

# “Pride Identity” as a Strategy of Self-Representation in the Situation of a Research Interview: The Case of Belarusian Women Involved in Market Trade<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This paper is a discourse analysis of three semi-structured interviews with Belarusian women who are self-employed in the market trade, which, I argue in the article, is a part of shuttle trade. According to the range of texts about women’s entrepreneurship in post-Soviet countries, this type of employment is generally considered as a physically hard, low-profit and non-prestigious job, which at the same time is interpreted as an important strategy of survival for post-Soviet women. In this paper, I analyze how these women describe and interpret their employment positions, how they overcome their lack of status, and how they construct and represent their identities as they try to attain a higher social status and social recognition of their work. I use the term “pride identity” to describe a special communicative strategy directed at overcoming the lack of status and getting social recognition from the audience of a performance, which in the situation of research is represented by the interviewer. The cases I analyze demonstrate that Belarusian women who are involved in market trade understand their low status in society (sometimes even despite the fact of making a rather successful business) and use different language resources in their attempts to change the perception of their work by society.

Yesterday I was at the Bolshoi Theater at a reception. I came back home only at 3 am. I was very impressed by the performance. I spent 100,000 rubles<sup>3</sup> for the ticket, but it was worth the money.

*From a conversation with an informal entrepreneur*

## **Introduction**

The conversation taken as the epigraph occurred accidentally when I was waiting for the tram in the center of Minsk. A well-tailored and very communicable woman asked me how she could get to the other part of the city. I gave her the advice and she began to wait for the tram with me. She told me that she was going to the bank because she had some affairs connected with her business there. The bank had to return some money to her and she wanted to get the money as soon as possible, but she was afraid that the bank would be closed when she reached it. When I suggested that it could be better to go to the bank next day, she said: "I can't wait, I want to get my money and to invest it. Money must work and make money. Probably, you are not involved in business."

Not being involved in business, but in the investigation of women's entrepreneurship in Belarus, I had to ask the woman about her business activity. She told me that she worked as an informal entrepreneur and carried medication from Russia for sale in Belarus. She distributed medical preparations among employees of big enterprises (a rather popular strategy of work for traders who do not have official registration as entrepreneurs). In general, I was speaking with a representative of shuttle traders, "who are small-scale, self-employed entrepreneurs" (Pachenkov and Voronkova 2003: 200) making frequent trips to foreign countries (Russia, Poland, China, Turkey) to buy goods as cheaply as possible and to sell them at a higher price upon return.

After a short conversation about the conditions of small business in Belarus and some features of her own activity, we had a little pause in our talk and then she began to tell me about her visit to the National Ballet Theater ("Bolshoi Theater"). This shift of the conversation topic could have been perceived as rather unexpected and unintelligible if I had not had some experience interviewing women who were involved in the shuttle trade. During my research interviews I could observe a similar strategy of communication when women who were asked to tell a researcher about their economic activity spoke a lot about their life projects and achievements, consumer practices and educational plans. On the one hand, diverse aspects of their lives were interwoven and connected with their narratives about becoming and being a shuttle trader. On the other hand, the choice of facts mentioned was related with the different strategies of self-representation which were used by the participants of interviews.

This article is based on the discourse analysis of three semi-structured interviews with Belarusian women who are involved in shuttle trade, which I consider as a physically hard,

low-profit and non-prestigious job and at the same time as an important strategy of surviving for post-Soviet women (Aidis, Welter, Smallbone and Isakova 2007; Andreeva 2003; Zhurzhenko, 2008).

Considering a research interview as a situation of social interaction where the struggle for symbolic recognition is always actualized, I try to analyze how women occupying low-status positions represent themselves and construct their identities. I use the category of “pride identity”<sup>4</sup> for the definition of a special communicative strategy directed at overcoming the lack of status and getting social recognition from the audience of a performance, which in the situation of research is represented by the interviewer.

### **(Re)Construction of Identity in Narratives about Self: Towards the Methodology of Research**

Identities arise from the narrativization of  
self...

*S. Hall and P. du Gay. Questions of  
Cultural Identities (Rosental 2003: 10)*

According to the social constructionist point of view, identity can be considered as “a socially-constructed self that people co-construct and reconstruct in their interactions with each other” (Paltridge 2006: 42). This perspective regards identity as not a pre-given, natural and invariable essence, but as a process of constant construction realized in the process of communication. As Goffman argues, individuals presenting themselves before others always try to make a particular impression, which is in their interest (Goffman 1959: 4). This “performed self,” as Goffman defines it,

is our truer self, the self we would like to be... The self, then, as a performed character, is not an organic thing that has a specific location, whose fundamental fate is to be born, to mature, and to die; it is a dramatic effect arising diffusely from a scene that is presented, and the characteristic issue, the crucial concern, is whether it will be credited or discredited” (Goffman 1959: 19, 252-253).

The important feature of self-representation to others is connected, according to Goffman, with two main principles organizing society. The first of them is that “any individual who possesses certain social characteristics has a moral right to expect that others will value and treat him in an appropriate way” (Goffman 1959: 13). The other principle consists in the assumption that if an individual “implicitly or explicitly signifies that he has certain social characteristics,” he or she ought to have them (Goffman 1959: 13). These principles make social interactions possible, and allow an individual to represent himself or herself as a person of a particular kind who “automatically exerts a moral demand upon the others, obliging them to value and treat him in the manner that persons of his kind have a right to expect” (Goffman 1959: 13). Speaking in another way, this “moral presupposition” of social interaction permits us to construct our identities according to a certain situation and to “how we want people to see us” and expect the acceptance of our identities by others.

This dynamic approach to self-construction gives permission to consider identity as an active discursive process (Coupland 2007: 106). As Hall and du Gay argue, “there is no historical or ontological essence. There is no *true self* outside of discourse” (Rosental 2003: 10). That is, Rosental continues, the constitution of own discourses and narrativization of self are vital for construction of identities (Rosental 2003: 10). If identity is constructed through discourses or narratives, a researcher is able to reconstruct and analyze it based on the interpretation of the individuals’ representations of themselves, their life experiences, their relations to other people and their attitude to the most significant events of their lives. This is where discourse analysis can be used.

