Overcoming uncertainty:

Moscow merchants’ wealth and inheritance in the second half of the nineteenth century.

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Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to obtaining the degree of Doctor of History and Civilization of the European University Institute

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Overcoming uncertainty:

Moscow merchants’ wealth and inheritance in the second half of the nineteenth century.

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Researcher declaration to accompany the submission of written work
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Abstract

In recent years, there has been an explosion of literature about material inequality and the historical linkages between socio-economic disparities and inheritance strategies. These studies mainly focus on Western Europe and North America, while histories of personal wealth in the Russian Empire are underrepresented.

My dissertation investigates the role of social stratification and private property rights in the accumulation and redistribution of personal wealth among the Russian urban population. I particularly focus on guild merchants during the second half of the nineteenth century. I have examined this group because merchants straddled social estates (as defined by law), class (as defined by socio-economic activity) and most were successful in the accumulation of personal assets.

In investigating the membership books of Moscow guild merchants, last wills, inheritance valuations, wardships, and other sources, I show that guild merchants successfully managed low social and economic appreciation of mercantile agency imposed by the authorities and were able to accumulate wealth. The moderate, yet stable, number of guild merchants was the result of a fledgling internal market rather than ineffective business practices. The proportion of transmitted inheritances to the Gross National Product was low (4 percent), which suggests that inheritances benefitted the lives of urban Muscovites, but only moderately. The social inequality of wealth distribution was high (150 times between honorary citizens and artisans in Moscow in 1892), though between 1888 and 1908 the number of testators in the Russian Empire increased two times and value of transmitted inheritances increased by 12 percent.

Excluding guild merchants, the rest of the urban population preferred single universal inheritance transmission. Guild merchants, however, chose more egalitarian, gender-neutral bequeathing patterns which lowered successor’s future income uncertainty.

The variations and shifts in bequeathing patterns suggest that the less egalitarian inheritance strategies (embraced by the majority of the urban population) were balanced by higher value inheritances among guild merchants which applied more egalitarian inheritance strategies. As a result, the level of material inequality was likely moderate in comparison to other countries, and the urban population was less destitute than previously described in other studies. Thus, my research contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence and accurate estimations of the levels of personal wealth along social and geographic lines in late Imperial Russia.
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List of abbreviations

Ezhegodnik Ministerstva Finansov – EMF
Sbornik statisticheskikh svedenii Ministerstva Iustitsii – sb. stat. sved. MIu
Polnyi Svod Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii – SZRI
Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii – PSZRI
Tsentralnyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Moskvy, Otdel khraneniia do 1917 – TsGA Moskvy
OKhD do 1917
Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv – RGIA
Otdel rukopisei pri Gosudarstvennom Istoricheskom Muzee – OR GIM
Otdel Rukopisei Rossiiskoi Gosudarstvennoi Biblioteki im. Lenina – OR RGB
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Introduction

This dissertation examines the connections between occupational uncertainty, wealth accumulation and its management by Moscow guild merchants in the second half of the nineteenth century. I analyse last wills, wardship cases, numerous quantitative prosopographical sources, official statistics and demographic data. Using these sources, I investigate how guild merchants’ personal micro-level decision-making about the size and structure of families, occupation, decisions about wealth accumulation and investment, and inheritance practices influenced national-level economic development and vice versa. In particular, I question whether inheritance strategies and patterns of bequests influenced wealth inequality and economic growth in the Russian Empire. Similarly, I examine whether Russia was unique in this regard and if these patterns differed from other European countries.

There is a long-established scholarly tradition of faulting Russian merchants for low occupational reproduction, instability and risk-averse behaviour. These arguments blame Russian merchants for their general inability to produce an analogue of the European middle class (i.e. the accumulation of a substantial proportion of wealth) and their failure to foster liberal movements which would or should have prevented the collapse of the Russian Empire. I call these assertions the merchant myth. I argue that, when challenged by new data, the merchant myth appeared to be based mainly on scholars’ intuitive preconceptions and ideological constructs, which do not reflect the reality of nineteenth century merchant behaviour. The spectre of serfdom constrained the development of an internal market and also challenged the healthy development of a distinct group of full-time businessmen (as opposed to part-time, seasonal peasant traders). Nevertheless, I argue that guild merchants successfully balanced the uncertainty of their status and the limitations placed on their property rights in this hostile economic environment.

The Russian business community in the second half of the nineteenth century (including all mercantile and entrepreneurial agents), and especially Moscow guild merchants, are at the centre of my research. I focus on guild merchants because this legal social estate was officially defined and can be traced easily in official statistics. Also, guild merchants were likewise involved in profit-extracting occupations which meant that members likely owned wealth. Contrary to the Russian-Soviet tradition of applying the murky European concepts of the “bourgeoisie” or middle class to Russian merchants, I largely leave the discussion of these
concepts to other researchers. While I include some speculations about the similarities and differences between Russian and European merchants, these assertions are peripheral to the main aim of my research: I do not aim to provide a comprehensive framework for analysing Russian guild merchants as part of the middle class or bourgeoisie. On the contrary, I aim to analyse the impact of their occupation and legal social status on personal life cycles and wealth management.

My first objective is to examine whether the discrepancy between the legal (soslovie or estate membership) and economic statuses of the members of the Russian business community posed a general obstacle to labour mobility, personal assets accumulation and economic growth. In other words, I examine the effectiveness of soslovie membership as it relates to occupational mobility and wealth accumulation. Legislation on mercantile agency in the Russian Empire was flexible. It provided individuals who were seeking extra income or full-time occupations with a variety of opportunities in trade, production and service. Official membership in the guild merchant soslovie depended on the annual purchase of a merchant (soslovie) patent, which was mandatory between 1824 and 1898. The guild patents provided holders and their family members with legal, social and economic privileges. Peasant and meshchane (towns people) trade did not require a patent because this mercantile activity was lower in profitability. Without a patent, however, these mercantile agents did not receive additional social and economic privileges.

Russian history provides multiple examples of legal attempts to balance the fiscal needs of the Russian State with a social order that would successfully define subjects vis a vis state (estate society) and occupational status (class society) or ethnic status. Scholars agree that the social tissue of the Russian state was fragmentary which on the one hand, allowed to introduce new social estates endlessly, however, on the other hand, the social categories were always chaotic, and many people were left unattached to any social estate. History shows that the majority of attempts at mercantile social reforms, when viewed in the context of inherited shortages of bureaucratic apparatuses, low urbanisation, and the vast geographic areas populated by numerous specific social groups, were not successful. The paradox, however, is that loosely regulated connections between the occupational and social legal statuses (here, the

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2 Before 1824 there was another system of enrolment in the soslovie.
guild merchantry) in the Russian Empire show little evidence that merchants were hampered by an imbalance of supply and demand in the internal market. On the contrary, data on the evolution of the number of guild merchants and the business-related population shows that the community increased proportionally to the increase of the urban population throughout the nineteenth century and was balanced by the demands of the internal market. My argument is supported by evidence which shows that the abolition serfdom (1861), the annulment of the third merchant guild (1863), and the reduction and later abolition of redemption payments (1881 and 1907) did not substantially alter the behaviour and evolution of guild merchants or the business community in general. My data shows that both groups grew moderately throughout the nineteenth century. Similarly, I argue that, in the context of the institutional framework of serfdom and the extended agricultural specialisation of Russian population, scholars cannot simply limit the number of mercantile agents to professional full-time guild merchants. The omission of trading peasants, small-scale producers and retailers from analysis runs the risk of distorting interpretations of the role and significance of Russian mercantile agency.

