference to authorities can be viewed as a way to raise the prestige of the project and highlight its significance for the local life. Ultimately, “all functional aspects of reported speech are determined by the overall task of persuasion” (Smirnova A. 2009:80). On the other hand, those specific persons who were recognized as authorities by the local media could shed a light on the power dynamic as well as other relationship between the stakeholders. In this way, it is not surprising that one of the cited authorities was the project manager who represented the Department of International Affairs at the Petrozavodsk city administration. Another person who was quoted was Petrozavodsk’ mayor, Galina Shyrshina, who attended the conference and greeted the audience at the beginning of the plenary meeting. According to the review on the Karelian Resource Center’s website, G. Shyrshina remarked that

“Separate waste collection has been practiced for a long time in many countries of the world. For sure, this is the experience worth adopting. I give my thanks to all organizers and participants of events carried out. I hope that cooperative work will be fruitful and residents of our city will appreciate the usefulness and meaningfulness of separate waste collection, for it is one of the ways of struggle for clean environment in our city.”

At that time, Galina Shyrshina¹⁷⁸ was a newly elected mayor of Petrozavodsk (elected on September 11, 2013) and was holding the office for only one month by the time of the conference. Although clearly not an expert on the topic of ecology or education, her presentation at the conference nonetheless added significance to the event and signaled the municipality’s support. These two governmental officials are the only ones mentioned by the media in relation to the conference while not a single local expert on environment, education, or waste utilization was neither named, nor quoted. At the same time, the seemingly endless line of “foreign guests,” “neighbors,” “foreign friends” and “experts from abroad” was given a voice in the face of several environmental educators from SYKLI, speakers from the environmental consultancy Miljøpunkt Nørrebro and the Danish association of waste management companies – all three major foreign partners of the project.

Sometimes taking online media as a source can yield richer data than printed newspapers and magazines when an option for readers to leave comments is offered. Three of my sources collected feedback from readers. It seems to me that the local (or maybe, pan-Russian) trend to criticize and undervalue the efforts to change things for the

¹⁷⁸ Galina Shyrshina is an unprecedented case in Petrozavodsk power structure being the first woman ever elected to be the head of the city; and, which is even more impressive, she is only thirty-four years old and not a member of the governing Putin’s party “Edinaya Rossiya” [United Russia] being an independent candidate (Online newspaper “Grani.ru”, last accessed on November 13, 2013 <http://grani.ru/people/1963/>)

better on the part of one's compatriots can be as powerful as the propensity to appreciate foreign 'experts.' An op-ed published in a regional newspaper *Vse* [Everything] announced the upcoming opening seminar and discussed prospects of the project.¹⁷⁹ The comments solicited from readers illustrate a striking disbelief in the success of the project that actually depends on the effort of the local people as far as no separate waste collection can start and become consistent without dedication and commitment of the ordinary citizens who are, ultimately, the main agents of the transition in the ways of waste handling. In this manner, the first one who started the critical attitude towards the chances for success of waste management education among Petrozavodsk citizens who "are rarely capable of getting their garbage to a regular container to say nothing of a special recycling bin," was the author of the article. The whole thread of comments did not express a tiny bit of hope that "our mindset" can "actually be changed." The critique on the part of readers did not touch the Russian mindset alone but proposed an alternative to "useless seminars" and "waste of money and effort" by suggesting that designated stations that would collect glass and plastic from citizens for a minimal reimbursement, should be open. The city hobos ("good people") were called the real 'heroes' of the waste separation mission that someday is going to save Petrozavodsk from excessively growing dump because "they are doing really useful things, cleaning Karelian grounds from bottles. But for their efforts, the ground here would be all covered in glass." Perhaps, this statement will become less surprising in the light of ... by Etkind (and his proclamation of a hobo as a new hero) – a random comment just supports it. Look in his article.