At the same time we should remember that speaking about social interaction we cannot concentrate only on the verbal aspect of communication. Goffman singles out two “radically different kinds of sign activity” of an individual: “the expression that he *gives*, and the expression that he *gives off*” (Goffman 1959: 2). The first is connected with verbal communication; the second “involves a wide range of action” (Goffman 1959: 10). Paltridge defines this second aspect of interaction as “the context, occasion and purpose of the discourse” (Paltridge 2006: 39). It means that when analyzing the narratives about self represented in the situation of a research interview we should understand and take into consideration the special features of this type of interaction.

## **The Construction of “Pride Identity” in the Situation of a Research Interview**

A research interview can be analyzed as an interactive performance of an interviewee whose identity is observed by an interviewer during the whole process of their communication. According to Goffman, “a “performance” may be defined as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants. Taking a particular participant and his performance as a basic point of reference we may refer to those who contribute to the other performances as the audience, observers or co-participants (Goffman 1959: 15-16). So, in the terms of Goffman an interviewee is a performer and an interviewer is the audience of his or her performance.

According to Goffman, the impression that an individual aspires to make depends on some important aspects of social interaction. Firstly, Goffman argues, performers represent themselves in an idealized way. It means that an individual “will tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society” (Goffman 1959: 35), or at least their notion about these values. Goffman insists that individuals tend to create idealized versions of themselves, concealing or underplaying those activities, facts and motives which can to destroy an idealized representation (Goffman 1959: 48). Secondly, the “idealized version” of an individual is not the same in the various situations of social interaction. It strongly depends on the type of audience. Goffman designates this phenomenon as “audience segregation” (Goffman 1959: 49). Thirdly, performers tend to create some unique or special impression for their current audience (Goffman 1959: 49).

At the same time we also cannot forget about the “working consensus” of every reciprocal action (Goffman 1959: 10). It signifies that when trying to achieve their own purposes of communication, individuals simultaneously should take into consideration the common situation of interaction and tend to correlate their interests with the “working consensus” of a communicative act. In the circumstances of a research interview, interviewees can represent any type of identity but at the same time the identity they construct should relate to the general aims of the situation, notably the acquisition of certain information by a researcher who initiates this type of communication. It means that goals of research create something like the frame which determines and limits the process of identity construction.

Considering the problem of social contextualization of identity according to the audience and situation of interaction, Coupland suggests recognizing two important processes of self-representation: targeting and framing<sup>5</sup> (Coupland 2007: 111). He explains targeting as

“shaping the *persona* of one particular participant of interaction, most typically either a speaker or a listener” (Coupland 2007: 112). Further, he notes that “a great deal of social identity work in talk targets recipients” (Coupland 2007: 112). Thus we may consider targeting as the contextualization of a particular identity according to the audience of interaction that corresponds to the idea of Goffman about “audience segregation” or – let me use a marketing term – about the “target audience” of interaction.

The other process – framing – means that, according to the situation, “social interaction often leaves many or most potential identities latent” and only “particular identities are made relevant or *salient* in discourse” (Coupland 2007: 112). Coupland discusses three main types of discourse framing: socio-cultural (class, age, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity), genre (business talk, informal chat, and so on) and interpersonal (position of the participants of interaction to each other) (Coupland 2007: 113). These frames not only determine the construction of particular identity in discourse but also dictate or prescribe the way of self-representation and restrict our possibilities “to choose” identities. More regularly, individuals just fit with the situation because, as West and Zimmerman argue in their discussion of the construction of gender identity, “while it is individuals who do gender, the enterprise is fundamentally interactional and institutional in character, for accountability is a feature of social relationship and its idiom is drawn from the institutional arena in which those relations are enacted” (West and Zimmerman 1987: 136-137). Whereas West and Zimmerman note that it is much easier to mute or make more salient any social identity than to reconstruct gender identity (West and Zimmerman 1987: 139), I argue that we are not so free in our choice of which identity should be constructed in a certain situation. And the more formal or “institutionalized” the interaction is, the less possibilities of “choice of identity” we have. The concepts of framing and targeting demonstrate that the presence of a researcher directly influences the self-representation of respondents. This thesis reveals the positivist claims to scientific objectivity as especially problematic in using qualitative methods of research.

According to feminist critique of objectivity directed at the overcoming the subject/object dichotomy of social research and the deconstruction of dominant position of a researcher, qualitative methods has been considered as the alternative to traditional “objective” methodology and the most adequate to the feminist project of a more egalitarian strategy of investigation (Sprague and Zimmerman 1989: 74, 77). However, as Sprague and Zimmerman demonstrate, the qualitative methods themselves have the same limitation for the feminist research as quantitative methods have (Sprague and Zimmerman 1989). Analyzing

methodology textbooks about interviewing, Oakley argues that they keep the idea about the respondent of a qualitative interview being the “object” of social research or the source of information (Oakley 1981: 33). At the same time, following textbooks, the position of an interviewer should be as neutral as possible; she or he cannot participate in the discussions provoked by respondents. In sum, “the interviewer must pretend not to have opinions (or to be possessed of information the interviewee wants) because behaving otherwise might ‘bias the interview’” (Oakley 1981: 36). As feminist researchers argue, it is almost completely impossible to keep the “objective” distance in the situation of qualitative research and to overcome the subjective position of a researcher and his or her involvement in a research situation.

Sharing the feminist position about the difficulty of freedom from researchers’ values, emotions and relations, I would like only to add that the “muddiness” of empirical data received by qualitative methods is also determined by a research situation itself. Though, as Oakley remarks, the authors of methodology guides define the interview as “not simply a conversation” but as “pseudo-conversation” (Oakley 1981: 32), I think that it is very complicated to reject the interactionist aspect of any research situation and especially of the situation of a face-to-face interview. That is why I argue that when analyzing interviews the researcher should be very reflexive to the received data and should take into account the influence of the situation and his or her own presence on the strategies of self-representation and constructing of identities by respondents.

An interactionist approach challenges the objectivity of data received by a research interview and highlights the influence of an interviewer on the strategy of self-representation used by an interviewee. But it leaves aside the important aspect of communication connected with power relations existing between the participants of every communicative situation. Criticizing the interactionist perspective for the interpretation of a communicative act as a “closed world,” Bourdieu argues that “what happens between two persons derives its particular form from the objective relation between the corresponding languages or usages, that is, between the groups who speak those languages” (Bourdieu 1992: 67). Bourdieu insists that “utterances are not only signs to be understood and deciphered; they are also *signs of wealth*, intended to be evaluated and appreciated, and *signs of authority*, intended to be believed and obeyed” (Bourdieu 1992: 66).

