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**Between money and soul:
work, self and Soviet/Russian culturedness
in a newly privatized global factory**

Introduction

Memories of work past

Memory of a Russian specialist. ‘Work used to be from the *dusha* (soul) [...] now we work for *zaplata* (pay or salary),’ Svetlana¹ remarks with a distant look in her eyes. ‘[...] Because we were young...we enjoyed life’. Svetlana turns to idyllic reminiscing of marital domesticity, harmonious with everyday factory life: ‘My husband took work breaks from the plant to care for our daughter [Galia]. By the time I finished my shift, Galia was in bed sleeping. Husband and wife helped each other. [...] There was a real spirit of team-work and community [implying work and home]. ‘Dojeni and Rybnitsa were full of young people from all over the Soviet Union. All shared – it was not about selfish ownership. [...] There was talk of the two cities joining [to become “Dniestrov”] when the bridge was built – it was about *mechty* (dreams),’ Svetlana smiles. Then her voice saddens: ‘Who knows what will be now, only that it is good.’

Memory of a Moldovan ex-Komsomol leader. ‘It was such a powerful country [the Soviet Union],’ secretary Silvia proudly tells me. ‘Even though I had to write “the Soviet Union is the best country in the world...and praise father Lenin,” the truth was university was free and jobs and houses were guaranteed. Today I don’t know if I will have a job a half year from now.’ [...] Silvia then shifts to discussing Soviet ambitions to create a ‘Soviet people’. Everyone would be ethnically mixed, so ethnicity would not be important to people. ‘But it didn’t work.’ Silvia’s earnest voice betrays the idea’s magnetism. She remarks ‘yes, maybe Russians and Moldovans have different colour eyes and hair, [...] *but we share a lot in common*’ [emphasis mine]. Silvia blames nationalism for destroying the USSR, and the vision of a Soviet people. ‘I think it’s a great shame when the Soviet Union fell apart.’ Silvia was a pioneer leader and head of her Komsomol Communist Party youth organisation.

The setting

¹ Pseudonyms are employed throughout the paper to protect individual confidentiality. ‘Svetlana’ was considered a relatively privileged Russian *molodoi spetsialist* (young specialist) in Soviet days.

Moldova is a newly independent, multi-ethnic country divided by unresolved secessionist war (1991-92), bifurcated Soviet-era industrial development, and opposing ideas of national and ethnic identity. Here along Moldova's northern, industrialised *de facto* border with secessionist 'Transnistria' lies the Dojeni Cement Plant (Dojeni, Republic of Moldova).² The last and largest cement plant built by the Soviets, it is presently owned and operated by the Fortune-500, European transnational corporation (TNC), which I call 'European Cement Ltd.', or 'EuroCim' for short. EuroCim is a leading global conglomerate in cement production and sales.³ With the advent of foreign take-over in 1999, the Dojeni Cement Plant (or 'Ciment S.A.') was placed under the EuroCim România division, tying the plant to wealthier, neighbouring Romania, a country with which co-ethnic Moldovans have historically had 'sisterly,' albeit complicated relations.⁴

'We want a psychologist!'

8:00am and the summer sun is already streaming through the laboratory's large, lofty windows. It is my last day in the cement plant. I am sipping weak tea at a make-shift table, surrounded by flasks, chemicals and *kavas*, nervously preparing for my meeting with Xavier Dupont, the plant's French director. Lab engineer Svetlana, learning that I am meeting Mr. Dupont, requests that I tell him something. It seems important. She comes close to me: 'Tell Mr. Dupont we want a psychologist!' Her unabashed, matter-of-fact tone breaks the morning calm. Svetlana conveys her stress in having to learn foreign languages and new lab equipment. Later in the day I hear a similar remark from the trade union leader: workers are stressed; they no longer work *liber* (freely).⁵

All Ciment S.A. employees feel job insecurity. It is manifested in their temperaments, in their pace of work, and in their on/off-the-job physical and emotional well-being. Nervous tension is exhibited in workers' habitual pill popping and recurring stress-related hives. All

² 'Dojeni' is a pseudonym for the town's name.

³ The pseudonym 'EuroCim' is used in the paper for company confidentiality. The corporation I call 'EuroCim' is ranked as one of the world's 500 largest profit-earning companies. EuroCim's Romanian cement division is one of its most advanced, developed business units in Central East Europe. The company's Dojeni Cement Plant employs 420 people. Over 2,000 employees worked for the plant in the Soviet era. Three-quarters of employees have been made redundant since transnational take-over. (Note: The PhD thesis includes more sociological data on the social make-up of the plant.)

⁴ In the twentieth century, Moldova exchanged hands between Romania and Russia five times, before becoming independent in 1991. For Moldova's inhabitants, this jockeying of territory has meant that for almost a century they have been objects of assimilation, discrimination and nation-building at the hands of others. While part of Greater Romania in the inter-war period (1918-1940), Moldovans confronted pressure to embrace a pan-Romanian ideal. Romanian 'Latinity' represented civilization and Russian 'Slavism' backwardness (see King 2000: 41-59). While part of the Soviet Union (1943-1991), Moldovans underwent 48 years of Soviet 'moldovanization' programmes, aimed at creating a Moldovan people distinct from Romanians. While neither nation-building effort entirely succeeded, the result is a present-day Moldovan ethno-national identity oddly betwixt and between something 'Romanian' and something 'Russian'.

⁵ This requires a better understanding of worker anxiety, especially as some scholars suggest that post-socialist workers assert a considerable degree of control over the labour process, even amid restructuring (e.g. Clarke 1999; Dunn 2004; Morrison forthcoming). Is the anxiety due to a loss of control or downward mobility? Is the calling upon psychological stress a form of resistance (Ong 1987), or is it something else?

employees attribute anxiety to work in a global, private-market enterprise. Ciment S.A. is not the same plant it used to be. EuroCim expects technical advancement and behavioural change in its employees.⁶ Different social groups are privileged over others, unintentional or not. The past has empowered some and not others. Ethnic ‘Russians’⁷ and Moldovan rank-and-file workers are considered by EuroCim to be the two social groups whose behaviour is most in need of re-ordering. Both groups are considered ‘backward’ and ‘working like Soviets’ – in the words of advantaged Moldovan engineers/managers. Neither group speaks fluent literary Romanian, an on-the-job marker of status in the plant,⁸ just as neither works beyond shift requirements. The few ethnic ‘Russians’ remaining at Ciment S.A., outlasting nationalist conflict and EuroCim layoffs, have experienced immense change. They, along with rank-and-file workers, are some of the most resistant to EuroCim changes.

‘Russians’ in the history of Ciment S.A.’s social organization

The social organization of the Dojeni Cement Plant reflects past and present ethnic changes in the factory. Ethnic ‘Russians’ (inclusive of Ukrainians and Belarusians) dominate in scientific and technical positions, as in the laboratory and control room – two spaces discussed in this paper. A smaller fraction of ‘Russians’ occupies 1/5 of engineering and management posts. The majority of all Slavs (over 50 percent) are women.⁹ This is a significant change from Soviet days, when male and female Slavs dominated all top positions. They used to be the elites of Soviet heavy industry.¹⁰ Kinship ties among them and their kin cross-cut the plant, mainly in supervisory domains.¹¹ The decline in ‘Russian’ management is owing to 1980s Moldovan nationalism and the 1991-92 conflict with Transnistria, which drove away many non-native

⁶ EuroCim România top managers assert that the modernization process at Ciment S.A. so far is moving slower than it did in post-revolution Romania. The assumption is that development at Ciment S.A. should replicate the progress and development of Romanian plants.