¹⁷⁹ Online Newspaper *Vse*: "We will be learning to sort waste" published on November 25, 2011 <http://vse.karelia.ru/news/?id=17724> (last accessed on November 12, 2013).

Taken as an individual case, the attitude towards representation (and the modes of representation) of an international project in the web resources of its partners, domestic and foreign, has a potential to illustrate the bottom-up bordering practices of the both sides as well as offer a possible explanation of why the attempts to find the “glue for the region” may still have a long way to go. The absence of interest among the Nordics in spreading the word about successfully developing partnership with Russians to the audiences who were not immediately involved in it may undermine the top-down attempts to construct a common identity for the Barents region (unless the identity construction has been targeting primarily Russian stakeholders). The cooperation that is not publicly acknowledged loses its power and credibility. It fades into a missed opportunity to consolidate partners and show the larger audience of Norwegians, Danes and Finns who are interested in environmental matters and check the project partners’ websites for news and updates that Russians can be reliable stakeholders. In Laine and Tervonen’s article on the attitudes towards Russians researched through the Finnish printed media with which I started this section, the authors state that although the attitude towards the “great eastern neighbor” in Finland has been changing to milder and more accepting around 2005, it was fluctuating, remaining for the most part cautious and dismissive (Laine & Tervonen 2015: 65-77). I am wondering how the aura of the imaginary neighbor could become more favorable if the little proves of the regional cross-border cooperation are not brought up but instead, the media focuses on one-sided representations of the Russian role in the Ukrainian crisis, or reminds of the lost Finnish territories (including a part of the present-day Russian Karelia) that passed to the Soviet Union after the Second World War – the fact that triggers spite of some categories of Finns towards Russians. What the Finns are not reminded of, however (even not by the authors like Laine and Tervonen in their comprehensive article) is the fact that they

fought on the side of the Nazi Germany and lost in the war together with them. This was exactly the reason for Finland's making war reparations for the countries of the anti-Hitler coalition under the Paris treaty (1947) with the exception for Great Britain and the USA. As far as the Soviet Union suffered the most because of the Finnish army, it claimed certain disputed territories from Finland. In no western academic texts discussing the current situation with the Finnish-Russian border, whether 'soft' or 'hard' or arguing for plausible arguments that help construct the common regional identity have I seen a single mentioning of the Finnish occupation of Karelian and Leningrad oblast territories in the Second World War. The Finns are not reminded about their concentration camp established for Soviet citizens of Slavic descent (mostly Russian) including women in children, in Petrozavodsk, on October 24, 1941. The camp was meant to ensure the absence of communication between the locals and partisans while also using the prisoners as cheap workforce.¹⁸⁰ History is a messy thing, and no one is absolutely clean. Sometimes, efficient cooperation and improved neighborly relations ask for a conscious choice for a certain amnesia on both sides. As Laine and Tervonen infer (2015:73), "The socio-economic gap at the border is portrayed almost as something desirable, as it is useful in differentiating the idea of prosperous Finland from troubled Russia." Holding on to the imaginary constructed image of the eastern neighbor by the general Finnish public hinders the efforts of those Nordic and Russian partners, individual men and women, who take pains in improving the lives and contributing to the

¹⁸⁰ On Finnish occupation of Karelia including establishment of concentration camps, religious conversion and language policy, see, among others: Klyuchnik S.N. 2014. *Bez sroka davnosti [Without status of limitations]*. *Voenno-istorichesky zhurnal* 12, 55-59. Emil Helge Seppala. 1984. *Finland as Agressor in 1941*. WSOY; 1989. *Finland as an Occupant in 1941-1944*. SN Books (reprinted in Russian in http://www.priozersk.ru/1/text/0005_1.shtml). Bobrov, A. 2009. *V'yuga pamyati. K 65-letiyu pobedy na Karel'skom fronte*. [Memory Snowstorm. In dedication to the 65th anniversary of the victory at the Karel front].