According to Bourdieu, every act of communication can be considered as an attempt to get recognition or to “maximize symbolic profit they [the authors of linguistic production] can obtain from practices which are, inseparably, oriented towards communication and

exposed to evaluation” (Bourdieu 1992: 77). In the other words, entering the interaction, individuals do not simply represent themselves to each other trying to achieve certain impression and perception of themselves by others; they also participate in the “labor of categorization.” According to Bourdieu, “this labor of categorization, of making things explicit and classifying them, is continually being performed, at every moment of ordinary existence, in the struggles in which agents clash over the meaning of the social world and their position in it, the meaning of their social identity...” (Bourdieu 1992: 236). Thus in the situation of a research interview the respondents not only easily represent themselves orienting to the status, age, gender of a researcher and following the requirements of a communicative situation, but they also take part in the struggle for recognition by the audience of their performance.

In the case of the interview dedicated to the different aspects of respondents’ lives – the certain types of their experience which are often used for reconstruction of identity – this symbolic struggle is possible through such “categorization of self,” which allows one to get recognition or, at least, the approval of a researcher. It means that depending on the context of interaction individuals actualize not only certain types of identities (for instance, professional identity or identity as a mother) but also identities of “a certain quality” or “idealized versions of themselves” (speaking in the terms of Goffman).

According to Goffman, there are two types of the idealized version of identity. The first one can be defined as a positive idealization and is described by Goffman as a process when “we tend to assume that the expressive stresses in a performance necessarily claim for the performer a higher class status than might otherwise be accorded him” (Goffman 1959: 37). The second type – negative idealization – is considered by Goffman as an example of how people “can play up ideal values which accord to the performer a lower position than he covertly accepts for himself”<sup>6</sup> (Goffman 1959: 38).

Trying to separate two opposite types of idealization, proposed by Goffman, and to include the aspect of power relations existing in every social interaction, I introduce the concept of “pride identity.”<sup>7</sup> I define it as a construction of idealized identity by people occupying or perceived as occupying a low-status social position but tending to a higher one. I consider this process as a discursive strategy of re-categorization of one’s own experience directed at overcoming the lack of status and the acquisition of the symbolic recognition by the audience of social interaction.



## **“Pride Identity” of Women Involved in a Low-Status Work: The Case of Belarusian Market Traders**

The empirical data used in this article were collected in 2007-2008 in Minsk during my studies in the MA Program in Cultural Studies at European Humanities University.<sup>8</sup> My MA thesis concentrated on the problem of women’s entrepreneurship in Belarus. First of all, I was focused on shuttle trade. Here I analyze the interviews with market traders, who can be considered as a part of shuttle trade but do not represent the whole spectrum of shuttle trade activities.<sup>9</sup> I give a wide definition of shuttle trade as an entrepreneurship practice (both formal and informal) that derives out of its likeliness to a shuttle, as an entrepreneur undertakes frequent trips to a foreign country to buy goods as cheaply as possible and to sell them at a higher price upon return using different strategies of distribution. Market trade presupposes that goods are sold in market places where traders have their own stalls. In Belarus, to have your own place in the market means to be registered as an individual entrepreneur and to pay some taxes and fees. Thus the market trade can be defined as a formal (at least in part) strategy of shuttle trade when the distribution of goods is realized mostly at legal market places.

The plan of interviews was focused on the employment of women and their trade experience. That is why they were mostly concentrated on talking about their work. It means that many aspects of their identities were left out of the frames of the research. At the same time I share the opinion of Bourdieu who notes that social identity is “these days more completely identified with one’s professional identity” (Bourdieu 1992: 248). I think that it is especially true for the identity of post-Soviet women of the older generation (from age 35) who were socialized under the influence of values and life strategies of the Soviet society.

As Tatiana Zhurzhenko argues, the identity of Soviet women was constructed on the basis of the contract of a working mother, which presupposed a double orientation on motherhood and family values and on activity in public and professional sphere:

The Soviet enterprises were the important source of collective identity, most women perceived the connection with labor team (*trudovoi collective*) or professional community as an important part of their self. That is why not only a traditional family role of a wife and a mother but also the social role of an enterprise’s worker influenced the formation of gender identity of Soviet women (Zhurzhenko 2008: 85).

Even though after the collapse of the Soviet Union the transformation of gender contracts has been occurring, the post-Soviet gender order has much in common with the Soviet one<sup>10</sup> (Temkina and Rotkirch 2002: 13). That is why it seems accurate to say that the professional identity is an important part of post-Soviet women's identity and can determine the "vision of their own position in this world, that is, their social identity" (Bourdieu 1992: 234).

Analyzing the interviews, I concentrate on a set of questions that help reconstruct the identities performed by respondents through their representation of the working experience connected with the shuttle trade. I draw attention to how women categorize their employment, which connotations they use for evaluation of their work, how they explain their professional choice, and how they relate themselves to their current professional and social status.

The focus of my research is on three of the most interesting and saturated interviews. The analysis is built on the case study basis. Firstly, I give a brief description of each case: the situation of an interview, the characteristics of an interviewee, and basic biographic facts especially connected with the shuttle trade. Secondly, I interpret the discursive strategies of the construction of "pride identity" using the method of discourse analysis.

### ***Case 1: Intelligentsia vs. Traders (torgashi)***<sup>11</sup>

The first case is of a trader named Olga. I made her acquaintance through my former colleague – an editor of a magazine for Belarusian entrepreneurs. Olga carried from Brest and Grodno (Belarusian cities on the Belarus-Poland border) women's clothing and sold it in Minsk. She had a place at the morning market at the stadium "Dinamo,"<sup>12</sup> but also worked at home selling her goods to acquaintances. For these purposes she even equipped a special space in one of the rooms in her 3-room apartment. My colleague was one of Olga's clients and maintained good relations with her.

For the interview, Olga invited me to her apartment, which was also the warehouse, an improvised shop (with special equipment which is usually used in shops for the presentation of clothes) and living quarters. We spoke in the kitchen where we simultaneously drank tea with cakes and curd. The cakes and curd were rather simple and plain. Such food is usually eaten in the everyday life of many Belarusian families. It means that the food was not presented as anything special; it didn't have the meaning of hospitality for a guest (*ugoscheniye*). This kind of food demonstrates the ordinariness of the situation

and its working character, but for me it was also a sign of sharing, by Olga, of common practices of the everyday life in Belarusian society.