What distinguishes my work from previous studies of this nature is my focus on the broader perspective and my incorporation of new sources. I consistently contextualise the Moscow business community and guild merchants, which I compare to mercantile agents across Russia and to the non-business-related population. I also combine impersonal statistics with individual events in the life cycle of families and suggest that marriage, birth, death and occupational mobility in different groups influenced the evolution of soslovie and the business community (and vice versa). I question how soslovie legal regulations affected demographic and occupational behaviour of guild merchants. Additionally, I ask whether wealth in the nineteenth century affected mortality and if the family and personal livelihoods of Moscow merchants were influenced by occupational uncertainty and “status stress” (membership was not hereditary and depended on annual patent purchases). What were the differences in personal strategies, demographic behaviour and property management patterns between members of the first and the second guilds other than the value and extent of trade and production? Another novel feature of my work is that it is the first attempt to calculate gender-specific life expectancy data on Moscow guild merchants. I do so in order to investigate whether demographic transition and the general influence of wealth on life expectancy is relevant to nineteenth century Russian society. While these trends have been explored in other European countries, they have never been examined in the Russian context for an extended geographical area and chronological period.
What emerges from my analysis of published and unpublished sources on the occupational and demographic evolution of the Russian business community, is that the trajectory of the Russian guild merchantry substantially mirrored the evolution of European mercantile institutions (by stages and types of agency, not by state-merchant relationships). At some chronological points, however, the general trend of the evolution of the guild merchantry diverged and converged, influenced by regional political and economic specificity. As in Europe, Russian mercantile institutions went through several stages of evolution. Individual agency was replaced by associations of mercantile agents: in Europe by guilds and in Russia by the sto (a Russian guild-like mercantile institution). Later guild-like institutions were replaced by family firms which by the mid to late nineteenth century, were replaced by (global) corporations and public companies run by external managers. It is commonly argued that the juxtaposition of the guild merchantry as both an economic and a separate legal social institution was detrimental to the development of a sophisticated merchant class. But this explanation seems to be motivated by a misinterpretation of the evolution of the number and internal composition of the group. Adjusted and placed in context, data suggests that there were positive aspects to the evolution of Russian mercantile institutions, and Russian merchants behaved much the same as their European counterparts. In the face of occupational uncertainty, Russian merchants developed strategies to cope with risk and economic fluctuation that closely resembled those used by European agents, particularly family planning and the development of safety nets which consisted of kin members and friends.4 My data calculations suggest that wealth levels were an important precondition when considering business survival and family strategy.

The second objective of my research is to explore how wealthy the Russian population, particularly the urban population, was on the eve of the 1917 Revolutions. How many wealthy people were there in the Russian Empire and how unequally were they distributed along social and geographical lines? The main limitation of all contemporary research on pre-revolutionary material inequality and living standards is a paucity of data. The few scholars who have published research on the topic usually use (1) two pre-revolutionary national-level surveys which estimated personal income over 1,000 roubles and provide fragmentary data on the value of individual income from some (but not all) sources, (2) anthropometrical data, (3) data on tax

4 For a detailed discussion of family and business strategies see, for example, Morris, R. J., Men, Women, and Property in England, 1780-1870. A Social and Economic History of Family Strategies amongst the Leeds Middle Classes (Cambridge, 2005).
collection, (4) demographic data etc. Each of these approaches, unfortunately, are flawed and lack specific details. In suggesting that the level of income inequality at the eve of revolution was moderate in comparison to other counties, scholars limited their observations to general overviews of phenomena. As a result, they cannot provide detailed specifications about the social and economic characteristics of the Russian population as a whole.

Apart from income, wealth is another means of understanding the level of material inequality and living standards prior to the Russian Revolutions. To date, no academic can provide information on how many Russians were able to save extra income (other than data on the number and value of saving accounts in banks) nor can they explain which strategies allowed for these savings. Similarly, they cannot explain how individuals combined different sources of income and which assets they preferred to accumulate. Previous academic studies cannot account for how the level and composition of personal wealth was connected to social stratification or to the level of wealth inequality in pre-revolutionary Russia. They also cannot explain the gaps between the average wealth of members of different social and professional groups as, for example, guild merchants and artisans. This gap seriously influences our understanding of the effects of industrialisation on personal well-being (both material and physical) and also limits our understanding of State-society relationships on the eve of revolution. Debates about the material causes of the 1917 February Revolution mainly centre around the material well-being of the rural population, without thoroughly investigating the material assets of the urban population. This is not only the result of ideological posturing, but also a lack of readily available data.

Numerous Western studies on this topic suggest that inheritance probations, the valuation of gifts inter vivos and wardship cases are the best sources to investigate the wealth of the

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5 Prokopovich, S.N., *Opyt ischisleniia narodnogo dokhoda 50 gubernii Evropeiskoi Rossii v 1900-1913* (Moskva, 1918); *Opyt priblizitelnego ischisleniia narodnogo dokhoda po raznym ego istochnikam i po razmeram v Rossii. materialy po proekte Polozheniiia o gosudarstvennom podokhodnom naloge* (SPb, 1906); *Podokhodnyi nalog. Ozhidaemoe chislo platelshchikov, ikh dokhod i summa naloga, po issledovaniiu, proizvedennomu poddatnymi inspektorami i kazennymi palatami v 1909-1910* (SPb, 1910).

deceased, which serve as a sufficient proxy for the value of their wealth while alive. These sources, contrary to the national surveys, open up individual perspectives and present sufficiently specified data on personal wealth. What is more important, and again contrary to national surveys and officially gathered statistics on taxes, arrears and population movement, is that inheritance probations and sources of this kind usually do not change in internal composition and authenticity of valuations over time.

An analysis of official, though unpublished, estimations of the value of personal wealth transferred through inheritance shows that between 1885 and 1905, the proportion of wealth transferred through inheritance (gifts inter vivos included) was only 4 percent of the Gross National Product (GNP) in Russia (for comparison, in France at the end of the nineteenth century it was 25 percent, 21 percent in Britain and 16 percent in Germany). The proportion of deceased adults who left inheritances of any value, however, increased between these dates, from 13 to 22 percent. The proportion of gifts inter vivos to the value of transmitted inheritances also increased twofold. The broad implication of these findings is that contrary to the widely accepted preconception of a poor, pauperized Russian population from the seventeenth century to the Revolutions (supported mainly by pre-Soviet and Soviet scholars with regards to the Russian population in general), I suggest that there was, in addition to a thin layer of wealthy entrepreneurs, a larger group of the population who benefited from economic growth. The benefit (here, wealth) was, however, distributed very unequally along both social and geographical lines. Inheritances were concentrated in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. The two capital cities accounted for 42 percent of transmitted inheritances in value and 20 percent in number (on average between 1888-1890). The average value of the wealth of Moscow guild merchants was 20 times higher than the average wealth of Moscow town-dwellers (meshchanin) and 100 times higher than average wealth of Moscow artisans. The huge gap


8 See a further discussion about the existing historiography in Kotsonis, Ia., Kak krestian delali otstalymi: selskokhoziaistvennaia kooperatsiia i i agrarnyi vopros v Rossii 1861-1914 (Moskva, 2006); Mironov, B. N., Blagosostoianie naseleniia i revoliutsii v imerskoi Rossi. XVIII - nachalo XX veka (Moskva, 2010).
between the average value of wealth among the social groups of urban population, however, does not automatically imply a dangerously revolutionary level of wealth inequality. Income is more important than wealth to maintaining lifestyles. The wage of educated professionals (medical practitioners or lawyers, for example) at the beginning of the twentieth century, was only 4 to 5 times higher than industrial labourers’ wages.\(^9\)