development of the conscious civil society in Karelia. Media reporting on the cooperative project that is realized on any platform, be it Barents, twin-city, Baltic, Euroregion Karelia or other, is essential for creating the grounds for mutual trust and respect. Paying attention to even small developments in joint work for safer and cleaner environment can help shift mediascapes in a more constructive manner that would benefit the cross-border projects in Karelia that are mushrooming each year. The bordering practices, the othering of the neighbor can be reduced through spreading the word among the Nordic nationals and especially Finns about practical joint endeavors that take place in neighboring Karelia, to contest the Finnish “inflexible social-spatial imaginaries that fundamentally exclude others and reproduce an illusion of social order and stability that reinforces the social imaginary that seek to maintain a distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’” (Laine and Tervonen 2015:74). Portraying Russia as a ‘problematic’ Other in the Finnish media could be counterpoised with timely reports and op-eds covering joint success in cross-border projects.

Part I V.

Final remarks.

Chapter 18.

In place of a conclusion.

The original contribution of my work emerges from my purpose to construct a productive dialogue between the two approaches to the study of contemporary borders: the more traditional geographical and political approaches to borders and an anthropological perspective that stresses the dynamic nature of the border. In this thesis, I have explored visible territorial borders and their crossing (Part III and discussion of the larger context of the Barents Region), and less tangible (or invisible) social and cultural boundaries that can also express salient social processes and practices of differentiation (Parts II and IV). Also, I have researched complex relationships between the hardening and policing of external political and territorial borders (which are related to the exercise of modern state sovereignty) and the production of boundaries as internal social categorizations (which are related to the politics of identity). In their book on new borders in the context of the changing Europe, Anderson, O'Dowd and Wilson (2003) point that structures and mechanisms such as euroregions and cross-border neighborhood projects can help to create a positively-charged cooperative culture based on mutual economic and business interests. The visible and hidden interactions between geographical and territorial borders and ethnic, social and cultural boundaries can produce othering on the multiple scales.

Through studying the unfolding of the project W.A.S.T.E., I explored the process of importing values and knowledge and the way in which it was realized in day-to-day life through different practices and the perpetuation of cultural cross-border stereotypes. I also researched the ways in which the construction of the border is intersected with the construction of the Other. There is no definitive answer to the question whether the

external regional border is internalized by the local Karelians. Despite the constant trafficking of financial and natural resources and the obvious attempts of the Nordic side of partnership in joint projects, some of the 'Nordic values' (such as volunteering, feminism as a conceptual framework, strong environmentally-minded behavior, active citizenship position, media freedom, etc.) are not quite internalized and accepted yet. However, in the context of the rich and intensive cooperation in the sphere of civil society, there is a strong possibility that the ideological gap between Karelia and its northern neighbors has been diminishing. However, the welfare state model can hardly be expected to be imported due to the cumbersome nature of the Russian state apparatus, its conscious resistance, and the limited freedom of Karelia to be engaged in international relations.

Meri Kulmala argues that Sortavala, a small Russian town close to the Finnish frontier, is peripheral and transnational at the same time. This characteristic is very much applicable to Petrozavodsk as well, if seen from the federal perspective: even being a capital city, it is peripheral in relation to the government center (while within Karelia, we can observe the 'nesting peripherality' with Petrozavodsk put at the center as its capital.)

The Nordic presence (and Finnish in particular) is obviously felt in Petrozavodsk with its monuments and sculptures belonging to the 'contemporary' art and joked by the locals. The Europe's proximity is seen through the wide variety of ethnic food restaurants and cuisines, which is still a rarity in provincial Russia (which is everywhere beyond the limits of Moscow and St. Petersburg). The Finnish, Danish, Swedish and Norwegian languages are heard on Petrozavodsk streets more often than English. The European influence is heard in the Nordic languages spoken on the streets while Petrozavodsk State University opened its doors to embrace a department of Nordic languages, literature

and cultural studies. From repertoire of the local cinemas, museums and art centers (that screen independent European movies and exhibit Nordic artists – also, quite a rarity in the province!). And finally, good selection of consumer goods, from detergents to clothing with labels in Finnish, indicate a close proximity of the regional and national border, permeable by flows of money, goods and ideas. Does the relatively good permeability of the Russian-Finnish border mean that this border is ‘soft’ rather than ‘hard’? While political borders tend to be seen as ‘hard’, the soft ones are those “immaterial or mental boundaries that define who we are and who the others are” (Petter and Zaikov 2012: 67).