At the time of the interview, Olga was 51 years old. She was educated as a mathematician-programmer. Before the early 1990s she worked at the heat and power engineering research institute. After the collapse of the USSR the salary of employees in these institutions became very low and was paid irregularly, which is why many of them had to find new strategies of earning money. Some of them joined the ranks of new entrepreneurs, whether developing large businesses or joining the shuttle trade and other fields of small entrepreneurship.

However, the situation of Olga was completely different. Her husband was an architect. At the beginning of *perestroika* he opened his own architectural workshop, simultaneously continuing to work as a civil servant (*na gossluzhbe*). According to Olga, her family began to live at the new level. First of all, she describes it through new practices of consumption: "...my husband began to earn very well. Not a millionaire, no, but constantly upper middle level. We could afford to travel abroad (*zagranichnye poezdki*), we traveled all over Europe, we bought an apartment for a son, a car..." The material security of the family permitted Olga to leave her job at the institute and to become a helper of her husband and a housewife.

Olga did not regret her choice, but she made it after some doubts that were connected with the radical changes in the way of life determined by the Soviet experience when it was almost completely impossible not to work. Olga recalled, "I was afraid because we all are the people of our epoch. I mean that some society has been created already, some context, some friends, some traditions. And when I go away, I little by little lose all of these." So, leaving the work at the institute meant for Olga the rupture of social connections and relationships with other people. That is, the work for her – as for other women of her generation – was not only the way of professional realization but also the important part of socialization. She underlines her belonging to a certain epoch and here, I think, relying on the interview, she means the Soviet times.

Olga's situation changed rapidly when her husband suddenly died in 2001. She was not able to continue his business because she did not have an architectural education, so she could not get a license. She describes her situation as hopeless and "catastrophic." She chiefly underlines the problem of the shattered material security of her family because she did not have a job, the business of the husband was lost, she had to provide her son and herself and also – and it seems to me very important – she had to prepare her son to enter the university

and it also required money: "...I was deprived of job...of husband, of an income, means of support (*sredstv k suschestvovaniju*), of the father of my child and the child was in his last but crucial school year, when private tutors were necessary."

Olga tries to organize her life all over again using the familiar strategy. She argues that she could not return to her previous job because she "lagged behind hopelessly" in her profession. So, at first Olga does not endeavor to find a new job as a source of income but attempts to restore the situation where she could continue to be a housewife. In other words, she prefers the contract of a housewife to the contracts of a working mother or a professional woman.<sup>13</sup> It is important to mention that in the post-Socialist society the gender ideology of a housewife and a breadwinner becomes a significant marker of a high social status. As, for instance, Kovacs and Varady argue, considering the process of class formation in the Hungarian agro-town Karikas, this gender pattern was mostly shared by women who belonged to local elites – usually as wives of men in leadership positions (Kovacs and Varadi 2000: 184 – 187).

So, Olga attempted to marry an Italian retiree. In 2002 she went to Italy and lived there for a month. According to her, a man was ready to marry her and even completed all the required formalities, but Olga decided to break their relations and come back home. As she says, she "just went away." She argues that her possible marriage with the Italian could have given her financial stability, but she could not accept the lack of freedom: "I was in complete isolation; he didn't allow me to communicate with people, even to phone home. There was patriarchy and very strong... In general, I was caged when you are fed but you can't decide anything...So. You know...Though we are still not in the West, however, we are already neither in Tajikistan nor Turkmenistan."

Olga rejected this life scenario because it was not correlated with her life experience. She was a housewife in Belarus but it was her own choice; it was accompanied by the well-being of her family and it also was not associated with the lack of freedom or autonomy. Moreover, the role of a housewife was connected for Olga with a high class position in society. In the interview, Olga indicates not only the changes in the consumer practices of her family during that period but also the difference between her way of life and the life of her former colleagues: "When I came to visit my former coworkers, I saw how it was miserable and poor (*sero i ubogo*), it seemed as if they just stopped..."

The contract of a housewife can be considered as an important indicator of social changes connected with the process of class formation in post-Soviet countries. As Gapova argues, the basic process occurring in post-Soviet societies is the process of class formation

or the formation of income inequalities. Gender as a primary principle of social stratification inevitably accompanies this process (Gapova 2005: 101). According to Gapova, a position of a housewife presupposes a restricted access to significant resources and this is strongly connected with the process of class formation (Gapova 2005: 114). The contract of a housewife also presupposes that men become dominant agents disposing of power and material resources for supporting women as wives and mothers (Temkina and Rotkirch 2002: 12). Masculinity comes to be associated with financial success and social prestige, which cannot be achieved through employment in shuttle trade. As Olga says when answering the question about why her son does not help her in the trade: "...It is *not a male* business. It is hard. It is unintellectual." It is also important to add that, according to Zhurzhenko, the shuttle trade has a low status only intersecting with gender: "When a man is involved in the shuttle trade people consider his activity as a normal serious business, but when a woman is involved in the same activity its status and prestige are automatically declined" (Zhurzhenko 2008: 109).

Representing her current position, Olga regularly appeals to her past and the memories of the past occupy a rather significant part of the interview. Trying to ask the question about why she began participating in the shuttle trade only in 2003, she tells me in detail about her previous experience. On the one hand, based on her willingness to talk with me, I think that she wants to give me as much information as possible. On the other hand, she tries to reconstruct her life for herself and also demonstrates the positive and negative changes in her life that prompted her current employment. The development of her narrative could be interpreted as a long and difficult way to the shuttle trade. She deviates from the main topic of the interview, gives me many details from her private life, as if she would like to demonstrate that nothing in her life—especially before her husband's death—signified such radical changes.

She categorizes her trade experience as a total collapse of her life. Many facts from her interview can be regarded as evidence. I will give only a few examples. Firstly, interpreting her life, Olga speaks a lot about missed opportunities. She admits and regrets that she did not try some activities on her own when her husband was alive and could support her. So, she does not consider shuttle trade as a life chance or a possibility for development. She speaks about it as about something unacceptable and absolutely impossible in other conditions. She represents her participation in shuttle trade as forced. Speaking about the experience of other people and interpreting her own experience in this way she argues that "the life forced (*zhizn' zastavila*)" people to look for new strategies of employment and that

shuttle trade was unaccepted by people of her circle, but some of them had to be involved in it because of “divorce, the death of relatives or...and...if someone just didn’t want to stay at the previous stage.” So, she places the most fatal circumstances at the two first (dominant) positions and considers the desire for a better life only as a third reason for starting market trade.