I suggest that inequality in wealth distribution is not only about the proportion of the poor to the wealthy or the daily consumed quality and quantity of calories. Instead, it relates to which proportion of the population expected a comfortable life, and how this related to real opportunities. For example, in 1883 Moscow merchant Aleksandr V. Kniazev wrote to his newly-married wife from the Novgorod trade fair. He described and valued his desired level of comfort: a spacious and bright apartment, muslin curtains, a marble washbasin, a large and elegant French bed, and glamorous mirrors. To this particular merchant, to live without numerous household items (spoons, plates, kitchen linen, etc. valued at 200 roubles) was a matter of life and death. Without them the couple would live like “dirty pigs”.\(^10\) Moscow merchant widow Varakina Praskovia suggested in 1883 that an annual net income of 2,000 roubles would provide her and her two underage daughters with a comfortable life.\(^11\) Ideally, a study about the value of wealth versus expectations would require individual-level evidence about what constituted a “comfortable life” and what annual income this life required. This was, however, outside the primary focus of my research. Instead, I approached the question of material inequality from the perspective of the role of income and wealth generating institutions of inheritance in Russia.

The third objective of this dissertation was to question the effectiveness of the institution of private property in the Russian Empire, with special focus on the role of inheritance transfers in the redistribution of parental wealth. Similarly, I examine the role of inheritance in the creation of favourable conditions for increasing inheritors’ income opportunities, and the role of inheritance in decreasing levels of uncertainty in the next generation.

I understand the effectiveness of the institution of private property within the framework of institutional economics. This framework refers to a number of economically relevant concepts, two of which are most applicable to my research. The first concept is the way well-defined

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ownership structures influence the distribution of wealth and consumption. The second is whether property rights allow, or to what extent limit, intergenerational property transfers. Thus, if classical economists understood property rights as a way to exclude some individuals from extracting profit from assets, the approach of institutional economics refers to private property rights as a set of rules which appeared from individual answers to official legislation, or the lack thereof. The effective institution of private property rights allows individuals to invest, control and transfer assets. The Russian Empire, however, never overcame the feudal, land-oriented character of personal property, and personal rights as the basis of property rights were never legally spread to the whole of the Russian population. The exception to this rule was the nobility, but even their rights were limited when it came to intergenerational property transfers. If limited and underregulated policies towards private property rights have previously been described as ineffective, data on the increased number of wealth holders and the value of transmitted wealth casts doubt on this conclusion. The data shows that the institutional approach, rather than an investigation of the issue through legal regulations, was probably most effective. By analysing a sample of last wills, I aim to reconstruct personal responses to State initiatives and suggest an institutional framework of private property rights in the Russian Empire (particularly in Moscow in the second half of the nineteenth century).

The implications of these findings go far beyond individual-level decision-making and influences on inheritors’ fate. I investigate the inheritance strategies of 419 testators and the shares of more than 1,500 inheritors spread across chronological (eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries) and social lines of the Moscow population. In consulting these sources, I establish patterns of wealth management (transmission) and show how these patterns evolved over two centuries. I look at two issues of succession. First, the way assets were partitioned: simple universal, partible, impartible. Second, I examine the type of assets (business, real estate, personalty and capital) transferred to different inheritors (sons, daughters, spouses, or others). In investigating these two aspects of property management, I aim to show whether occupational uncertainty (here, guild merchantry membership) influenced wealth accumulation and its redistribution. I also seek to understand whether inheritance strategies in Russia were as inequality-generating as in Europe, especially in the context of more relaxed constraints on the property management of Russian women. The data on the proportion of Russian rentiers by

soslovie in 1897, the proportion of women testators in Moscow (1908-1917) (above 40 percent) and an increased proportion of wives and daughters mentioned in wills, however, suggest that in Russia, disproportional wealth distribution was more likely based on social estate membership rather than gender.\textsuperscript{13} Likewise, the comparatively low proportion of inheritances to GNP\textsuperscript{14} was the result of non-egalitarian inheritance strategies, which applied to the majority of the Russian, or at least Muscovite, urban population. The Moscow merchantry, and especially the wealthiest merchants, contrary to the rest of the urban population which favoured simple universal inheritance transmission, adopted partible inheritance transmission. Simple universal inheritance transmission, as opposed to egalitarian (partible) divisions of wealth, positively influenced the widening of the gap between people with lower levels of wealth and people with substantial levels of wealth. I suggest that the huge gap in the level of wealth between merchants and meshchane, discussed above, was partly caused by the non-egalitarian inheritance strategies of the majority of the Moscow population (i.e. all except merchants). By transferring all wealth to one successor, other inheritors were free from parental manipulation but also inheritance prospects. Instead, in merchant families, the possibility of receiving a share of inheritance probably decreased the general level of occupational anxiety and also the level of social mobility for male and female.

My study of the inheritance strategies of Moscow merchants is applicable far beyond the immediate context. By studying the merchant guild soslovie and their practices of social, economic, occupational and family reproduction, with a special focus on inheritance transfers, I show that their strategies deviated from the general practices of members of other legal social estates. Studying the Moscow guild merchantry is especially important because this legal social estate (and honorary citizens), which was only 4.2 percent of the Moscow population, held a quarter of real estate and received 45.6 percent of the total value of their net income from privately held Moscow real estate. As a result, my study furthers our understanding of the impact of social stratification and occupational anxieties, which is especially relevant to the effects of early stage industrialisation and moreover, shows how inheritance strategies impacted economic growth and the levels of material inequality in the Russian Empire. Finally, my dissertation offers a valuable case study of Russian private property institutions from the largely underdeveloped perspective of inter-familial, gender-specific transmissions of

\textsuperscript{13} In the eighteenth century, 22 percent of merchant wills mentioned daughters and 36 percent mentioned wives, compared to 34 and 58 percent in the nineteenth century, respectively.

\textsuperscript{14} Gross National Product – a monetary measure of all goods and services produced in a given period of time by a countries’ residents, could be applied to estimate the differences in living between nations.
businesses, real estate, charity donations, marriage, and their influence on macroscale economic development of the Russian Empire.

My dissertation provides the most thorough scholarly attempt at measuring the gap between the average level of wealth along social (and to a lesser extent geographical) lines, in order to explore the mechanisms of wealth management and identify the factors which explain social and economic change in late Imperial Russia. I explore property transfer motivations (through inheritance patterns and patterns of inheritance bequests), combined with previously ignored statistics about the value and the number of transmitted inheritances and gifts inter vivos across social, geographical and chronological lines. Thus, my analysis significantly alters the commonly held view of the Russian population as economically illiterate and bound to explicit or implicit social expectations and profit-averse behaviour. Additionally, my study puts general statements about the consistent increase in the level of personal well-being in late Imperial Russia in real numbers.15

My focus on the personal behaviour and rationality of Moscow testators is grounded in ideas about institutional and behavioural economics. As opposed to classical approaches, I suggest that economic development could be substantially altered by personal understandings of more or less optimal decisions. These decisions, however, were not always more profitable. Within the analytical and conceptual framework of my dissertation, I see that Moscow guild merchant’s (not including their family members) individual decisions were strongly influenced by both social and economic contexts.16 The idea of *Homo Economicus*, that individual preferences are rational and stable and their decision-making processes are always grounded in profit maximising behaviour where money has no social meaning, is not always applicable. In reality, the merchants and testators in my sample showed features of both rational and irrational behaviour.17 They could choose to provide children with lifetime, gender-specific conditional shares of inheritance while at the same time granting grandchildren unconditional and gender-neutral inheritances.18 Many testators were emotionally invested and bound by social expectations when they drafted a will. Some, however, knowing their successors’

15 See the basic comparisons of income, real wages and equality level in European countries, including the Russian Empire in: Leonard, C. and Ljungberg, J.: ‘Population and Living Standards’.
weaknesses (rational behaviour), their lack of motivation, or ability to run the family business imposed conditions on their children’s inheritances or provided successors with shares they deemed manageable based on the individual characteristics.