⁷ At Ciment S.A., this category means ethnic Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians. In Moldova all are considered ‘Russians.’

⁸ See PhD thesis chapter four.

⁹ Most ‘Russians’ remaining in the plant are skilled, white-collar women. (There seems to be a connection between ‘Russian’ – woman – good job.) As such, it can be argued that there is a feminization of the ‘Russian’ workforce.

¹⁰ Russians/Ukrainians used to hold the majority of industrial jobs: ‘The result of Soviet policy was that two-thirds of Moldova’s Communist Party members were Russian or Ukrainian in the 1960s, as were *54 percent of industrial workers in 1977* – not a congenial situation for the indigenous Moldovans. Ethnic Russians even dominated local cultural life, since continuation of indigenous Romanian culture was forbidden’ (Kaufman 2001: 135). Kaufman here uses the work of Jonathan Eyal, 1990, ‘Moldavians,’ in *The nationalities question in the Soviet Union*, ed. Graham Smith. New York: Longman (p. 127). See also William Crowther, 1991, ‘The politics of mobilization: nationalism and reform in Soviet Moldavia,’ *Russian Review* 50, no. 2.

¹¹ One example is Ol’ga, an ethnic Russian technician from the Laboratory. Ol’ga’s husband works in the factory. He works on the limestone crusher in the quarry. Ol’ga and her husband are one of eight husband-wife pairs at the plant. ‘There used to be many, many more’, the Head of Human Resources recounts. Her own husband used to work at the plant, as did the Plant Manager’s wife. I also learned that the Lab chief’s deceased husband was a former Plant Manager. Today, the Lab chief’s daughter, Eugenia, works in Accounting. She got the job straight out of university, in summer 2005. However, the HR Head insists that it is rare for EuroCim, a foreign, private company, to hire from within families. Only in Soviet days was it a common practice to hire whole families (e.g. spouses and children) to work in the same factory.

Slavs.¹² Placed under EuroCim's România division in 1999, Ciment S.A. needed a common language (Romanian) among employees of its transnational division. EuroCim policies decreased the plant's number of non-Romanian speakers – mostly ethnic Russians/Ukrainians.¹³ Those 'Russians' who survived the lay-offs are today somewhere between 'working class' and 'middle class'. Their money earnings and technical skill put them in the latter category, but their lack of important cultural capital (namely the Romanian language), as discussed in other chapters, curtails their middle class strivings.

This paper gives attention to Ciment S.A.'s 'Russian' minorities, the one-time bearers of Soviet modernization, now at the bottom of the factory hierarchy of power. The ethnography details how European management tries to produce roumanophone, individualized, competitive subjects out of minorities and titular workers, based on the conglomerate's global-neoliberal vision of modernity. The paper looks at how workers from the laboratory and control room organize their everyday work practices, labour values, social identity and inter-group relations in response. Attention is also given to patterns of relating between 'Russians' and Moldovans, bearing in mind memories of relations past and competing ideas of moral/amoral economy, with which the chapter began.

Soul in the laboratory

Most of my time at Ciment S.A. was spent in the laboratory. I originally resisted visiting the laboratory; I was anxious to get into a 'real' down-and-dirty production site. However, the Production Director insisted I observe the laboratory to understand the production process. Within one week, I was invited to lab lunches of *borshch* and stuffed peppers with the all-female personnel, and welcomed to after-work evenings of *oaspeție* (hospitality). I quickly learned the sterile, 'white-collar' laboratory belies the true hazards of work with radioactive elements, dangerous equipment, and unrelenting quality-control testing. The laboratory may not 'produce' anything, but its experimentation affects the final product's composition, making its work integral to production (Braverman 1974 would agree). Tedious experiments on raw materials, rushed deliveries of clinker samples, and constant walkie-talkie communication between lab technicians and control-room machinists shows the dynamic, relational interface between production and quality assurance. Thanks to close lab relations, I could freely traverse through the lab's 'unauthorized access prohibited' thermo glass doors. It was the only production-related space in the plant where I did not need permission to enter.

Spatial and social organisation

The Laboratory's job is quality control. It monitors what goes into and what comes out of production. It either slows-down or sustains operators' production work. The laboratory is

¹² I am told factory 'Russians' who voluntarily left early obtained jobs in cement plants around Moscow. Some from the laboratory, for example, moved to the cement plant across the river in Rybnitsa (Transnistria).

¹³ Still, the dominant, preferred language among ethnic 'Russian' employees and many rank-and-file Moldovan workers remains Russian (mixed with the rural Moldovan dialect, in the case of manual-labour Moldovans).

unique in that it is the only all-female Department at Ciment S.A. Other sectors that once employed large numbers of women are now male dominated (recall the repair hall in chapter three). Global capital's outsourcing and profit-oriented downsizing made redundant all women occupying unqualified or semi-skilled industrial jobs. Post-Fordism in heavy industry genders work, but in the direction of masculinisation, not feminisation (perhaps *pace* Harvey 1989, who does not make a light/heavy industry distinction in predicting global capital's shift to cheap, compliant female labour).¹⁴ The laboratory, which under socialism occupied the entire four-storey Administration Building, now comprises only $\frac{3}{4}$ of the second floor. Today only ten lab technicians, two quality engineers, and one supervisory chief make up the laboratory workforce. The technicians run experiments on finished products and raw materials, while the engineers oversee experiment accuracy. The latter have a higher skill and pay status than the former.

The Laboratory is spatially split along job lines, with the quality-control engineers occupying two rooms on the northern side of the corridor, while the technicians occupy two rooms on the southern side. The most dangerous machinery and radioactive elements are housed with the latter. The lab chief has her own office, adjoining the quality-control space. In reality there is a lot of movement between the two rooms – but it is the engineers who move freest. The technicians rarely venture over to the engineers' side, unless in need of assistance. The spatial and job-status differences presuppose and reproduce social divides in the lab. The lab women use their short-form names with each other (e.g. informal 'Sveta' instead of formal 'Svetlana Petrovna'), a Russian practice that signifies closeness, but there is a recognised hierarchy among them. When the lab ladies eat lunch, they eat only on their designated sides – with the quality-control women eating exclusively together. The latter take a leisurely, (on average) 40-minute lunch, gossiping about their husbands and work, while exchanging recipes and opinions on CIS politics. They communally divide up their dishes of *shchi* (cabbage soup), *kasha* (porridge) and pork *kotleta*, cooked at home and reheated on lab Bunsen burners. Post-meal tea and biscuits are shared with fellow kin (like the Lab Chief's daughter, Eugenia, from Accounting) and 'Russian' engineers, joining the scientists from other departments in the Administration Building. The lab technicians, on the other hand, rarely eat together. Their lunch-breaks, short and quick, are taken alone, as one technician must always be running a *proba* (experiment or test) on the clinker, slag, gypsum, or cement. The technicians' pay rate depends on the pace and accuracy of their experiments. Their labour is tedious. (Even I, with my limited chemistry background, could follow the experiments and make-out the basic chemical equations.) They work gruelling twelve-hour, around-the-clock shifts (8:00 to 20:00 or 20:00 to 8:00), and whereas the lab engineers work eight-hour shifts (8:00 to 16:00). The former hardly domesticate their work space in comparison to the latter group, who spend less time at work. The engineers live their side of the laboratory with flowers and green leafy plants from home (one medicinally edible), a make-shift food pantry, and tea table for socializing (emblematic of femininity). A box of kittens once came to work, meowing over the noise of boiling, stove-top flasks.