In my research that evokes the multidimensionality of borders, the ‘hard’ vs. ‘soft’ categories help better make sense of the processes and practices happening at the borderlines. Eder points that “the symbolic power inherent in soft borders helps to ‘naturalize’ hard borders, to produce the effect of taking borders for granted” (Eder 2006: 256). This ‘naturalization’ of the border is what has been argued against by the new generation of anthropologists who demonstrate, critically and empirically, the dynamics of the border and develop the processual understanding of the border, which highly enriches the border studies as an interdisciplinary approach. D. Fassin (2011), F. Barthes (1969) and others critiqued the use of the ‘border’ as denoting objective territorial limits that constitute discrete entities within them. Instead, the dynamic and multilevel nature of the border that includes geopolitical plane and social practices and social productions is expressed by the term ‘borderscape’ that can be traced back to A. Appadurai. As aptly put by C. Brambilla, the borderscape concept can be used as an “analytical angle to develop a wider understanding of the contemporary spatiality of politics, providing a political insight into critical border studies based on a multi-sited approach at different levels... Borderscapes are multidimensional and mobile

constructions, which tell us about geographies of actions and stories of the border place as well as about the itineraries of mobile subjects that cross the borders, at the intersection of experience and representation” (Brambilla 2015:2). The processual nature of the border can be interpreted as the act of bordering, that is, the “everyday construction of borders through ideology, discourses, political institutions, attitudes, and agency” (J. Laine and M. Tervonen, in Brambilla 2015:66).

The long history of cooperative relations with Finland which continued, although slowly, through the Soviet period, ensured a special beneficial position of Karelia in terms of a more open dialogue with the ‘west’ than their Russian neighbors, other Russians regions located farther from the national border. As put by one of my informants, a professor and a former chair of international relations at the Petrozavodsk State University in regards to the rich opportunities for exchange student programs and short visits for professors, “we are lucky here.” Gelman and Lankina in their study done in 2008, claimed that as early as the beginning of 1990s, the Karelian regional government and some municipalities were actively using their privileged locations to engage with foreigners on various levels, and not only with Finns. James Scott who has been closely and prolifically studying the Finnish-Russian borderland as seen from Finland, writes in his article that “to a major extent, the Finnish-Russian Karelian regional development agenda has been shaped by the problems experienced by the Russian side” including the problems of poverty, unemployment, crisis of municipal services and infrastructure, alcohol, etc. (Scott 2010:132). While I agree on the general framing and the direction of cooperative developmental programs that have been targeting generally put economic and social problems in Karelia, I argue that much of the “meat for the bones,” the specific content of these projects has been provided by the Nordic partners and based on their perspective on how to manage a project, and how to measure its success, which is not