Secondly, Olga frankly declares that she does not like her work and does not find any satisfaction in it. She characterizes shuttle trade as a “hard and unintellectual labor” that negatively influences her health and appearance. Thirdly, and this point is probably the most important in the context of the article, she constantly attempts to distinguish herself from other shuttle traders and to redefine her status. She identifies herself with intelligentsia and underlines this identity through the whole interview: “People who were more or less *intelligentnye* they didn’t want to work at the market, because in the Soviet Union a market... It was something awful, it was a shame (*eto bylo chto-to uzhasnoe, pozorno*) and especially for intelligentsia. I should confess, I myself had the same opinion...Traders (*torgashi*)...It was always [regarded] with contempt, especially by the intelligentsia.”

Opposing herself to other market traders Olga constructs her “pride identity” and struggles for the recognition of her belonging to the other social class because she connects her current position with decline in social status. As Zhurzhenko argues, educated women who occupied a high social position before their involvement in shuttle trade often consider their current employment as a total life collapse (Zhurzhenko 2008: 99). They continue to associate themselves with values and practices of their previous social group and aspire to be regarded as possessors of a higher status who are forced to be shuttle traders only under the influence of negative circumstances. At the same time, as Andreeva notes, men are rarely ready to agree with the decline in their social status (Andreeva 2003: 131). That is why the strategy of shuttle trade as a way for surviving is more common for women than for men. As Olga argues,

in such hopeless situation as I was [in] a man rarely survives. It is a common case. Men become alcoholics. A woman has more chances to survive, she will climb. Women are more responsible, they work hard. They can’t trust anybody except themselves. They are in a more difficult situation but they are stronger, more organized. A woman can get over humiliation. I am, for instance... I don’t like this business. But what can I do?”

Olga underlines the unintellectual character of her employment that is, according to her, one of its biggest disadvantages. She speaks about the lack of morality among entrepreneurs: “As an educated woman I want something more intellectual because here I must communicate with people who...It would be better not to communicate with them;” “You know the most unconscionable people are our former Soviet people who have become entrepreneurs;” “I am not good in trade but I must do it. Entrepreneurs have *a different* psychology. They firstly do something and then think. And these people with such awful behavior they emerge (*vyplyvajut*).” She blames herself for the unnecessary reflexivity peculiar to the intelligentsia which precludes her from business success. Actualizing her unique features before the researcher (who of course can be considered as a representative of the intelligentsia for Olga), she underlines that she has some working motivation: “As soon as a woman begins to earn something she begins to take care of herself... A swimming-pool, a cosmetologist...It is a stimulus for me (*Eto menja podstegivaet*). But nobody besides me is interested in self-education.” Thus the morality, reflexivity and aspiration for education are presented by this interviewee as the most important qualities of her identity. Olga interprets her employment as an unhappy coincidence and constructs her “pride identity” on the basis of the opposition to her colleagues in the shuttle trade. She seeks to be perceived as a representative of the other, more prestigious from her point of view, class – the class of intelligentsia.

***Case 2: “I am myself...”<sup>14</sup>***

Ekaterina started her business in the early 1990s. She is a representative of the first wave of entrepreneurship (1989-1994) which, according to Zhurzhenko, “generally consisted of women who were rather adventurous and immediately took the opportunity to start their own businesses” (Zhurzhenko 2008: 107 – 108). At the time of the interview, Ekaterina had a rather stable and profitable business in the sphere of trade of “home textiles” (linen, towels, and so on). Her strategy of entrepreneurship can be interpreted as a “professionalization” of the shuttle trade. Starting as a usual market trader, Ekaterina developed her business, specified it, and organized it as a small trade enterprise where she played the role of owner and manager. It means that Ekaterina did not sell her goods herself anymore, but employed traders.

I met Ekaterina thanks to my friend-journalist who set up the interview with the entrepreneur. Ekaterina was a member of the small business council of the Belarusian

Association of Entrepreneurs and occupied a rather active and visible position in the entrepreneurship community. She started her business at the market at the stadium “Dinamo” when it first appeared in Minsk and was a very popular place of shopping for the residents of the city. When the so-called “covered” markets began to emerge, Ekaterina moved her business to one of them situated in the underground passage in the center of Minsk. Now she has places at the most well-visited and comfortable “covered” markets such as “Parking,” “Zerkalo” and others.

Ekaterina and I met in the café of “Parking.” She was hospitable and presented herself as a mistress of this public place and of the situation. Through this, she demonstrated that this was her territory where she felt at home. She was familiar with most waitresses, she knew the content of the menu well, and she greeted some of her colleagues. It was understandable that she was well known in this café and that she was a regular visitor. Ekaterina occupied a protective position in relation to me. She ordered two glasses of fresh orange juice and two cups of coffee and rejected my offer to pay for both of us (by this I wanted to thank her for her agreement to spend her time for the interview). She said that I was her guest and paid for us. During the interview several times she called me “Olechka” (the informal form of the name Olga used by close, usually elderly, people), once appealed to my age speaking about her relationships with men where she always occupied a dominant position (“You are young, so you take it into account and never do it”), and was also interested in my parents, and tried to compare her experience with theirs.

The situation of our meeting also demonstrates that Ekaterina shares, at least in our local interaction, the consumer practices which are still not so common in Belarus, especially for people of Ekaterina’s generation (at the moment of the interview she was 47). Our meeting in the café (not at home or at her work place), her relaxed behavior in a public place, and her choice of drinks (fresh orange juice) represented her as a person who aspires to occupy a rather high social position or at least higher than a position of an average Belarusian. In the interview she also pays attention to the meaning of health and tells me that she has a vacation four times per year (twice in Belarusian sanatoriums, twice at the seacoast). Answering the question about her becoming an entrepreneur, Ekaterina very briefly speaks about her private life (which influenced her choice, according to the interview) drawing the main attention to her business motivation. In this narrative, she uses a considerable number of “I” constructions, which can be interpreted as a representation of her active position and her desire to keep her life under own control: “I mobilize myself;” “I went



to Grodno, Khabarovsk, Hungary, Poland and began to trade;” “I worked very much;” “I proved that I didn’t worsen, that I was a beautiful woman, that I must look well.”