The methods and concepts of moral and behavioural economy discussed above are not the only methodologies applied in my dissertation. By placing the uncertainty of mercantile agency, wealth accumulation and wealth redistribution at the centre of my research, I employ interdisciplinary methods related to social (family, gender, urban and rural social history and historical demography) and economic history (institutional theory and business history) as well as sociology (social stratification, class and social estates).

**Secondary Literature**

The Russian guild merchant has been an object of numerous scholarly studies, which incorporate a variety of aspects of merchant life from professional to cultural practices and their relationship to Russian officialdom. While these aspects of the Imperial Russian merchanty have been explored by Russian and Western scholars, some specific aspects of this history have been largely neglected or ignored (particularly the connection between personal wealth and occupational uncertainty, inheritance transmission and status reproduction). Other studies, while accurate, have never explored the specific issues I examine, such as the effectiveness of the institutional frameworks of mercantile agency and personal property rights.

The negative influences of occupational uncertainty and status anxiety over professional performance among the Russian merchanty has long been established by Richard Pipes and Jo Ann Ruckman. They argue that Russian merchants were substantially limited by the oppressive State, whose “institutional weakness” was unable to provide subjects with effective social frameworks. This argument, however, lacks empirical support. To these scholars, post-reform Russian society remained a polarised system of “fragmented networks” (the core and periphery) and was “particularistic” and “sedimentary”. All these characteristics were bound

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to the idea of a society plagued by instability as a result of the huge variations of attitudes across geographic, demographic, ethnic and cultural issues.\(^{22}\)

Other scholars have challenged the argument that “traditional images of Imperial Russia […] convey a society of rigid, stagnant, and hierarchical relationships”.\(^{23}\) In their view, Russian society was very mobile and open to change, where the boundaries between social groups were flexible (and even “indeterminate”) and society absorbed “multiple structures”.\(^{24}\) Despite their important contribution, these academics are likewise rarely able to support their arguments with empirical data on, for example, the rates of social and occupational mobility.

Moscow guild merchant social mobility, rates of intergenerational business transfer and demographic reproduction have only been examined in the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century. The later period is largely overlooked. One exception are the numerous qualitative and quantitative studies about a group of Siberian guild merchants in the second half of the nineteenth century.\(^{25}\) Scholars researched the Siberian merchantry by applying methods of record linkage: their findings suggest that the annual rate of merchant soslovie mobility was between 5-10 percent of the total number of members. By the third generation, 20 percent of merchant family businesses survived. These academics likewise suggested that the trend and rates of demographic and occupational evolution of merchant soslovie, with subtle variations, were also shared by merchants throughout all the Russian provinces.\(^{26}\) Until recently, however, academics have not compared these findings with data on the Central

\(^{22}\) Wcislo, Reforming Rural Russia, p. 5.


\(^{24}\) Wirtschafter, Structures of Society, p. xi.


provinces in order to prove or disprove the assertions made by Siberian scholars. I suggest that the general lack of research interest is partly due to time consuming methodologies (in late Imperial Russia merchants in all Siberian provinces were only a tenth of the size of the Moscow guild merchant population). Similarly, more scholars appear interested in Moscow and Saint Petersburg when discussing social and national composition, political ambitions, charity, gender, etc.\footnote{For example, see Owen, T. C., Capitalism and Politics in Russia. A Social History of the Moscow Merchants, 1855-1905 (Cambridge, New York, 1981); Baryshnikov, M.N., Politika i predprinimatelstvo v Rossii. (Iz istorii vzaimodeistviia v nachale XX veka) (SPb, 1997); Osmanov, A. I., Peterburgskoe kapechestvo v poslednii chetverti XVIII - nachale XX veka (S.-Peterburg, 2005); Shatsillo, M. K., Sotsialnyi sostav Rossiiskoi burzhuazii kontsa XIX veka (Moskva, 2004); Gavlin, M. L., Formirovanie krynnoi moskovskoi burzhuazii vo vtoroi polovine XIX veka (60-e - 90-e gody) (Moskva, 1973); Petrov, Iu.A., Chastnoe predprinimatelstvo v dorevolutsionnoi Rossi: etnokonfessionalnaia struktura i regionalnoe razvitie, XIX - nachalo XX vv. (Moskva, 2010); Ulianova, G. N., Female Entrepreneurs in Nineteenth-Century Russia, vol. 2 (London, Brookfield, 2009); Ulianova, G. N., ‘Old Believers and New Entrepreneurs’, in James L. West & Iurii Petrov (ed.), Merchant Moscow: Images of Russia’s Vanished Bourgeoisie, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007, pp. 61–71; Petrov, Moskovskii burzhuaziia, p. 4.}

The flexible and porous structure of the Russian business community has affected the parameters of research objectives in the work of many Russian and Western scholars. For example, Yuri A. Petrov, the author of the most complex and thorough research about Moscow merchants and entrepreneurs at the beginning of the twentieth century, defined his research subject as “partly based on Soviet tradition ... and partly on traditions of Western historiography”. He similarly described merchants as “bourgeoisie,” which, for him, was a “general term for all entrepreneurial layers of society”.\footnote{Petrov, Moskovskii burzhuaziia, p. 4.} How these entrepreneurial layers, proportionally and conceptually, intersect with the guild merchantry, however, is not specified. The issues he confronted, and his sources show that the term “bourgeoisie” only applied to the wealthiest business elite (with wealth over 100,000 roubles) and Moscow citizens who, based on the 1909 national survey, were eligible to pay income tax (around 70,000 people with annual incomes over 1,000 roubles).

Theoretical reflections about the concept of the Russian bourgeoisie, middle class and the evolution of society from estate to class structures lie outside the main focus of my dissertation, as mentioned above. Yet, a general overview of works by both Western and Russian scholars suggests that there is still little common understanding of what the Russian business community looked like in terms of numbers, structure, productive relations, social identity, and personal
and material well-being. Views on the subject vary. Pamela Pilbeam questions the existence of the middle class in late Imperial Russia. She describes it as a very underdeveloped, fragmentary, proto-middle class because, in her view, the middle class is a product of industrial development and Russia began industrialising very late. Even before 1917 the Russian situation differed from the Central and Western European pattern so dramatically that the author concludes that “The Russian middle class did not exist because its constituent elements were determined to avoid fusion and identification.”

C. Timberlake alternatively claims that “by the end of the nineteenth century the industrialization and... division of labour had produced in Russia middle-class groups that performed the same functions as their counterparts in Western Europe ... [yet the middle classes were largely invisible because] the government’s aim was to co-opt the new elites into traditional positions of privilege rooted in the society of orders”. Between these two extremes, E. Wirtschaftschafter suggests more subtle, country-specific definitions of the middle class that illuminates both similarities and differences. With few exceptions, the historiography of Russian, especially urban, society in the late Imperial period describes a bleak existence of lost opportunities and unrealised expectations.