The hierarchy also extends beyond working hours. The quality engineers are best friends on and off the job. All three (including lab chief) have *dachas* (country farm cottages) – a

¹⁴ It is important to make the distinction between global capital's feminized *light* industry (see for example, Freeman 2000, Lee 1998, Salzinger 2003) and masculinised *heavy* industry.

Russian custom among the urban privileged – next to one another, within shouting distance in the same village. Their famous village (Saharna), just 10 kilometres from Dojeni, is home to the renown Moldovan monastery, *Manastirea Saharna*, attracting Orthodox pilgrims from near and far. Spring and summer weekends are usually spent at the scientists’ rustic, river-side dachas, quietly tucked away from any hustle and bustle. They sow, harvest and relax in their gardens. Everything from strawberry patches to pear trees abound. The engineers rarely mix with lab technicians outside of work (except, for example, weddings or trade-union picnics). They do not even cross paths with the one Russian technician (Ol’ga) owning a dacha in the same village. Rarely do lab engineers work on weekends. This is in contrast to upwardly mobile, Moldovan engineers and managers, many of whom forsake family and home for weekend work at the plant.

Technicians work in pairs of two, the same pair every shift. ‘Pairs’ choose one another at the start of each year – usually without change. Most technicians are best friends with their ‘pair’, spending quality time outside of work. For example, Ol’ga’s home photos are filled birthday scenes of her family celebrating with ‘pair’ Irina and her husband. Likewise, it is not unusual to find technician Ol’ga in Irina’s home. Irina’s teenage children casually address Ol’ga as ‘*tetya Olya*’ (Aunt Olya), representing the closeness and fictive kin relations (e.g. of godchild-godparent) typically shared between workers’ families. One evening I was at Irina’s place, coaching her daughter’s English, when Ol’ga stopped by unannounced on the way to the plant. Irina prepares Ol’ga a quick tea, spiced with sweet, strong liquor before starting her night shift. Irina unscrews a liquor bottle especially for Ol’ga, an act revealing the closeness of their relationship beyond the factory gates.

An enclave of Russianness

‘It’s all Russian here’ (*totu-i rusesc aici*), is how an informant describes the laboratory. The laboratory is one of the few enclaves of Russianness remaining at Ciment S.A. Most other sectors are devoid of Russianness since EuroCim România’s 1999 takeover. Nowadays the laboratory is the only factory space where all things Russian still dominate. It is the one department lacking a supply of qualified, native-speaking ethnic Moldovans to replace ‘Russians,’ who the Soviets channelled into scientific vocations (Kaufman 2001).¹⁵ Symbols of ‘Slavdom’ are everywhere, from pictorial calendars of Ukrainian Odessa, to an old, unused silver *samovar* (traditional Russian coffee pot) decorating a quiet corner. Practically all objects, from test-samples to solution labels, and signs are written in Russian Cyrillic (like ‘лаборатория’ at the entry), atypical of other shop floors. Romanian is only found on official EuroCim signs, like employees’ ‘personal development’ targets, (ironically) incomprehensible to them and usually

¹⁵ For example, in 1977 ‘Russians’ accounted for 54 percent of industrial workers, 57 percent of leadership posts, and 68 percent of those employed in the sciences (Kaufman 2001: 138). Discuss more the relationship between Soviet modernity, morality and ethnicity. Relate this to why most lab scientists are ‘Russian.’ The reason probably relates to Soviet ideology, which empowered Russians with the ‘moral destiny’ to lead the USSR’s social-economic development (e.g. see Grant 1995, Hirsch 2005, Payne 2001, Slezkine 1994). Morality and modernization went hand-in-hand in the Soviet Union. For as Stephen Kotkin (1999) writes, Stalinist modernization was about proving not only the Soviet Union’s economic superiority, but also socialism’s moral superiority over capitalism.

ignored. Objects and articles are classified as personifying ‘the lab’ (us) or ‘EuroCim’ (them). The eye-catching crimson word ‘объявления’ (*ob”iavlennia* – announcements) tops the lab’s hallway notice-board, which is filled with Russian documents, EuroCim (Romanian-language) audit notices, ‘Leaders for Tomorrow’ promotional material, and a congenial (non-smiling) lab-team photo. The point behind Russian objects and words is that every Moldovan, no matter his status (whether Production Chief or secretary), knows that he must speak Russian upon entering the laboratory.

The laboratory women are a mixed group of ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians and Moldovans. Of the nine women, seven are ethnic ‘Slav’ (Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian or mixed) and two ethnic Moldovan. All are middle-aged (35-50 years old), with the exception of one newly hired, young Moldovan technician. The Laboratory Chief and two quality engineers are Russian. The working language of the lab is Russian – whether shift-change meeting or tea time.¹⁶ With EuroCim’s 1999 takeover, all official plant notices and work-manual instructions have changed to the Division’s operating language of Romanian. The Lab Chief is the only Slav with communicable Romanian, but resolutely prefers Russian. Factory rumour has it that the laboratory women were the most hostile to the language change-over. Their resistance to learning Romanian requires all official EuroCim documents and technical instructions to be coupled with ‘informal’ (non-company-stamped) Russian translations.

The reliance on Russian – as a common, uniting language in the lab – relates, I believe, to the Soviet value of *kul’turnost* (‘culturedness’, ‘civility’ or ‘being civilized’), frequently mentioned by my informants¹⁷, and by regional scholars, as something that has long dictated urban inter-group relating (see Patico 2005). As in other heavy industrial plants in post-Soviet Moldova, *kul’turnost* is preserved in the laboratory through workplace language and social habits. Russian speaking and other *kul’turnyi* (‘cultured’) behaviour are considered moral and *dushevnyi* (soulful) (cf. Pesmen 2000: 111).¹⁸ Slavs have little incentive to learn Romanian – a language to which they attach little value or respect.

Lab employees were supposed to be learning Romanian (‘priority A – imperative’ on their 2005 ‘personal development’ goal sheet). I observed little progress during my first half year in the plant.¹⁹ Workers’ vocabulary remained limited to *oleacă* (a little), *făină* (‘flour’ or cement powder), and raw materials. This was problematic when, for instance, a EuroCim România lab visit turned ‘Tower of Babel.’ ‘They [technicians] could not understand anything the Romanian delegates were saying,’ one witness says. On-going language apathy turned to outright anxiety in autumn 2006, when EuroCim installed a Quality Control Manager from Romania to run the

¹⁶ This meant that I was forced to speak Russian in the lab, despite most of Ciment S.A. being Romanian speaking. This worked to my advantage, though, as I was the first ‘Western’ visitor to the plant knowing basic Russian. This helped me to earn trust with the plant’s minority Russians, accustomed to Romanian and English-speaking visitors uninterested in Russian language/culture.

¹⁷ In Romanian with the adjectives *civilizat* (civilized) or *politicos* (politeness).

¹⁸ Explore works on morality and Soviet industry. Does any author discuss the importance of *kul’turnyi* behavior to industrial labour relations?

¹⁹ Speaking Romanian is also important for EuroCim laboratory trainings in Romania. Eugenia tells me the lab ladies need to study Romanian, but they are so tired after work. They have house chores and *dacha* gardens to tend to.

laboratory (autumn 2005-2008). Lab Chief Tat'iana now must speak Romanian with her foreign boss. In his presence, she listens carefully to instructions and answers dutifully in mediocre Romanian. She turns immediately back to Russian as soon as he is gone.²⁰ The senior-ranking lab ladies now spend their summers in intensive Romanian classes, instead of on the beach in Odessa. Gripping about no holiday, they fail to recognise that EuroCim provided classes only to some employees and not others, and count themselves fortunate.