She represents her employment as a success overcoming a negative life situation when her second husband refused to provide for the family. According to Ekaterina, at that time she had two children – a daughter from the first marriage and a son from the second. She did not work, because she was on maternity leave. So, as she argues, she had to feed her children and, according to her, the responsibility for them forced her to be involved in the shuttle trade. Despite negative life circumstances that prompted Ekaterina to join the shuttle trade, she does not construct her identity through the representation of her traumatic experience. On the contrary, she turns this situation into an important resource for the construction of “pride identity.” According to Ekaterina, she was not broken, but could achieve a certain professional success. Self-reliance, responsibility, and grit are the features of Ekaterina’s “pride identity” represented before a younger interviewee. She also considers these features as necessary aspects of progress in trade business.

At the same time, as Ekaterina argues, these characteristics have also impacted her private life, particularly her role in a family and relationship with men. Ekaterina is not married, but she said that periodically she has some serious and stable relations. According to her, the main problem is that she has been used to occupying the dominant position in a relationship. She does not need a man who could support her materially and is mostly interested in a partner who would be equal to her. Ekaterina perceives her employment position as comfortable and acceptable. It is important to mention that she has no higher education, but she has the Soviet experience of work in the trade: “Trade you know I am used to it.” At the same time, arguing that “entrepreneurs are the best part of society because they are strong, they don’t cry but climb in difficult conditions,” she actually reproduces the discourse about the low social status of trade. Ekaterina speaks about it most sincerely in the following fragment:

Interviewer: So, your sisters participate in your business and [your] children don’t?

Respondent: Of course not. Look, my daughter has two diplomas. So, the first is international relations, the faculty of international relations at BSU,<sup>15</sup> foreign languages. The second is PR, economic education. She works at the Trade Union Federation, she has a good job. Her job is interesting. Should I

take her to trade with me?... You know I like my job and I like the goods I sell but how do they say? Traders (*torgashi*)...

It is important to add that Ekaterina, similar to Olga, explains the low status of shuttle trade in gender categories:

Interviewer: How do you think, if you were a man, it would be easier for you to be in business?

Respondent: If I were a man, I wouldn't be involved in trading. Of course, it would be easier, but if I were a man, I would do something what a man should do, a male business. I would not be a trader, I wouldn't sell these goods. I think I would produce something. Because it is non-prestigious for a man to be a trader...

Sharing her belonging with the market traders, Ekaterina simultaneously tries to distinguish herself from the part of the group that has lower status. According to her interview, she is opposed to people trading at open markets. She openly says that when the first "covered" markets emerged, she decided that she would work harder but would take a place at one of them (the trade at these markets requires a higher price for the rent of the place). Speaking about her work at "Dinamo" market she underlines that it negatively influenced her health and simultaneously she intertwines the situated remark about fresh orange juice in her narrative:

...then I traded at "Dinamo." We traded in any conditions, it wasn't important the frost or not. Sometimes we spent the whole day in the cold of 20-30 degrees below zero, because it was our income. Some traders, of course, took alcohol but I thought: 'No, I can't, I can become an alcoholic.' We defended ourselves from the frost in different ways. We made special cream from coconut oil and powder. Drink your juice. Fresh juice lives only 15 minutes. Then...So, we traded.

I argue that this remark demonstrates the symbolic struggle between past and present in Ekaterina's narrative. She talks about the practices of her past and contrasts them to her

present where she does not work in the cold anymore and can take care of herself and her health. Ekaterina also resists the association with shuttle traders who carry all their goods by themselves in big bags:<sup>16</sup> “I recently flew to Istanbul, it was charter flight. There were about 100 entrepreneurs, among them only 10 – men, the rest were women. They were *with bags and knapsacks (s sumkami, so vsjakimi kotomkami)*. I flew *without any bags (Ja-to letala uzhe bez sumok)*, I went to carry on negotiations, I would like to organize wholesale deliveries.”

So, the “pride identity” of Ekaterina consists of her struggle for the recognition of her representation as a serious and successful businesswoman who overcame different barriers and created herself. She shares her belonging to the group of market traders but insists on the association with those of them who occupy the highest position in their professional hierarchy. Similar to Olga, Ekaterina wants to belong to a higher class status than she does. Through her manners, practices of consumption, and representation of gender ideals, Ekaterina aims to overcome a marginalized position of a shuttle trader and to be considered as a part of a new middle class that is still forming in Belarus.

### ***Case 3: A natural born entrepreneur***<sup>17</sup>

The interview with Zhanna presented in the third case was rather problematic for me. I could not establish good and trustful relations with the respondent from the beginning of our interaction and “the working consensus” of the situation was broken. Zhanna snatched the list of questions out of my hands and began to read questions and to comment on them. She related to the questions rather aggressively and she skipped some of them, especially those which concerned her trade activity. Zhanna explained her position by the fact that the information about her business was a kind of commercial secret. It seems to me that she did not correctly understand the aim of the interview.

I got Zhanna’s contact information from my colleague who is an economic journalist and often turned to Zhanna for comments and information about entrepreneurs’ lives. According to Zhanna, only my friendly relations with this woman helped me to organize our meeting because Zhanna was not interested in it: “It is absolutely useless for me,” she said. We were speaking in the empty café at one of the “covered” markets in a suburb of Minsk where Zhanna worked. She did not propose to drink something because, as she said, she was in a hurry and did not have an opportunity to speak with me for a long time. So, the situation

of an interview was considered by Zhanna as undesirable and uninteresting. She did not trust me and it was very hard to communicate.

Zhanna came to shuttle trade in 1990. She also had been working at open markets but not such popular and significant markets as “Dinamo.” The market where we were meeting was built in 2000 and was oriented primarily to inhabitants of the adjoining districts *Malinovka* and *Jugo-Zapad*. It meant that it did not have the significance of the city market like, for instance, “Parking” and “Zerkalo” where Ekaterina worked. It also had a cheaper cost for monthly rent.<sup>18</sup> Explaining her motivation for starting a shuttle trade, Zhanna argues that this type of employment is correlated to her character most of all. She represents herself as an active, interested person who first of all seeks to realize herself. Zhanna appeals to her “inborn qualities” (“I think that it is inborn”) which helped her to achieve a certain success in her business. She appreciates her professional achievements very highly: “I saw that I could trade very well. It was colossal;” “I borrowed money and transformed it into what I wanted. Look what I have achieved. It is almost impossible;” “I am developing all the time.”