Occasional attempts to estimate the size of the middle class rely on income estimations of wealthy voters, national surveys of income distribution among the wealthiest strata of the population (B. Mironov) or calculations of the proportion of the population with suitable intellectual, industrial or commercial backgrounds. Pilbeam estimated that the proportion of the middle class in Russia at the beginning of the nineteenth century was 2 percent, growing to 10 percent by the end of the century. Boris Mironov based his calculations on income based

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30 Pilbeam, *Middle Classes*, pp. 18, 68, 80, 135.


34 Pilbeam, *Middle Classes*, p. 18.
characteristics of middle class membership, and estimated that at the end of the long nineteenth
century, the middle class was 5.5 percent of the Russian population.35

Almost every scholar who has investigated the problems of the merchant soslovie, the social
stratification of the business elite, or any question related to wealth, income and living
standards in Russia, remark on their inability to provide any direct estimations of wealth or
income prior to 1900.36 While the value of the personal wealth and income of the urban
population before 1900 is difficult to evaluate and compare with other countries, the available
data on workers’ wages in agriculture allow for general comparisons. To place Russian income
inequality in the context of world-wide trends (in 1870, 1890 and 1913), C. Leonard and J.
Ljungberg utilised data on agricultural worker wages which, for an agrarian country such as
Russia, seems representative of calculations prior to the last decade of the long nineteenth
century. After 1913, when the pace of industrial development was higher, these results are
probably biased and less accurate but still the only sources available.37

Sources

Archival sources on Moscow guild merchant social and demographic statistics, as well as
last wills, probations and wardship cases for the second half of the nineteenth century, are
preserved in the Central Historical Archive of Moscow (TsGA Moskvy OKhD do 1917). Statistics on the value and number of transmitted inheritances and gifts inter vivos are
preserved in the Russian State Historical Archive in Saint Petersburg (RGIA). I also consulted
supplementary sources at the Manuscript Department of the State Historical Museum in
Moscow (OPI GIM) and at the Manuscript Department of the Russian State Library (OR RGB).

This dissertation is based on a variety of sources: sources on the evolution of the business
demography of the Russian business community (Moscow guild merchantry membership
books both published and unpublished for the years 1863, 1879, 1880, 1881,1897 and 1910),
official statistics of the number of merchants and business-related individuals, bankruptcy
statistics (1885-1898), archival registers of guild merchant families and other materials and
documents of this nature. In total, I have accessed more than 12,000 personal profiles of
Moscow merchants who were actively involved in business from the first quarter of the
nineteenth century until 1917.

35 Mironov, Sotsial’naia istoriia Rossii, pp. 142–143.
36 Mironov: ‘Kakai a doroga vedet k revoliutsii’, p. 101; Petrov, Mosovskaia burzhuzia, p. 60; Startsev, A.
V., Goncharov, IU. M., Istoriia predprinimatelstva Sibiri, p. 131; Bovykin, V.I., Zarozhdenie finansovogo
I also incorporated sources which provide information on the demography (life expectancy) of Russian merchants, changes in their family size and structure and the personal life cycles of individual Moscow guild merchants in the second half of the nineteenth century. This data was collected from the unpublished merchant soslovie registry books which contain sections on deceased members of the soslovie and indicate members who left the soslovie. This allows me to calculate the average life expectancy of the members of the merchant soslovie and compare this information with national data on life expectancy. Such comparisons allow me to investigate whether or when the connection between wealth, occupation and gender appeared in Russia, and Moscow specifically. The same unpublished registers, contrary to the published versions which provide only the names and age of male family members, contain information about all individuals enrolled on a merchant’s patent, including family members, their age and kin relation. The data on the lifetime of Moscow merchants and members of their families was collected from the prosopographical appendix in Galina N. Ulianova’s manuscript on wealthy Moscow merchant philanthropists.38

The data gathered from sources described above was standardised at the time and did not change in internal structure for the whole period under investigation. This implies the accuracy and authenticity of the information.39 The sample of prosopographical data for Moscow guild manery and their family members was collected in 1879 and 1897. The proportion of members who died and left the guild was about 10 percent of the average annual number of certificate holders. The number of merchants’ relatives enrolled on the certificates, and used for calculations of family size, life cycle and other parameters, is about 6,500 people in total over several years between 1863 and 1912. The total number of members in the Moscow merchant soslovie (including family members) was around 23,000. While it may appear that the 6,500 relatives in my sample in 1897 is not large enough to be representative, it is the biggest sample on this topic ever collected and analysed. I suggest that the sample is appropriately sized to draw some connections, or lack thereof, between occupation (here gender-specific membership in merchant soslovie) and factors which shaped personal material well-being. My hypothesis is as follows: if the average longevity of a business and the average age of the members of merchant guilds increased, while the number of family members decreased (i.e. the number of inheritors decreased) it implies that inheritance shares would be larger. Similarly, they would become more gender and asset neutral in that both sons and

38 Ulianova, Blagotvoritelnost moskovskikh predprinimatelei.
39 For a further discussion of source limitations, see Chapter 1.
daughters were likely to receive, for example, real estate. If this hypothesis is correct, it suggests better living standards for generations of children compared to their parents.

Another collection of sources relates to questions of wealth composition and transmission. This collection consists of published and unpublished last wills, inheritance probations, Muscovite wardships (with a primary focus on the guild merchantry, and, for the post-1898 period, merchants and entrepreneurs), supplemented by published and unpublished statistics of the value and number of transmitted inheritances and gifts inter vivos across the Russian Empire. The chronology of sources in this collection covers a more extended period, from the eighteenth century until 1917, in order to examine shifts in Moscow guild merchant inheritance strategies. In total, I was able to access 419 wardships, inheritance transmission cases and drafted wills where personal wealth was valued. The sample of sources in this collection was randomly collected. It is difficult to say with certainty whether or not the files were randomly preserved. For example, in the Moscow Historical Archive I found files of only two Moscow notaries (in 1908 in Moscow there were 26 notaries registered and 33 in 1917). The wills in the notary files (notary registers) were collected chronologically and drafted by people of differing social and material backgrounds, which likely implies random preservation. At the same time, it is unclear if the separate cases of inheritance probations that have survived were entirely random or not.

The court reform of 1864 (apart from its well-known improvements such as trial by jury, public hearings and professional advocates) introduced a unified judicial system across the majority of the Russian Empire. The probation of last wills was also unified and codified, including similar procedures and composition of documents required for probation and inheritance acceptance by successors. From 1864 until 1917, all cases of inheritance succession were under the jurisdiction of the District Courts. Records of probated cases had to be stored at the District Court Archive which, unfortunately was always the case.