Lower-ranking lab technician Ol'ga, when I asked her about the Romanian classes I assumed the entire lab was taking, responded with disappointment: 'no, there is no Romanian for me; it's not for us *rabotniki* (manual workers).' Ol'ga, a proud Russian who endured the horrors of Chernobyl district, sees an emerging class distinction, based on language, made between her and the other lab engineers.²¹ She and her Slav superiors once collectively resisted EuroCim's new ethnicized (Romanian) categories of classification (Bourdieu 1984, 1986).²² Powerless to change the categories, reinforced by new on-site Romanian management, Slav lab workers nervously yield to, or anxiously fret over, EuroCim's language-learning demands. '[...] They made so much noise in the beginning [...],' a Moldovan secretary says of the lab engineers. 'Then they saw their good salaries, and they became silent [...] They started learning Romanian.' Even though there is increased pressure for all Slav employees to know Romanian, there is unequal access to, and unequal incentive for language learning.²³ Workers like Ol'ga fear that EuroCim considers manual labour more replaceable than indispensable to invest in its skills (read: Romanian language). Whether true or not, language differentials may set in motion new social divisions among a formerly connected group of minority Slavs. It is a division not just between white and blue-collar workers – as all lab employees are, in a sense, 'white-collar' – but a division between those who can potentially be 'middle-class' and those who cannot.²⁴

²⁰ EuroCim is, in a way, indirectly engaging in nation-building attempts to make 'citizens' speak the official language of their country (*limbă de stat* or Romanian/Moldovan) – something Moldovan state institutions have failed to do.

²¹ Russian employees like Ol'ga consider the Romanian language key to preserving their work positions. Based on how she talks about the past, I do not think Ol'ga always considered herself to be a 'simple worker.' (Discuss 'Russian' solidarity with a history of Russian social relations during the socialist and the 1991-1999 'transition' period.)

²² For Bourdieu the class struggle is a contest over classificatory schemas. Note: this is what rank-and-file ethnic Moldovan labor is presently resisting, as discussed in chapter three.

²³ Changing goals: A year later (May 2006) I noticed the laboratory goals in the domain of 'personal development' included studying English and two computer programs (EXCEL and CECIL). Learning *limbă română* (Romanian) is no longer one of the goals. Surprisingly, this changes again. Two months later, senior-ranking Slavs are made to take daily Romanian-language classes. They blame the plant's French Director (a self-taught Romanian-speaker) for this policy. He wants them to know Romanian, because he learned Romanian.

²⁴ I need to address how a 'middle class' lifestyle (*meshchanstvo* or a petty-bourgeois lifestyle) was considered spiritually depraved under socialism (see Dunham 1990: 17-19 and Pesmen 2000: 48). Pesmen's Russian informants in the wake of transition still consider things *meshchanstvo* deficient. My lab informants, however, regard it with a mix of anxiety and desire. TNC EuroCim makes *meshchanstvo* attractive through business travel, performance-related promotions, and regular interactions with visiting European specialists. (Pesmen's [2000] Siberian informants did not have the same opportunities for transnational interaction and travel.)

Labour, goals and the self²⁵

Surveying the technician lab room, at first glance, I notice signs everywhere about objectives and safety. In fact, four of the six signs on the window-wall in front of my work desk are about objectives and safety goals.

Global capital assumes that autonomy, self-reliance and goal-orientation are innate or learnable attributes of human beings.²⁶ Work is celebrated as a form of self-fulfilment (or ‘self-actualization’, Bear forthcoming). Training programmes, like (Fortune-500) EuroCim’s ‘Safety at Home’ or ‘Leaders for Tomorrow’ (see chapter three on LFT), encourage worker empowerment and participation (see similar example in Dunn 2004: 20-21). Designed in Paris skyscrapers, and translated and disseminated from elite Bucharest headquarters, such programmes are predicated on Western ideas of work and personhood. They are based on a neoliberal ideal of privatized responsibility (or individual self-discipline). They arrive in a post-socialist context where production and personhood were once organised differently. In socialist Eastern Europe, ‘people were very visibly not entirely autonomous’ (2004: 20-21, see also 7), writes anthropologist Elizabeth Dunn. Based on fieldwork in privatised Polish industry, Dunn finds workers fight to reclaim values that sustain a moral vision of solidarity, associated with the socialist past, amid individualising pressures.²⁷

While I observed similar resistance at Ciment S.A., particularly in the laboratory (see also chapter three on manual labour), I want to be cautious in assuming that neoliberal, capitalist notions of self and work are in complete opposition to Soviet ideas. The differences and similarities must be teased out, something Dunn 2004 neglects. My starting point, following Collier et al. 2006, is that neoliberalism²⁸ should not be considered a hegemonic, *ex nihilo*, predictable, coherent project (*pace* Harvey 2005 and perhaps Comaroff and Comaroff 2001). As my informant Silvia intimates, EuroCim work mottos, like ‘let’s make today better than yesterday and tomorrow better than today’ (*să facem azi mai bine decât ieri □ i mâine mai bine decât azi*), replicate exact Soviet Komsomol (youth Communist Party) sayings and propaganda (*zavtra budet luchshe [...]*). ‘It’s not new to us!’ Silvia exclaims. Silvia believes the USSR prepared her, in a way, for the capitalist world – which is all about success and being ‘better

²⁵ The self is always a gendered self. Explore more the relationship between female personhood (the gendered self), goals (e.g. family or work), and the construction of domesticity and motherhood (see 13/02/06 fieldnotes). My informants believe that TNC EuroCim champions the idea that a woman’s primary sense of self-fulfilment should come from work and not home. In other words, home should be subordinated to work. My informants believe that work and home (as fulfilment) were more interconnected under socialism. Countless discussions with the lab ladies corroborate the findings of Dunn 2004 and Westwood 1985 on how ‘true womanhood’ lies in domestic motherhood. It is a gender ideology created and reinforced among the ‘Russian’ woman in the laboratory workplace, as they regularly celebrate newborn children/grandchildren and share baby photos.

²⁶ As evidence on goal-orientation, recall a sign hanging in the hallway of the lab reading (in Romanian): ‘The EuroCim Way – principles of action’: 1. Making our people successful (expecting people to give their best, leading by example, achieving greater results through teamwork) 2. Focusing on performance improvement (resulting from the actions of all, making performance a daily commitment, sharing systems and tools) 3. Within a multi-local organization. And this is all to build its own culture of performance.’

²⁷ However, Dunn 2004 does not seem to go into much detail on socialist types of personhood.

²⁸ David Harvey, in *A brief history of neoliberalism* (2005) defines neoliberalism as a monolithic project that seeks to ‘re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites.’ This definition is well-critiqued by Collier et al. 2006.

tomorrow than today'. Both the communist command economy of yesterday (see Kotkin 1995) and the neoliberal, free-market economy of today are fixated on goal-orientation and the future. The main difference is the former was production-led, while the latter is consumption-led. One emphasizes the making of personhood through productive labour, while the other through consumption. Another difference between the two economic systems is the place of 'the self' – or more specifically, how the self should *feel* – in relation to work and community.