Zhanna constructs her “pride identity” by appealing to the uniqueness of her inherent character qualities. Through the whole interview she underlines them. For instance, when she speaks about her first foreign business trip, which occurred in 1986, she notes: “It was the *first* voyage after isolation. All had been closed before, it was the *first* trip. It was perestroika. It was the *first* trip from the *whole* Soviet Union, not only from Belarus, from Belarus there were *only* 19 people, all the others were from Russia. *You understand?*”

Zhanna represents herself in the opposition to a researcher as an audience of her performance. Trying to prove her uniqueness she appeals to my experience:

Respondent: When I started my business to borrow US\$500 was as if to borrow today US\$5,000. Now you understand me? Can you borrow US\$5,000?

Interviewer: No.

Respondent: So, it means that I was so brave (*Vot, znatit, ja smelaja kakaja*).

Zhanna does not tolerate the possibility of my being competent in the shuttle trade; discursively she struggles for the dominant position in our communication about entrepreneurship. Linguistically she accentuates her status as that of expert, who has power to

explain and interpret. She often uses the phrase “Do you (or don’t you) understand me?” in different Russian variations, and appeals to my age as a means of denying my ability to understand her: “You are still young and I should say you don’t understand many things,” and she starts her answers from the locution, “I am explaining to you.”

Finally, Zhanna resorts to the strategy of open devaluation of my cultural capital (first of all my research opportunities). She argues that the research of entrepreneurship does not give me any chance to start my own business: “Even if you study it, it is, it doesn’t make any sense.” It looks like Zhanna’s attempt to prove her uniqueness and to construct her activity as something that is available for the limited circle of people born with their purpose to be entrepreneurs.

It is also important to mention that, according to the interview, knowledge and education do not have a significant value for Zhanna. She relates to them rather pragmatically by arguing that she develops them all the time, but adds all her new skills in her business. At the same time she represents herself as a universal specialist. She argues that the entrepreneur should simultaneously be competent in management and finance, know how to drive a car, and understand people (“You know, I am a good psychologist, I understand people at first sight”). Zhanna underlines that she has all of these qualities because they are necessary for her business. So, her “pride identity” consists in her unique business competence given to her as her birthright.

## **Conclusions**

The analysis of cases presented in this article is not widely generalizable. However, every case demonstrates not only the unique situation of each woman involved in market trade, but also some common tendencies of post-Soviet society connected with this type of self-employment. The cases show how shuttle trade was perceived in post-Soviet society. Women who are involved in this type of employment in different circumstances reproduce this negative perception in their narratives and try to overcome it. As I demonstrate, they construct different types of “pride identity” (intelligentsia, a businesswoman, a natural born entrepreneur), but all these types are connected with the aspiration of women to gain symbolic recognition of their employment and (at least in two cases) to be considered as representatives of a higher social class.

It is important that the low status of shuttle trade is represented in gender categories as an economic activity that is acceptable for women but not for men. This way of

representation is an important marker of post-Soviet changes. It indicates that ideas about masculinity and femininity are closely interwoven with class formation in post-Soviet society. As Elena Gapova argues, “women are allowed to be poor and men are not allowed [to]... Even being poor, women continue to be women. Poor men lose a significant part of their masculinity” (Gapova 2005: 107). According to Gapova, the lack of masculinity of Soviet men was connected with the absence of classes in the Soviet Union (Gapova 2005: 109). That is why the process of class formation in post-Soviet societies was accompanied by redefinition of masculinity and femininity. The representation of shuttle trade as a low-status activity in gender categories is evidence of this process. Men are prescribed to be rich and successful or to belong to a high class, and only in this case can they be considered “real men.” Women “are allowed to be poor” because – and this idea is very popular in Belarusian society - this is in their nature to be always behind men.

At the same time, the analyzed cases demonstrate that the stratification of post-Soviet society brought into life not only differences between men and women, but also differences between women. Despite the fact that all my interviewees are involved in shuttle trade, they, as I argue, share different values, practices of consumption and gender ideologies. They also perceive their own experience as traders in very different ways. If Olga, for instance, considers it a collapse of her life scenario, Zhanna and Ekaterina tend to regard their current employment as a kind of a personal success. Here I would like to underline that although shuttle trade is interpreted as a low-status activity and is connected with the decline in social status, it nevertheless was an important strategy not only of surviving, but also of certain professional achievements for women in the condition of essential social transformations. Those who came to shuttle trade with previous trade experience (like Ekaterina) or chose this activity as the best way for self-realization (as Zhanna argues) turned out rather successful in their work. This allows them to find more positive features in their employment for construction of their identities. Ekaterina and Zhanna do not reject their belonging to shuttle trade, they just try to redefine the status of their work and want to be perceived as representatives of higher status groups in their hierarchy. Actually Ekaterina, for instance, reproduces many symbols of the middle class (aspiring to partnership relations with men, behavior in public space, consumption practices). I argue that post-Soviet transformations give women some new patterns for self-identification. The official Soviet contract of a working **mother** was replaced by contracts of a **working** mother, a professional woman, a housewife (Temkina and Rotkirch 2002: 12), and correspondingly more diverse practices and identities became available.

But not all women won in the process of transformation. Some of them lost their status and experienced a complicated conflict in their identities. As the case of Olga shows, these transformations were especially hard for educated women who shared their belonging to the intelligentsia. Being involved in shuttle trade, Olga continues to reproduce the attitude to this type of employment shared by her previous social group. She opposes herself to her colleagues and declines to be associated with traders. It blocks the possibility of constructing a positive identity for her. This frustration attaches a very pessimistic vein to her narrative.

The last point I would like to mention is how different ideologies influence our self-representation. All my interviewees reproduce some ideologies – gender ideology concerning male and female work, socialist or neoliberal ideology in respect to entrepreneurship, and so on. The case of Zhanna seems to me the most transparent example of how market discourse of post-Soviet transformations was perceived by people and used in the process of identity construction. The idea of a “natural born” entrepreneur was a part of a neoliberal ideology resting upon the principles of private initiative and equal opportunities. As Zhurzhenko argues, this ideology was used for the justification of a new post-Soviet order based on the market economy (Zhurzhenko 2008: 74). The impoverishment of people was explained by their negative personal characteristics (lack of initiative, laziness, inclination to doubts) that did not allow them to occupy prestigious positions in a new society. As Zhanna’s case shows, the neoliberal rhetoric was appropriated by some people and became a significant base for their self-perception and for the construction of their identities.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Elena Gapova, the supervisor of my MA thesis at the European Humanities University (Vilnius, Lithuania), for her precious comments which prompted me to the idea of this article. I am also grateful to Christine Beresniová for her editorial assistance with this article.