It should to be explained that while the 1864 Court Reform unified and improved the judicial system of the Russian Empire, the issue of archival preservation has received less attention. Although the law dictated that the District Courts (where all last wills had to be probated) were required to keep records after the closure of a case, in reality, a substantial number of cases found their way to different institutions (different courts, banks, notary offices, charity organisations etc.) which were connected to the probate process. Legally, there were two types

of last wills: the first type could be made in the testator’s home without notarisation (domashnee zaveshchanie) while the second required a notary and registration in the notary’s assembly book (notarial’noe zaveshchanie). The first type of will could remain in the testators’ home or could be deposited by the testator at the Board of Trustees, established by Empress Maria. They could also be kept in the office or in the guardianship of the Committee of the Council of the Imperial Philanthropic Society. If the calculation of inheritance succession legal fees was incorrect, a copy of the last will had to be sent to the Treasury Chamber (TsGA Moskvy OKhD do 1917, f. 51), which oversaw the verification of fees. In cases where successors were not in agreement with the court resolution, or the way the testator distributed their assets, the case would go to the Trial Chamber (OKhD do 1917, f. 131). If underage heirs remained after the death of the testator, then the last will had to be sent to the Court of Wards (OKhD do 1917, f. 83). For a variety of reasons (usually if the testator had a bank account or unpaid credit) a copy of the original last will went to the Moscow Merchant Society of Mutual Credit (OKhD do 1917, f.120), the Moscow branch of the State bank (OKhD do 1917, f. 450) or to different companies and firms.41 In the case of charity transfers, a copy or extract of the entire will had to be deposited in the records of the charity institution, for example, the fund of the Moscow Merchant Society (OKhD do 1917, f. 3). A substantial number of last wills can be found in the archival holdings of Moscow notaries (OKhD do 1917, f. 1000 - Kazakov, f. 2185 -Konstantinov, f. 1701 - Kedrov, f. 1009 - Memorskii, f. 1010 - Momm, f. 1011 - Nazarov, f. 1013 - Nesviazhskii and the collections of other Moscow notaries). The geographical location of the District Court, where the last will could be probated, depended either on the place where the testator passed away or where their real estate was located, meaning records of last wills could be scattered across the Empire.42

Many historians have noted that files on intergenerational wealth transfers are poorly preserved in the Russian archives. Yuri Petrov commented that the Moscow Historical Archive is no exception in this regard.43 In general, there are three reasons for the poor preservation of archival collections: first, the limitations of the pre-Revolutionary archival system; second, Bolshevik intolerance towards private property and documents which testified to private ownership; and third, damage caused by the evacuation of the entire archival collection during the Second World War and Soviet policies on the preservation of archival documents. It is

42 Polnyi Svod Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, vol. X. part 1 (Sankt-Peterburg, 1911), art. 1060.
43 Petrov, Moskovskaiia burzhuiia, p. 63.
challenging to identify what exactly caused other archival losses: it could be Bolshevik intolerance towards private property or the pre-revolutionary and Soviet policies of archival collection formation and preservation. I will consider these issues as three parts of one process.

The Moscow Historical Archive was introduced in 1925. The exact number of cases in the primary collection of the archive was not registered at that time, nor was it identified in the following years. During the Second World War nearly the entire archival collection was evacuated to Barnaul. The evacuation and the war caused enormous losses to the archival collection. Moreover, as the director of the archive E. G. Boldina confirmed, during the restoration of the archival collection, a considerable number of files were physically damaged or dispersed (the exact number cannot be established). In 1941, 1950 and 1952 the archival materials of the collection were examined for their “historical value”. A number of files, including 5,158 files of the District Court in particular, were deemed “documents not valuable for historical research” and were destroyed. This “evaluation of value” was not unique to Soviet archivists: pre-revolutionary archivists were also involved in this practice. For instance, in the files of the Moscow Municipal Council (Moskovskaia Gorodskaia Uprava, f. 179) there was a file “On the sale of closed cases from the Archive of the Moscow Municipal Council, Moscow Congress of Peace and Moscow Peace Judges”. These invaluable materials were sold “by weight” because there was a “large accumulation of closed cases and lack of free space in the Court archives”.

In the Russian Empire, archival materials were sold due to the lack of free space for storage, but, alternatively, the first years of the Soviet regime were marked by a chronic shortage of writing paper. One way of solving this problem was to launch two so-called “scrap paper campaigns” (from 1919 to 1920 and 1929 to 1930). These campaigns were designed to extract used paper which could be reused for a second time. One of the most important experts of Soviet archive history, T. I. Khorkhordina, found these campaigns among the most destructive actions against the preservation of archival collections. Any specific data on the number of

44 This archive changed its name and title many times over the years.
45 Here I refer to an official clarification by the director of the archive per my request on the 3 April 2012 № 20–22/7.
46 The meaning of “value” was not clear in the technical documentation found in the archive.
47 Moskovskaia Gorodskaia Uprava, Moskovskii Mirovoi Sieezd, Moskovskikh Mirovykie Sud’i.
49 «makulaturnye kampanii»
documents which were lost is unavailable. Neither scholars nor the director of the Moscow Historical Archive could provide any precise information about which documents were repurposed.

To estimate the losses I suggest to use the following data. The Ministry of Justice published annual statistics on the number of cases heard by the District Courts regarding inheritance transmission. For example, in 1885 the Moscow District Court (TsGA Moskvy OKhD do 1917, f. 142) oversaw 659 cases of inheritance transfers.\(^\text{51}\) If we take this number as an average of the annual number of cases in the Moscow District Court between its foundation in 1866 and its dissolution in 1917, there are 33,150 potential sources available.\(^\text{52}\) Based on a quick review of archival registers, I estimate that the number of legal proceedings that remain in the Moscow Historical Archive in this period is between 1,000 and 1,500 cases. Similarly, there are no official or scholarly estimations of the number of last wills drafted annually. Certainly, however, the number of last wills was lower than the number of probated cases on inheritance succession, because a certain number of people died intestate.

The question of data preservation and the terms of access in Russian archives is a very sensitive issue for all scholars who study Russian Imperial and Soviet history. Sergei Antonov suggested that “approximately 90 percent of the records of the Moscow Commercial Court – which is obviously essential for any in-depth study of the Russian merchanty – were deliberately destroyed in the 1930s out of ideological hatred for the bourgeoisie”\(^\text{53}\). While I partially agree with Antonov, I can find no empirical evidence supporting this assertion: I can only state that more merchant inheritance probations were destroyed than those of testators of other social origins.

Yet, a brief analysis of the social status of testators and the number of probate records is still possible. A comparison of the remaining documents in the Moscow Historical Archive with the registers of the archival materials stored in the Moscow District Court Archive shows that the majority of missing probate materials were made by peasants and meshchane.\(^\text{54}\) The bulk of the remaining documents in the Court collections belonged to merchants.\(^\text{55}\) Thus, this

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\(^\text{51}\) Sbornik statisticheskii svedenii Ministerstva Iustitsii za 1884 i 1885 gody. Svedeniia o lichnom sostave i deiatelnosti sudebnnykh ustanovlenii obrazovannykh po ustavam imperatora Aleksandra II, vol. 1-2 (SPb, 1887), pp. 72–73.

\(^\text{52}\) Sb. stat. sved. Miu za 1884-1885, pp. 72–73.


\(^\text{54}\) The first register refers to cases that remain today and are available to researchers. The second register refers to closed probate cases which were inventoried in order to send to the Court Archive.

challenges Khorkhordina, Starostin and Antonov’s assumptions that the Bolsheviks destroyed specific files. They did not purposefully destroy the notarial acts of aristocrats and merchants over those of other social groups. To some extent, this certainly contests widely accepted ideas about the 1918 Bolshevik decrees regarding the abolition of private property and the right of succession. While some notarial archival collections where destroyed (where papers related to private assets were concentrated), in reality it seems that the poor preservation of archival documents is the outcome of many factors.

The archival file on will probation usually consists of:

The death certificate of the testator.

The text of the last will (an original for last wills made at home and an abstract from the notary register book for notarial last wills). The heir (or the executor) had to submit the last will within one year (or two years for persons living abroad).

A declaration of “vacant succession”. There was a special form which could include the following content: description and valuation of the seisin (the value was declared by successors and did not require any verification), capital (in the form of money, bonds and stocks), disputed property (or property which was the subject of a court trial) and a list of creditors and debtors.

A list of the testator’s or deceased personal assets (this was optional and created by the heirs).

A deed of real estate purchases (kupchaia), insurance policies, obligatory bills, commercial books, extracts from the parish registers on the birth of successors (metricheskaia zapis’, to testify to the kinship) and other documents.