Industrial labour was about achieving goals under socialism. Soviet Five Year Plans (*piatiletka*) were about the economic and moral advancement of state and society. Heavy labour was valued for its part in 'catching and overtaking the capitalists' (Kotkin 1995: 14-16, 29, 42, 123). Individual workers were singled out for their record-setting, labour feats, like legendary Donbas miner Aleksei Stakhanov. Achieving individuals, like Stakhanov, were valued in the Soviet command economy, just as in today's market economy.²⁹ My factory informants spoke proudly of their socialist-era labour transforming landscapes and livelihoods. They pointed to how their participation in factory construction renewed rocky, fallow land and enabled their families' urbanisation.³⁰ Informants' labour acquired value in relation to their families and homeland (to which is linked 'soul' or *dusha*).³¹ Working for the good of the latter made their labour virtuous and sacrificial-like.³² Nowadays my informants at Ciment S.A. frequently complain about not knowing to what end they work. One accountant protests: 'I write all these reports. But where do they go? [...]' Employees once laboured for the betterment of things they could see – family life, factory 'collective' and welfare state (subjects always mentioned in employees' narratives of work past.)³³ However, now employees work for intangible, transnational (read: soulless) corporation.³⁴

²⁹ There was also a developed sense of 'the self' in the Soviet Union, although not assumed to be individualistic (cf. Pesmen 2000, Steinberg 2002). The self and individual was only really of value in relation to 'the collective' (e.g. work-group, family, nation). The difference between the Soviet 'new man' of the past and the 'neoliberal man' of the present is that the former was an individual part of a collective, whereas the latter works unattached (unfettered by kith and kin). [Beware of confusing 'the self' with 'the individual'. Here I am using them interchangeably. Bear in mind Russian meanings/translations of 'self', 'person' and 'individual'.]

³⁰ This is mainly through securing newly-built apartments and residency permits in town. Factory labour helped make this possible.

³¹ The relationship between homeland and *dusha*, as it relates to migration, is developed in chapter seven of my PhD thesis.

³² Visibility of things built was important, in that it was proof of alleged Soviet superiority and morality. However, today there may be a new visibility of labour, which is about individuality and discipline, not community and morality. Perhaps I should also explore how relations of moral reciprocity (even with 'the state') (cf. Pesmen 2000) and groundedness in homeland moralized labour? To my surprise, my informants never spoke of their socialist-era labour as 'sacrifice' (*sacrificiu* or *jertfă*).

³³ See Mark D. Steinberg. 2002. *Proletarian Imagination: Self, Modernity, and the Sacred in Russia, 1910-1925*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. See also *ibid*, 1992, *Moral Communities: The Culture of Class Relations in the Russian Printing Industry, 1867-1907*. Berkeley: California UP. *Ibid* and Stephen Frank (eds). 1994. *Cultures in Flux: Lower Class Values, Practices and Resistance in Late Imperial Russia*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP. In addition, read Sheila Fitzpatrick. 2005. *Tear off the masks: identity and imposture in twentieth-century Russia*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP (e.g. Ch 1: Becoming Soviet, Ch. 2: the Bolshevik invention of class). Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Ronald Grigor Suny (eds). 1994. *Making workers Soviet: power, class and identity*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP

³⁴ Review Dojeni Cement Plant Soviet scrapbook/archive for evidence.

EuroCim teaches *angaja* (formal employees) to work for ‘the client’, salary and self-satisfaction.³⁵ Work and goal-attainment are about feeling good about oneself (self-gratification) (see EuroCim pamphlets).³⁶ Work is about being unfettered by kith and kin. This way of valuing labour is modelled by foreign management at Ciment S.A. Half of all foreign managers have left behind families in Romania and France for job promotions in Moldova, America and soon China. Their weekends and long hours at the plant (e.g. 8:00 to 21:00) are meant to reach targets, satisfying to self. This sacrifice to the self (to become ‘a Lafargist’) – a self connected to global flows, but disembedded from communal ties – may be the essence of an idealised ‘neoliberal person’ aspiring to a middle-class identity. However, this ‘sacrifice to self’ runs counter to long-held Soviet notions of the person and work. It is a source of anxiety for most workers at Ciment S.A.³⁷

**Add here a table comparing and contrasting neoliberal and Soviets ideas of ‘the self’ and ‘work’*

Visible/invisible labour³⁸

A sign hanging in the hallway of the lab reads (in Romanian): ‘The EuroCim Way – principles of action’: 1. Making our people successful (expecting people to give their best, leading by example, achieving greater results through teamwork) 2. Focusing on performance improvement (resulting from the actions of all, making performance a daily commitment, sharing systems and tools) 3. Within a multi-local organization. And this is all to build its own culture of performance.’

A working day in the life of the laboratory begins with a shift change meeting (7:45am) in the technician room. Present are four technicians – two ending and two beginning the twelve-hour shift. Lab chief Tat’iana conducts the short meeting, all in Russian, sitting at a large desk, surrounded by four attentive, sometimes weary-eyed workers. Topics discussed range from upcoming audit preparation to problems in recording experiment results. By 8:00 the new shift has changed into green work bibs. (Usually only the quality engineers wear white lab coats). Each technician is at her isolated work spot – computer, writing desk, or lab countertop. Rarely do technicians work together. Technician Ol’ga (18 years employed at Dojeni Cement Plant) offers to take me through her work routine of monitoring materials. She is responsible for running tests on clinker and cement product every 60 minutes (or faster). This means she repeats the same task every hour, twelve times a day. Samples of raw materials (e.g. slag, gypsum, red

³⁵ Teaching ‘self-gratification’ (‘to feel good about oneself’) through goal attainment is also, I believe, a way for EuroCim to discipline and secure labour’s cooperation.

³⁶ See examples from EuroCim ‘Leaders for Tomorrow’ (LFT) pamphlets

³⁷ It is also a source of anxiety to foreign managers. Although they consider the sacrifice worthwhile, it has bearing on their physical/emotional well-being.

³⁸ Develop the idea that *different types of labour/s* (e.g. lab technician versus quality scientist) construct different identities. Also bear in mind how people learn to be ‘ethnic’ or ‘individualistic’, for example, through their particular, everyday work practices. Add a discussion on how employee insecurity affects workers’ identities.

slurry) are analysed only twice a week.³⁹ Ol'ga pulls out a EuroCim ring-bound folder to show me a precise description (in Romanian) of 'methods'.⁴⁰ She guides me to a bucket of (pre-silo) ground cement. Ol'ga must fetch it herself every hour from the nearby cement mill. (This is the only time Ol'ga moves beyond the laboratory walls.) She piles cement granules onto scrap paper, and then carefully spoons out thirty grams or so onto a modern, digital scale. This bit of powdery cement makes its way into a beaker, mixing with several chemicals. Meanwhile, a warm clinker sample arrives, fresh out of the kiln, delivered in a tall, narrow aluminium pail by an (always male, often 'Russian') engineer. Pleasantries are exchanged in Russian between the clinker-carrying engineer and Ol'ga. Ol'ga quickly shifts to running a test on the clinker, which involves baking a handful of the knobbly, coal-looking substance in a pie-shaped pan in a small electrical oven. Returning to her beaker of cement powder, Ol'ga takes notes of the amount of chemical solution added at each stage. She then inserts these figures into an equation to calculate the cement's chemical properties. Ol'ga grabs the chunky calculator on the desk for computation. She records the results in a large-ruled journal (and on the computer). Ol'ga must quickly relay by walkie-talkie the experiment results to the control-room's cement mill operator (usually a woman, ethnic Russian). 'We are working fast [...]' (*my rabotaem bistro*), I hear Ol'ga assure the operator on walkie-talkie. I understand there is much pressure between the technicians and control-room operators. Cement production can be slowed without timely communication. Ol'ga's subordinate status vis-a-vis the operator ('Galina Petrovna') is evident through Ol'ga's use of respectful patronymics with the operator.