<sup>2</sup> Olga Sasunkevich is a PhD student at Greifswald University, Germany. She received an MA in Cultural Studies with a Gender Studies specialization at the European Humanities University in Vilnius, Lithuania in 2008. She holds a BA in Journalism from Belarusian State University. Her research interests include post-socialism, gender studies, gender and economy, women’s work, border studies, and ethnography.

<sup>3</sup> 100,000 Belarusian rubles is approximately US\$35.

<sup>4</sup> I borrow the category of “pride” from the political movements of the 1960s when race and sexual orientation became a source of pride and the basis for construction of identity. I

consider that process as an attempt of black people or gays to redefine their stigmatized status and to turn race and sexuality into positive features which could be used as a base for self-identification and political struggle for recognition.

<sup>5</sup> Actually, Coupland considers five process of contextualization: targeting, framing, voicing, keying, and loading (Coupland 2007: 111). Voicing, keying and loading are chiefly focused on the style of speaking (pronunciation, tone, manner) so they are more functional for sociolinguistic analyses than for discourse analyses.

<sup>6</sup> One of the examples Goffman borrows from the M.A. report of J.B. Ralph “The Junk Business and the Junk Peddler:” “...the junk peddler is vitally interested in keeping information as to the true financial value of ‘junk’ to the general public. He wishes to perpetuate the myth that junk is valueless and that the individuals who deal in it are ‘down and out’ and should be pitied.” According to Goffman, “such impressions have an idealized aspect, for if the performer is to be successful he must offer the kind of scene that realizes the observers’ extreme stereotypes and hapless poverty” (Goffman 1959: 40).

<sup>7</sup> I would like to note that the concept of “pride identity” is a field concept. I mean that it was introduced not before but after the analysis of interviews. Firstly, the interviews were interpreted as information about the women’s participation in shuttle trade. But analyzing the interviews I, thanks to Elena Gapova, paid attention to some common features of the representation of self by my respondents. It required me to return to the interviews and to raise new research questions. The common strategy of self-representation demonstrated in interviews is designated as “pride identity.”

<sup>8</sup> The empirical data of my MA thesis consists of five semi-structured interviews with women who worked as shuttle traders in Minsk and of observations of the practices of shuttle traders on the Belarus-Lithuania border.

<sup>9</sup> Here I would like to give a brief overview of shuttle trade as a phenomenon connected with the post-Soviet economic transformations. As Zhurzhenko argues, shuttle trade was an essential tendency of the post-Soviet economy (Zhurzhenko 2008: 97), but it was nevertheless practically invisible in academic discourse (Zhurzhenko 2008: 115). As researchers of shuttle trade in St. Petersburg argue, “for some people this experience provided the basis (both financial and social) for further development of their own trade businesses. For others it was only a chance to survive or to improve their financial situation temporarily” (Olimpieva, Pachenkov, and Ejova, 2007: 17). The participators of interviews which I collected represent both strategies. Some of them were involved in shuttle trade by force but then could transform their activity in more serious businesses; the others continue to work as shuttle traders. Here I analyze the cases of women who are involved in market trade and consider their employment as a rather stable and permanent way of the earning money. In other words, market trade is their basic employment and source of income. In the article I use “market trade” and “shuttle trade” as synonyms but actually shuttle trade is a wider phenomenon which includes market trade. My point of view correlates to the opinion of Olimpieva et al. who regard market trade as one of the types of shuttle trade (Olimpieva, Pachenkov, and Ejova, 2007: 18).

I would like also to underline two sociological tendencies of shuttle trade which are especially important in the context of this article. Firstly, this type of economic activity is



considered as a chiefly female strategy of employment (Andreeva 2003: 129; Olimpiewa, Pachenkov, and Ejova, 2007: 18; Zhurzhenko 2008: 97). Secondly, shuttle trade is traditionally perceived as a low-status and non-prestigious strategy of employment. It is represented by researchers as a stigmatized and marginalized economic activity which is always accompanied by the decline in social status (Andreeva 2003: 132; Zhurzhenko 2008: 98, 108-109).

<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that Temkina and Rotkirch speak primarily about contemporary Russia but their conclusions can be extrapolated at least to Belarus and Ukraine. The situation in the Central Asian and Caucasian countries of the former Soviet Union can differ from the situation in the so-called European part of the former USSR or in the Baltic States.

<sup>11</sup> Empirical citations in this section are taken from the interview “The entrepreneur Olga, the interviewer Olga Sasunkevich, May, 2007.”

<sup>12</sup> The market at the “Dinamo” stadium (*stadion Dinamo*) was organized at the beginning of the 1990s and was one of the first markets in Minsk. It is located in the centre of the city at the territory adjacent to the stadium’s field and arenas. Many Minsk shuttle traders began their activity at this market. Nowadays the market still functions but it lost its meaning as the largest and most popular market in the city. It was pushed aside by newer and more comfortable markets and trade centers which began to appear in the early 2000s. At the moment of the interview the trade in the market was divided into two types. The first – regular trade – was realized by entrepreneurs who occupy market places on the constant basis and pay monthly rent. The second – morning trade – was carried out by traders of Belarusian goods (mostly clothes) on weekdays from 5 to 9 a.m.

<sup>13</sup> The detailed analysis of Soviet gender contracts and their transformation in post-Soviet societies is represented in the article of sociologists Anna Temkina and Anna Rotkirch (Temkina and Rotkirch 2002).

<sup>14</sup> Empirical citations in this section are taken from the interview “Entrepreneur Ekaterina, interviewer Olga Sasunkevich, February, 2008.”

<sup>15</sup> The faculty of international relations at Belarusian State University had been considered for a long time (especially in the Soviet times) as one of the most prestigious in Belarus.

<sup>16</sup> Here I should mention that the image of a woman with a huge checkered bag had been considered for a long time as the symbol of the first post-Soviet decade when shuttle trade was a really mass phenomenon and traders brought their goods from Poland and Russia in the cheap plastic bags which could carry much weight.

<sup>17</sup> Empirical citations in this section are taken from the interview “The entrepreneur Zhanna, the interviewer Olga Sasunkevich, May, 2008.”

<sup>18</sup> As of June 1, 2009, the cost per square meter in “Parking” was US\$ 84,6 - US\$112,8, and at the market where Zhanna worked – US\$28,2 – US\$35,3.

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