A court verdict on the approval of the last will and the appointment of heirs.

The receipt of inheritance taxes payment.

A text issued by the lawsuit of the Treasury chamber, if the District Court’s estimation of the inheritance tax was challenged.

A copy of the court investigation was required if heirs had legal disagreements about the verdict of the District Court on inheritance distribution or if the heirs claimed the will was invalid.

56 Starostin, E. and Khorokhordina, T., Arkhivy i revoliutsiiia (Moskva, 2007).
Wardship was necessary for individuals who could not manage assets either because they were not yet 21 years of age, were physically or mentally disabled, or were considered “over wasters”. Wardship as an official institution was established by the Statute for the Administration of the Provinces of the Russian Empire in 1775. It was based on the principle of social estate division. This meant that there were several civil wardship courts: the nobles were subject to noble custody (Dvorjanskaja opeka), urban dwellers were subject to orphaned court (Sirotskij sud), the clergy were subject to eparchial guardianship (Eparhial'noe popechitel'stvo) and peasants were the subjects of either their landlord’s decisions or local courts (rasprava).

According to the Humble report of the Moscow Ward Court (which contains data for the period between 1892 to 1909), the majority of cases (on average 67 percent or 3,645 of the total annual number of cases) were brought forth because individuals were underage. A minority of wardship cases were related to people with disabilities. The number of underage wards decreased from 4,524 in 1892 to 4,013 in 1902, while the number of “others” (“over wasters”, cases of real estate without an inheritor, etc.) grew by more than 10 times from 1,278 in 1892 to 2,585 in 1909. The total value of personal assets in trusteeship varied from 44,111,366.68 roubles in 1894 to 72,695,850.03 roubles in 1906. This meant the average value of one wardship case was around 10,927 roubles (approximately 1,100 pounds sterling or 5,500 dollars in comparable value of that time).

Wardship cases (TsGA Moskvy, f. 83) usually had a unified structure and consisted of the following papers depending on the case: a statement of custody, the last will, a personal assets description and a valuation of the property of the deceased parent (in the case of trusteeship over minors). The names and birth certificates of heirs were required to prove their blood relationship to the deceased and the right of succession. In wardship cases, individuals also needed to provide the social and occupational status of a prospective ward or wards and their appointment record; the annual ward’s reports on estate and underage inheritors maintenance.

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60 Merchants, meshchane, honorary citizens, people of different ranks and artisans.
61 Their traditional way of life and the existence of many types of peasants led to a situation de-jure: there were a variety of places where wardship could be established (in courts and ministries). Yet peasant society largely decided for itself who would be the ward and the future inheritor. The authorities usually did not interfere. Pobedonostsev, K.P., Kurs Grazhdanskogo prava (SPb, 1896), p. 156.
62 Here and below I provide the average number of cases in process. The report only presents the number of annual cases in total for all types of wards.
(income and expenditure); a court verification of the ward’s reports; internal correspondence (which usually consisted of letters between wards) and claims to the court by wards and inheritors.65

My dissertation begins with a general overview of the legal framework of Russian mercantile institutions (from the ninth century until 1917) and their relationship to the State (Chapter 1). This overview provides the conceptual basis for the central aim of my research: to establish the connections between occupational uncertainty and personal wealth accumulation and management. By providing data on the number of guild merchants (with and without family members) and other business-related agents (trading peasants, meshchane, petty traders), rates of business reproduction (succession), business longevity, survival and bankruptcy, I show the evolution of Russian mercantile institutions which expands upon existing Russian and Western historiography. I suggest that while the structure of mercantile institutions was flexible and the boundaries between legal social estates were porous, the comparatively small but stable proportion of guild merchants was more likely the result of State economic policies, legal regulations and the limited volume of the internal market, rather than the lack of individual motivation and professional merit.

While I address the question of soslovie membership and the active mercantile agency of Russian guild merchants in the first chapter, I approach these topics from more private (family) perspective in my second chapter. I focus on the connections between demographic parameters and the material well-being of Muscovites and Moscow guild merchants in particular. By accepting that the primary motivation for personal assets accumulation was to provide better living standards for dependants, I estimate the average number of family members in the first and second guilds and explain how it changed over the life cycles of the heads of families. The demographic parameters of the average life expectancy and their connection to occupation, level of material well-being and general changes related to periods of demographic transition are also discussed in Chapter 2. Changes in life expectancy are an important condition of the timings of inheritance transmission: in many countries an increase of life-time resulted in a widening gap between the beginning of children’s independent life and the death of their parents, which was balanced by an increased proportion of gifts inter vivos. Thus, this chapter provides estimations of these changes for a more in-depth analysis of the changed demographic parameters and inheritance behaviour.

65 Ustav Obshchestvennogo Prizreniia (SPb, 1892), art. 250, 251, 187, appendix for art. 9, 15, 20.
My third chapter explores the institutional framework of personal property rights. In particular, I question if legal regulations undermined personal wealth accumulation. If this was the case, I investigate which limitations were more restrictive by soslovie or by type of property in ownership. I also examine whether the lack of an established connection between personal and property rights influenced personal assets management. By law the transmission of acquired property was free but the owners of enterprises (i.e. merchants) could not bequest their businesses freely: it had to be transmitted undivided to all successors or to a single successor, sold, or bought out. To provide a basis for further investigation, I address the social meaning of property, the extent to which women held property rights, restrictions placed on property ownership in rural and urban areas and the legal aspects of property transmission without consideration.  

In Chapter 4, I examine dynamic estimations of the number of people who owned wealth and the value of privately held wealth along social and geographical lines. I compare these figures to the inequality of income distribution in late Imperial Russia. This chapter returns to issues discussed in my first chapter, particularly the effectiveness and practical value of legal social estates. I also compare wealth gaps between members of different Muscovite soslovia. The question of possible connections between occupational uncertainty and assets management in this chapter is further explored through estimations of the wealth composition of Moscow guild merchants. To place the proportion of Russian wealth holders in respect with the other countries I estimate the change in inheritance flow (the proportion between the value of inherited wealth and the value of GNP) in Russia between 1888 and 1905.

My fifth and final chapter discusses whether the uncertainty of parental (merchant) guild membership affected testator inheritance strategies. Additionally, I question if these strategies became more egalitarian in order to secure the future of dependants including children and spouses, as well as grandchildren and other inheritors. I compare bequest patterns of Moscow merchants in the eighteenth and the nineteenth century, and also the bequest patterns of the wealthiest Moscow guild merchants in the second half of the nineteenth century. I also compare merchant inheritance strategies in general with the inheritance strategies of the Muscovite population by soslovie and social groups. I similarly explore the bequest patterns of individual social groups to determine which generated more wealth inequality. This chapter strengthens general discussions about testator behaviour by providing individual insights on what

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66 I provide more details about property transmission without consideration in Chapter 3.
motivated divisions of wealth and whether testators risked their own well-being and the future of their businesses. Was inheritance a life changing factor in late Imperial Russia or not?
Chapter 1: Russian Guild Merchants: The Legal Framework and Business Demography

Scholars who study the Russian mercantile community, and guild merchants in particular, usually suggest that Russian guild merchants were mechanical copies of their European peers. Continuous business anxiety, triggered by specific policies of the paternalistic State, monopolised and constrained nearly every positive merchant initiative. Similarly, the almost tragic, yet simultaneous, mismatch of social, occupational and legal statuses of Russian businessmen likely hindered the successful evolution of mercantile agency, stalled the launch of industrialisation and, to some extent, delayed the development of a credit system, the birth of the middle class and the expansion of liberal ideas. Likewise, when historians discuss the fate of the Russian merchantry they pay little attention to what actually warrants and complicated the discussion: the concept of soslovie (the socio-occupational group composed of business agents with family members), mercantile agency as business related occupations (in all spheres of trade, production and service), mercantile institutions (the set of formal and informal rules and conventions which shaped mercantile practices over long periods of time) or a combination of these several issues.