always shared by the direct participants, the ‘beneficiaries’ of the project. Scott explains further, “Finish and Russian priorities do not necessarily coincide. Russian partners are usually interested in either long-term administrative cooperation or direct implementation of particular investment projects, while the EU and the Finnish partners prefer to provide assistance in the form of educational projects, consulting, research and advice on the implementation of reforms on the level of regional public sector” (2010, p.133). This difference in approaches and expectations was exactly what led to some degree of frustration on the part of the Kizhi island museum staff who had hoped to receive at least minimal equipment to deal with those tremendous amounts of waste that are hard to deal on an island. However, what they received was study trips to see how waste recycling is organized on the insular territories in the Nordic countries and advice on how to bargain for equipment with the government – the advice, sure enough, was coming from the Nordic context, not Russian, and therefore, was useless for implementing with rather different state machine. I would like to underline here that the museum staff neither see their Finnish colleagues as sponsors, nor they expected the equipment to come directly from the Nordic Council of Ministers’ headquarters: the humanitarian aid of the early 1990s became history, while there developed an expectation of equal partner relationship. The main hopes (unfortunately, unrealistic in this case) were anchored on the structural power of the project to provide a steady bridge between the Karelian government and the federal state apparatus (both of which imposed certain kinds of legal limitations on the waste handling options), local business actors who would be interested in partnership strongly enough to commit to the new scheme of waste removal and treatment and to purchase the necessary equipment, and, the last but not least, the organizing experience of the Nordic partners who would be able to manage the engaged stakeholders. However, the history of the failed modernization of the

Segezhprom factory attempted by Ikea Swedwood shows that perhaps, the power of the Nordic management model can be overestimated. The discrepancy is that this rational administrative approach that is well-suited for the Nordic welfare state, is still rather alien to the Karelian modes of 'getting things done' that are based on the networks and informal ways of solving problems that work well in the local context that is not always easily accessible to the outsiders.

The international cooperation within the Barents Euro Arctic Region is mostly concentrated on 'soft' topics such as culture, science and socially beneficial projects; an important instrument for spurring communication and cooperation across border is the creation of the common regional Barents identity. J. Scott sees this process as a (re)construction of familiarity between Finnish and Russian Karelia (Scott 2010) after the two became separated as a result of the Second World War agreements. The process of the region building benefits from the flexible understanding of borders developed by F. Barthes (1969) who suggested that permeable borderlands can be catalysts of hybridization of group identities, which is exactly what happened in Karelia whose citizens developed hybrid identities with different proportions of the 'mixed in ingredients' – local Karelian, general Russian and European constituents of identification, with a pinch of the sense of belonging to the Barents and the Baltic regions.

The issue of bordering and othering is inseparable from the understanding of the everyday processes occurring at the border. B. Porshnev, Russian social psychologist, believed that the major human driving force is not the pursuance of mutual understanding between groups but on the contrary, the pursuance of non-understanding, insulation, through which the sense of the common 'us' is preserved. Negativism in relation to 'them' stimulates contiguity in relation to 'us' (Porshnev 1979). In his research of insiders and outsiders within one territorial entity, A. Shipilov goes in

depth into the reasons for creation of oppositions between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and the reasons why the preservation of the common belonging so often necessitates the group opposition to others. Citing Ortega y Gasset’s book *Man and People* (1957), the author agrees that “the other can be both a friend and a foe, and that is why any society and any community means also dissociation, the friends and foes living together.” (Shipilov 2008:10). Later, in his 1983 work, Sack pointed to the psychological comfort and the sense of control over space that are brought about by demarcation of the limits and enfoldment. A similar conclusion is made in Marcussen et al. in relation to European nation-state identities, “apart from being defined by a set of shared ideas, the sense of community among members of a social group is accentuated by a sense of distinctiveness with regard to other social groups” (Marcussen et al. 2010:102). E. Helms’ article on construction of the Other and the multidimensionality of the other is illuminating. As she maintains, Western Europe was constructed by the Bosnian nationalism as a licentious and spiritless Other (the qualities opposite to the stereotyped Bosnian qualities). But at the same time, Western Europe posed as the universal symbol of the better life, which is very similar to A. Yurchak’s account on the West as a symbol of all that was good in consumerism-driven life as imagined by Soviet citizens who have never crosses the state border (Yurchak 2006).