As Ol'ga finishes one round of *proba* (testing) and begins another, her colleague ('pair') Irina works on two heavy machines (one of which uses radioactive elements to break-down materials' chemical composition.) Irina and Ol'ga barely have time for breaks, let alone a leisurely, social tea. Occasionally they talk to one other, when doing experiments on different sides of the same room, but often they are stressed and concentrated on their own tasks. Apples or pears from Ol'ga's dacha are munched between tasks. Lunch is eaten hurriedly. There can be no interruption in experiments, or production is slowed. Ol'ga once complained that she was working two weeks straight without a free day, as Irina was on summer holiday, another technician on maternity leave, and another ill. (Ol'ga blames the downsized labour force.) Under

³⁹ The raw material *kek/chec* (clay or red slurry) is received from Ukraine by train, but 'the others [raw materials] are ours' (meaning from Moldova).

⁴⁰ The EuroCim 'work instruction' folder spells out the following work responsibilities for the lab technicians: 1. Results need to be transmitted to the control room. 2. You need to do analyses in a timely and correct manner 3. You need to [...] *duce raspundere deplina pentru exploatarea corecta a utilajui*. 4. You need to [...] *raspunde de curative permanenta a echipamentil or pe care le utilizeaza in timpul efectuarii incercarilor*. Note the words '*responsabilitati de munca si pentru utilaj*' (responsibilities for work and for equipment). This signals the high importance EuroCim places on workers relations to their machines and equipment. (Also recall September 2007 conversation with Plant Manager on manual labour not respecting new machines: 'When something is new you have to take care of it [...] not break it.')

This can open the door to a discussion on how machines as objects have agency. They create new forms and beings of labour.

such circumstances, it is no wonder that employees are stressed and say they want EuroCim to hire them psychologist (recall Svetlana in the introduction).

Also emotionally destabilizing was the way in which laboratory space and habits were constantly changing. New machines and regulations turned up every season. Hard-hat rules went into effect even for technicians intermittently *la teritoriu* (in production space) (the Romanian management rule: either hard hat or hand-written reprimand). Gone just two weeks in summer 2006, I returned to find freshly plastered signs about ‘safety first’ and ‘a culture of performance’ hanging everywhere.⁴¹ For workers like technician Ol’ga, ‘making performance a daily commitment’ simply means increased pressure to do her job faster and better – knowing her pay is contingent upon quantity and quality.⁴² Technicians feel the way they do their job is being monitored by EuroCim (similar to what Dunn 2004 found among TNC baby-food line-workers). The recent addition of brand-new computers and advanced equipment (replacing Soviet-era machinery) not only gave the laboratory a European make-over –transforming it to ‘European standards’, in a manager’s proud words – but also had the affect of making technicians’ labour more visible. The experiments and measurements of technicians can now be recorded on print-outs. What one does, and does not do, is made visible through technology. Global capital wants the labour of the individual (not just shop floor/collective, as under socialism)⁴³ to be made calculable, and thus accountable.⁴⁴ Technicians embody this calculability in their self-conscious choices to cut short lunch or to not talk to a colleague (or to me) wanting to start up conversation during a work task. Calculability thus becomes a form of labour (self)discipline. The stress in technicians’ eyes – stress that intensified during my years in the plant (observed even during September 2007 visit) – may be what Trade Union leader Valeria meant about employees no longer ‘working *liber* (freely).’⁴⁵

Calculability seems to penetrate some workers more than others. Like the lab technicians, the quality engineers appeased capital’s expectations placed upon them (e.g. working longer

⁴¹ There was also a new sign posted (June 2006) warning that those without permission from the lab chief cannot pass through the laboratory.

⁴² See Dunn 2004: 7 on how the introduction of new quality control measures change labour discipline.

⁴³ See the Dojeni Cement Plant 1980s archive album celebrating shop floor accomplishments. Individuals in the album are presented as leaders (‘beacons’) of the shop floor. However, their work feats are not achievements in and of themselves (read: for self-fulfilment), but accomplishments for the good of the plant and the advancement of the Soviet state. This raises the question of what were Soviet ideas of the ‘individual’, and the individual’s relation to work.

⁴⁴ Add literature on how technology controls bodies and behaviours, and the relationship between global capital and ‘transparency.’ See ‘test evaluation’ (16 May 2006 fieldnotes) for an example of a discursive method for re-educating employees in new work ideas. Dunn 2004: 5 also discusses the ‘re-education’ of managers and employees to fit a Western model.

⁴⁵ The deskilling of white-collar labour? (see Braverman 1974): ‘Take for instance Doamna Sveta – she only knows the tasks she is supposed to do. Nothing else!’ Eugenia complains about the company. Eugenia insists it was different in Soviet times. Workers could learn new skills and advance.

winter hours, submitting to Romanian classes). However, the latter appeared to have more scope to subvert management discipline than the former.

A new machine. Sipping tea together after lunch, Svetlana and Tat'iana sheepishly ask if I can help them with something tomorrow. It has to do with language. I say 'yes,' between bites of gooey *Bucuria* ('Joy') chocolate. It turns out the lab received a new machine – a beige and blue-trimmed boxy desk-top contraption. Svetlana and Tat'iana need to learn how to use it, as senior lab chiefs, but the instructions only come in English. Their short, intensive English class with EuroCim was not for translating complicated instructions. [...] Next morning I report for my task. I am handed (daunting) scientific instructions for conducting 'Rio Solutions'. I learn it is a new, technical process 'for measuring.' I pull out my Russian dictionary and work side-by-side Svetlana. We manage to translate two paragraphs, when finally I confess the technical lingo is beyond my secondary-school chemistry. I ask why a Russian version of instructions was not provided. 'They don't want to (*oni ne hotiat*),' Svetlana said tilting her head upwards towards management's third floor. The machine lay dormant for almost a year.

The engineers escaped, at least for awhile, learning a new machine that could discipline their job-time routines. The engineers seem 'invisible' in a way the technicians are not. Their 'invisibility' gives them control over the labour process, unlike the visible, assessable technicians. Invisibility allows for everyday activities like tea breaks – moments of sociality that may be incipient acts of resistance against individualizing measures, seeking to make labour 'visible' and calculable. The tea breaks (*vis-a-vis* the labour process) may also function to reinforce processes of social group identity (de)formation.

Tea time ('come, let's drink a tea')

'We have our own families at home, but at work we are each others' family.' [...] 'The plant is our life [...] It is a place where we laugh, we cry' [...] 'Most of the hours of our days are spent at the plant, so of course we want to have close relations with those we work with.' (Eugenia)

A group of Moldovan housewives, sitting around a kitchen table, once joked with me that being Russian is to drink tea, singling out Nadia, the lone Russian, 'see, *rusoica* (a Russian) drinking tea', while their mugs brimmed with coffee. Stereotype or not, no other social group at Ciment S.A. was so habitual in its communal tea breaks than the female Russian lab scientists. Like clockwork, tea breaks happened every day at 9:00, lasting half of an hour, followed by a post-lunch tea around 13:30, and afternoon tea after 16:00.⁴⁶ In addition to tea-time, there were regular tea parties for birthdays and name-days. Russian Orthodox names-days are occasions when colleagues get together to drink/eat to a friend whose name matches the Saint's day. On St. Valentine's Day (14 February 2006), for example, all men and women named Valentin/Valentina are honoured. On this day the laboratory attracted a half dozen women (and one 'Valentina') for tea and cake. All 'Russians', including one ex-employee turned contractor, showed up. No matter the occasion, ordinary or special, tea was always drunk lukewarm, weak and sweet, with a spoonful of sugar, honey or *varen'e* (fruit preserves) stirred in, with an occasional lemon slice. I

⁴⁶ Afternoon tea was sometimes skipped during the shorter-working summer months.

discovered the bitter, vulnerable and sweet moments of workers' lives came out most poignantly over communal tea time. When a close colleague impromptu says 'come, let's drink a tea' ('*hai să bem un ceai*' in Romanian or '*davai pit' chai*' in Russian), it really means 'come, let's sit down and open up.' This is when emotion and *dusha* (soul) is shared.

It is said that the essence of the *russskaya dusha* (Russian soul) is 'suffering for others, compassion, empathy [...]' (Pesmen 2000: 54).⁴⁷ Dale Pesmen's ethnographic, critical appraisal of the 'Russian soul' found that most informants believe: 'Soul [is] connected to warmth, stability, support and moral behaviour' (ibid: 58).⁴⁸ To be a *dushevnyi* (soulful) person is to concern oneself with others (55). This is what the act of tea-drinking is – a time to drink and feel the bitterness and sweetness of others. It is when Ivana worries about her son's university placement and Tat'iana celebrates the birth of her second granddaughter. It is when Eugenia nervously chats with her long-distance Romanian-EuroCim boyfriend (Lucian), phoning in the middle of tea. The laboratory tea table is where I laughed and cried the most in Moldova. (Reserve chocolates are stored away for sentimental moments.) Maybe this is because, as Russians would have it, *dusha* attaches itself to people and places (Pesmen 2000), like the laboratory. Through sociality and the sharing of emotions, *dusha* is implanted in the laboratory. Habits of 'warmth, stability, support' (or what could be called 'practices of *dusha*'), as in tea-drinking – bind people, soul and place. Practices of *dusha* keep the self submerged in the collective – "a sacred, moral self that transcend[s] narrow individualism" (Steinberg 2002 in Pesmen 2000: 18). They provoke reflection on an individual's social place and moral significance – ponderings not uncommon to, but even encouraged among Soviet-era learned workers (cf. Steinberg 2002). It seems I experienced this firsthand one afternoon, when lab scientist Svetlana began spontaneously retelling her life history (without provocation), while washing-up lunch dishes and soiled beakers in the sink next to me. It all started with a cup of tea together:

One family, two river banks: a story.⁴⁹ During a leisurely afternoon tea with Svetlana Suhina, I discover that Svetlana is one of a fifty workers at Ciment S.A. whose lives are split between two sides of the river. She originally worked in the Rybnitsa Cement Plant (est. 1965 in left-bank region, Transnistria). Then Svetlana was assigned to the Dojeni plant (est. 1985 on right-bank). She was twenty-three years old. Her husband, now laid-off, also worked at the Dojeni plant [cement mill?]. Come to find out, Svetlana's mother was employed in finance at the Rybnitsa Cement Plant. Svetlana's sister worked there too. Svetlana says it was normal [under socialism] for parents, children and grandchildren (*vnuki*) to work in the same factory – and for jobs to be passed down through families. Svetlana's sister later moved to the MMZ Steel Plant, where she now works. Svetlana's youngest daughter (of two), Galia, works as a computer programmer in the MMZ archives. She is presently on *otpusk* (paid leave), owing to problems

⁴⁷ Pesmen writes: 'It was *dusha*, at least in the early 1990s, that condensed Russianness, Russian history, and mystical, social, and philosophical notions of self, soul, identity, and personhood, interwoven with ritual and sentiment' (2000: 18).

⁴⁸ See Laura Engelstein and Stephanie Sandler (eds), 2000, *Self and story in Russian history*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press. The volume challenges the common notion of the Russian character as selfless and self-effacing. It argues that there is a history of the individual in Russian culture not entirely different from that in the West. (Juxtapose volume to Pesmen 2000.)

⁴⁹ This is my recorded paraphrased account of our discussion from memory.

with her boss. [University-educated Galia later quits her job at MMZ and migrates to Moscow to work as a nanny. She makes more money as a nanny than a computer programmer.] Svetlana worries a lot about Galia. [...] Svetlana's family is intimately linked to the Rybnitsa and Dojeni aristocracy of labour. If asked to pick one city, as I pushed her to, Svetlana admits to identifying more with the language and customs of left-bank Rybnitsa. She imagines them as more Russian. Also, her mother, sister and daughter live in Rybnitsa. Her father is buried there.⁵⁰ It becomes increasingly clear that Svetlana's heart is more with Transnistria, her birthplace (or *rodina*), than with right-bank Moldova, her workplace. However, the division was not always so acutely felt. Svetlana suggests that war and diverging factory cultures are to blame...

Such moments of on-the-job sharing are what keep *dusha* (soul) in work. In the quality control room, the engineers organise their individual work tasks around regular, collectively-shared periods of sociality. No matter if boss Tat'iana is in the middle of analysing documents, Ivana is supervising a *proba*, or Svetlana is running a chemical experiment – each pauses her task for lunch or tea-time. It is work that is ordered around sociality.⁵¹ The opposite is true for the technicians across the hall, whose limited sociality is ordered around work. However, as EuroCim (via new machines) makes increasing demands on engineers' time – and calls into question job stability – soul at work is jeopardized. Some fear it has already disappeared. In Svetlana's words (recall introduction): 'Work used to be from the *dusha* [...] now we work for *zaplata* (pay or salary). [...] It is about *den'gi* (money)'.

Tea breaks are acts somewhere between resignation and resistance to soul-taking. They are, in a way, resignation to the lures of post-socialist (neoliberal) *meshchanstvo* (a middle-class/bourgeois lifestyle), as things 'middle-class' – like talk of gold jewellery, apartment *remont* (redecorating) and business travel abroad⁵² – once considered compromising to *dusha* (Pesmen 2000), pervade tea-time discussion. However, tea breaks and long lunches can also be interpreted as velvet acts of resistance to global capital. EuroCim Romanian management complains about time wasted on tea drinking. Russian engineers, by refusing to let work tasks interrupt tea-time, are resisting not just capital's disciplining (individualising) time measures put on them, but also resisting a type of modernity forced upon them. Workers like Svetlana resist EuroCim's ethnicized (read: Romanian), neoliberal modernity by drawing upon idioms of the past (see introduction) – a morality of labour, linked with ideas of *dusha* (soul) – and by employing an ideology of Soviet *kul'turnost'* (culturedness), in which all people spoke the same language (read: Russian) and ethnic identity was supposedly irrelevant. Nostalgic for days gone, Svetlana's face lightens up reminiscing of work past, or in flipping through an old factory photo-album dug out of lab storage. Nowadays work is devoid of morality in Svetlana's opinion. She

⁵⁰ To give an example, Svetlana explains that in Transnistria, 9 May is a day when people go to the cemetery and remember the dead. 'It is different than in Moldova,' where 9 May is only a veteran's day commemoration. She reiterates that *Pastile Blajinilor* is the ethnic Moldovan holiday for remembering the dead. Svetlana usually takes four days off for the 9 May (Transnistrian) holiday.

⁵¹ Revisit Elizabeth Dunn's discussion of the morality of the collective (2004), and add further reasons for why it is moral for my informants (because of Russianness and *dusha*).

⁵² Such things have become markers of a new, incipient middle class in Moldova/FSU. Find literature on the development of a post-socialist 'middle class' in Russia/FSU (if it can be said to exist)? Discuss the boundaries and limits of this 'middle class.'

works to live – for *den'gi* (money) – and not the other way around, as she idyllically imagines. Not only has workplace kinship been taken away from her (her husband was laid-off from the plant), but also Svetlana and colleagues fear their collective (*'nash kolektiv'*) is in danger of falling apart.⁵³ The engineers fear an end to work-time name-day celebrations, Valentine-card giving, birthday parties, and afternoon tea (acts of soulful sharing). The blame is on encroaching individualization (associated with 'romanianization') – on ideas of self divorced from morality and ('Russian') community.