The topic of waste as another symbolic domain is important for anthropology. Bruno Latour points that non-human objects, things (including ‘garbage’ and ‘waste’ as something that was discarded) take part in social relations and need to be recognized as agents not less active than people (Latour 2004:5?). In their article on the “dirty countryside” and the “littered city”, O. Brednikova and O. Tkach explore the critical potential of the discursive narratives of villagers and city dwellers about the garbage and

dealing with it in their daily practices, making ‘the invisible visible’ as far as the ‘garbage’ topic is the one that is readily avoided in the Russian cultural context.

Interestingly, in my research, the garbage proved to be a groundbreaking topic that informed some of the directions in which my research went such as exploration of imported and adapted foreign values, postsocialist consumption, and the garbage as an effective marker that divides private space from public, expressed through the ideas of social acceptability of garbage and use of recycling material – as a topic to speak about **or** as a taboo, **and** as physical substance to deal with. The attitudes among kindergarten educators as well as parents towards usage of used material like cardboard milk cans for children’s arts and crafts lessons, open a bigger perspective of the border between what is socially accepted as safe and what is regarded as dirty and disgusting, which goes back to illuminating study by Mary Douglas of purity and danger (1966).

In the project W.A.S.T.E., the garbage and dealing with it was the central topic and goal; the garbage became a sort of a litmus test indicating that a boundary was trespassed, social, or of personal nature. I find it particularly illuminating that the project brought together three themes, or aspects, which are garbage, children and money. This is an interesting symbiosis that was created for the purpose of the project; sometimes, it provoked the feelings of danger and discomfort (“We won’t sort waste with our children’s hands!”, “Don’t our kindergartens are so impoverished that they can’t buy unused paper and cardboard for crafts?”, etc.) which are clear indications of transgression of an invisible but salient social boundary.

The combination of garbage, children and money created a sensitive situation. First, the garbage is the main objective issue that the project set to deal with. Second, the children, as project participants, were a vulnerable target group. During the project, the discussions of whether it is beneficial for children to work with used material became

quite heated. Suggestions to do crafts with used material raised controversial responses on the parts of educators and parents, which ranged from “Kids working with dirty (i.e., dangerous) garbage, which is not acceptable” to “Kids getting educated about environmental challenges through safe and progressive hands-on experience and games with used material by giving the second life to it”. In this sense, we can see that the ideas about ordering through getting rid of garbage (or embracing it) differed among the representatives of the same rather homogenous society (which points to the nesting concepts of the garbage). And finally, the money in the project served as a major motivation for adults, members of homeowners’ associations and school/kindergarten principals that was supposed to motivate them to take on a burden of changing their behavior patterns and established routines to embrace the new practice of waste sorting.

In more than a year and a half that I spent in Petrozavodsk (with occasional travels around Karelia), I collected much more data than I could possibly process for this thesis – the realization that I kept resisting till the very end when it became clear that I am catastrophically running out of time (and page space). I will save for future development and publications the carefully collected interviews and surveys that I did with students and professors of the Petrozavodsk Pedagogical College, researching the project on youth entrepreneurship and the way in which the concept of entrepreneurship that was alien in the Soviet period is promoted among students, who nevertheless, do not get tangible results (or, simply put, enough money) to be motivated to continue their ‘joint ventures’ with the pros and peers. I must leave out the data collected during the insightful trip to Nevo Ecovill, an eco-settlement by the village of Ruskeala (although I did use some of the information shared with me about the local occupations, crafts and sheep breeding, and trade with Finns). At this point, I leave behind my further considerations about the budding transformations of local consumption patterns to what can be called a half-

conscious eco-consumerism. It gained momentum since the attempts of reorganization of the urban space (through recycling and installation of recycling containers, planting flowers at flowerbeds with the hands of citizens, *subbotniki*, etc.) became more consolidated, emanating from the joint efforts of the government and society. The multiple notes of my thoughts (and data) on the emergent youth environmental movements in Karelia and urban social sustainability with young people as its driving force, I put aside now – with a hope and resolution to come back to them, for new research, and new insights.

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