This is what Ciment S.A. employees see modelled by EuroCim's Romanian management in Moldova and Romania. Eugenia shared with me how she thinks work relations are different at EuroCim in Romania:

'I don't think they're as close as us at the plant,' Eugenia says with certainty. [...] 'They don't celebrate in the way we do...and spend time together [...] They are more competitive.' [...] 'For example,' Eugenia illustrates, 'we all get together and have some sweets with Ivana to celebrate her son graduating from high school. [...] We all gather for one hour – no more time than I'd take for a lunch – and drink a tea, eat some cake together...'

Romanians' perceived self-interestedness at work is considered 'soulless' (without *dusha*) for Ciment S.A. employees like Eugenia (see Pesmen 2000: 149 on Russians). Only the self embedded in social relations moralizes things (ibid: 119; see also Steinberg 2002). Eugenia worries that EuroCim's competitiveness will destroy close relations among workers.

'Russian' group identity (de)formation⁵⁴

Competition and the individualizing tendencies bombarding Ciment S.A. employees are felt acutely by 'Russians,' who, as minorities, have some of the strongest bonds in the plant. However, they are bonds of 'Russianness', 'Slavic-ness' or 'Russian speaking'⁵⁵ not omnipresent in time and space. They are bonds that grew out of Moldovan nationalism, independence, war, factory privatization and encroaching romanianization. Posited against these experiences are workers' shared narratives of a meaningful past (see narratives in introduction) – narratives around which a degree of 'Russian' groupness exists. However, not all 'Russians' experience collective 'groupness' (and resist capital) in the same way, just as not all 'Russians' see their futures in the same way. An imagined shared past does not mean a would-be shared future. For example, Russian lab engineer Svetlana envisions a 'middle class' future,⁵⁶ whereas

⁵³ See chapter four for a longer discussion on the break-down of the collective.

⁵⁴ Six principles of Russianness are said to exist (in Troebst: 23): patriotism, communitarianism, emotionality, morality, realism, sociability. However, many scholars question the existence of a strong Russian national identity and nation, due to the way the Soviets problematized the nation.

⁵⁵ Discuss groupness around 'being ethnic' versus 'being linguistic' (see Laitin on a Russian-speaking identity among Russians in the near-abroad). I need to unpack the difference, as it is crucial for the arguments I want to make about group identity formation in secessionist Transnistria and Moldova.

⁵⁶ Add data on lab engineers remodeling their apartments – symbolic of wealth and status.

Russian technician Ol'ga resigns herself to 'working class' one (recall how she labels herself *rabotnik*, a 'simple, manual worker'). Growing class inequalities divide and mitigate 'Russian' groupness.⁵⁷

Important to this is how differing ranks of employees assert differing degrees of control over the labour process. In the case of the laboratory, engineers have more control over their labour practices than lower-ranking technicians. The work-time habits (e.g. work pace, frequency/length of breaks) of the former have been reordered less than the latter – despite the assumption that the more skilled the worker, the faster the change.⁵⁸ I believe workers' degree of control over the labour process bears on the way in which their group identity is experienced. Technicians, as opposed to engineers, have less control over available time for Slav group-edifying sociality. The visibility and calculability of technicians' labour, and difficulty in subverting individualisation, impedes lasting, cross-rank, ethno-linguistic groupness among 'Russians.' Workers' experiences of certain (lower-ranking) labours being more easily calculable and disciplined than others – and certain (higher ranking) labours able to resist discipline easier than others – may do more to ingrain class difference than ethnic sameness among Slavs.⁵⁹

This, I believe, is one of the sources of anxiety among the lab ladies, demanding 'we want a psychologist' (recall Svetlana in introduction). 'Russians' oscillate between wanting to preserve a proud past and wanting to be 'modern' the EuroCim-way (which requires learning Romanian, working over-time, etc.) 'Russians' are torn between needing to feel bound to each other as minorities, and wanting to be 'middle class'. There is high anxiety (and attraction) tied to a modern middle-class identity and lifestyle (*meshchanstvo*). As 'Russians' see it, *meshchanstvo* (the neoliberal EuroCim-way) separates identifications from territories and spaces (like 'Russians' long associated with scientific spaces, like the lab) and does away with work-time practices (like Russian speaking and tea-time sociality) considered to bring 'soul' (*dusha*) and 'culturedness' (*kul'turnost*) to labour. EuroCim's romanianization of Ciment S.A. does not only impose language and behaviour upon people, but also unsettles shared values, meanings and identity.

Concluding remarks

This paper examines changing meanings of labour and self, as linked to changing capitalist relations and to processes of social-group identity formation in a transnational cement

⁵⁷ In other words, there are growing class divides among an all-white-collar and all-ethnic-Slav work group.

⁵⁸ Coping with a loss of control (or feared loss of control) may contribute to feelings of anxiety in places like the laboratory. During my last week at Ciment S.A., Svetlana explained how she wants EuroCim to hire a psychologist because workers are stressed with pressure on them to work faster and to learn more languages.

⁵⁹ What does this mean for Russianness as a category/identification versus an identity assumed to gather groupness (see Brubaker 2004)?

plant in post-socialist Moldova. The main social actors of the paper are the factory's Russian-speaking minorities, the one-time bearers of Soviet modernization, now at the bottom of the factory hierarchy of power. The ethnography details how transnational management tries to produce individualised, ethnicized, competitive subjects out of workers based on the conglomerate's global-neoliberal vision of modernity. It disciplines and secures labour's cooperation through teaching 'self-gratification' ('to feel good about oneself') through goal attainment. However, the study shows how this 'sacrifice to self' runs counter to Soviet notions of the self and work, which championed sacrifice to (Soviet) homeland, state and kin.⁶⁰ The paper looks at how female employees from the laboratory organise their everyday work/social practices, social identity, labour values and inter-group relations in response. Work-time sociality (associated with a nostalgic Soviet past, *dusha* [soul] and Russianness) becomes subtle resistance for workers able to resist (lab engineers versus technicians). The paper also addresses the tension of ethnic 'Russians' needing to feel bound to one other as 'Russian' minorities (against encroaching 'romanianization'), while at the same time wanting to be 'modern' and 'middle class'. The chapter suggests that workers' anxiety, introduced at the start ('we want a psychologist!') and in the work ethnography, is owing not only to ever-increasing work demands, but also to wider, unsolvable or contradicting tensions. Social identities and meanings of work are becoming detached from locally embedded ideas of Soviet/Russian soul, culturedness and self.⁶¹ Anxiety arises among Russian speakers who champion these things, while, however, aspiring to be 'middle class' – made possible only by way of Romanianness.

⁶⁰ A working version of this paper (under revision) wishes to look at emerging capitalist relations, socio-economic subjecthood and moral economy in post-Soviet Eurasia. The paper examines how industrial workers embrace, localise and resist factory-disciplining identities by negotiating past and present ideologies of labour, language, gender and moral/amoral economy.

⁶¹ For certain identities tend to go with certain types of labours, even within one plant (e.g. 'Russians' in scientific jobs). EuroCim seems to want to rearrange this. Maybe there is a fear of identities and work detached from Moldovan/CIS homeland/territory and soul (discussed in PhD thesis chapter seven).