The aim of this chapter to investigate a wide spectrum of the Russian business community chronologically, geographically and socially, and compare Russia with European business communities. I also place Russian business-related groups within the wider context of Russian social groups, networks and legal regulations (i.e. mercantile institutions). In doing this, I aim to challenge the widely accepted preconception that the Russian business community (and guild merchantry in particular) was shrinking because it was unable to cope with the oppressive State and ineffective social and mercantile policy. On the contrary, my research and the data I collected prove otherwise: Moscow guild merchants were able to run business over long periods of time and accumulate wealth, also the Russian mercantile community as an institution, at least until the mid-sixteenth century, actually did resemble European guilds. Then trends diverged until beginning if the nineteenth century when substantial peasant mercantile agency and the development of a sophisticated phase of proto-industrialisation, again brought Russia closer to general trends in European mercantile institutions.
1.1. European Mercantile Institutions

Mercantile institutions were associations of individuals based in trade and manufacturing, which influenced and shaped the behaviour of their members. Merchant guilds, the most noted mercantile institutions of the late Medieval and modern periods, appeared as a response to exchange challenges. They functioned in a variety of forms, though, according to Regina Grafe and Oscar Gelderblom, they always shared one fundamental characteristic: “through self-organization they always delegated control to fellow merchants in return for support with their contracting and enforcement problems”.67 Grafe and Gelderblom suggest that the level of delegated control is the universal measure of tracing the evolution of mercantile institutions and especially merchant guilds.68 They also propose five levels of control, from the lowest to highest:

1. Individual agents (no control delegated)
2. Informal constrains (organised loosely along social and religious lines, no delegated control, decisions can be constrained)
3. Political representation (control delegated to a spokesman)
4. Internal discipline (members elect officials to enforce general rules, no right of exclusion)
5. Power of exclusion (members delegate control, right of total exclusion from market entry).69

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68 Especially effective is their illustration representing the evolution of the levels of control delegated by German merchants in Bruges, Antwerp, and Amsterdam between 1250 and 1750. Their graph shows that while German guild merchants in Bruges and Antwerp experienced increasing delegation control over time, in Amsterdam the level of delegation control gradually decreased from the fourth to the first level between 1400 and 1550. Gelderblom and Grafe: ‘The Rise and Fall’, p. 493.
Based on the levels of delegated control, Grafe and Gelderbloom were able to calculate the possible answers to four major topics in the literature on mercantile associations:70

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Result of the data-intensive survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guilds offer protection against predatory rulers</td>
<td>There is no clear association between acts of violence suffered by merchants and their degree of association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilds prevent merchants from suspect business practices</td>
<td>This hypothesis would seem to be supported by the data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilds enable traders to extract rents</td>
<td>Evidence is indirect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilds facilitated the matching of supply and demand in markets of limited size</td>
<td>There is a clear association. Larger markets required less control delegation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These simple findings are easily applicable to other contexts and models of the level of delegated control and the nature of European guilds. Similarly, they provide scholars with an essential framework to facilitate comparing mercantile institutions across geographical and chronological space.

Despite a concrete tradition of research about the persistence and decline of European merchant guilds, “we still know surprisingly little about when and why merchant guilds originated and what they actually did”.71 Below I will provide a schematic picture of the origin, organisation, purpose, dissolution and impact of European merchant guilds on social stratification and economic development. I do so in order to compare this information with the following sections about Russian mercantile institutions.

Origin. There appears to be a common agreement among historians that before the eighth century, retailers acted as individual agents. By the eleventh century, the first associations of long-distance merchants emerged. Their main purpose was to minimise transaction costs by providing and insuring an infrastructure for overseas members. They also lowered information asymmetry and enforced contracts primarily through reputation.72

Organisation. European merchant guilds were associations of export-orientated retailers who, depending on the level of delegated control, were self-governed, and also had restrictions and membership fees. Collegial approval was required for new members, and members had the power to exclude unwanted individuals. Merchant guilds originated as parallel and sub-State

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70 Gelderbloom and Grafe applied a data intensive methodology (standard maximum likelihood models) which, contrary to mono-variable models, is usually used by economists (for example, game theory as used by Avner Greif). It allows for the analysis of a number of political, legal, and economic variables. Gelderbloom and Grafe: ‘The Rise and Fall’, pp. 499–506; Greif, A., Institutions and the Path to the Modern Economy. Lessons from Medieval Trade. Political Economy of Institutions and Decisions (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 110–123.
institutions that facilitated goods exchange. Despite their loose dependency on political rulers, guilds (both craft and retail) sought and enjoyed certain privileges issued by the State or local chamber of commerce (patent letters, trademarks etc.). Over time, trade and production guilds developed trade specialisations, divided and sub-divided by the destination of trade and the level of delegated control.

Purpose. In order to resolve the complex challenges of overseas exchange, merchant guilds, rather focusing on one protective service or infrastructure, were multifunctional institutions which performed a variety of economic, political, social and cultural functions. While they did minimise transactions costs, I suggest that this multifunctionality was the reason why merchant guilds produced and reproduced themselves over at least seven centuries (from the eleventh through the eighteenth centuries).

Dissolution. There is a heated debate among historians and economists as to why successful European guilds began disappearing by the eighteenth century. The first group of historians believe that the guilds faded because functions shifted from basic mercantile to cost-sharing (S.R. Epstein and M. Prak). Others argue that merchant guilds became rent-seeking associations which extensively redistributed political resources to members (S. Ogilvie). This concentration of political power allowed guild merchants to monopolise trade and production, control prices and decide whether or not innovations would be introduced. Whether these monopolies negatively influenced the entire institution and economic development, however, is debatable. Yet, it should be noted that flourishing industry coincided with, and probably accelerated, the dissolution of merchant guilds.

Merchant guilds left the commercial scene when their functions were seized by national states that provided insured infrastructure and enforced contracts through political, military and economic instruments. These new regimes facilitated the formation of large markets and provided relative safety of individual economic agency, which influenced the shift in internal organisation from guilds/family firms to industrial production. Similarly, the shift from rent

(land and estates) to capital investments in shares and stocks damaged the long distance and local trade of guilds.\(^{76}\)

Impact. While the evolution and substance of merchant guilds still require further research, scholars have devised a variety of arguments about their impact on social stratification and economic development. Some scholars acknowledge that guilds benefitted from economic development and that they were central in the evolution of trade and production. Others argue that monopolising the spheres of production and exchange, fixing prices and restricting entrance negatively impacted economic development.\(^{77}\) Ogilvie argues that merchant guilds were a historical example of “social networks” which established a “social capital” of shared norms and collective actions. This benefitted individual members but discriminated against outsiders.\(^{78}\)

1.2. The Evolution of Russian Mercantile Institutions from the Ninth Century Through 1917

After Peter the Great introduced formal structures on local and long-distance retailers and producers in 1721, the following 200 years witnessed significant changes both in the scale and scope of the Russian merchantry. Over the course of the eighteenth and long nineteenth centuries, many formal institutional components changed: the number of guilds, the social and financial membership prerequisites, and the extent of privileges and economic rights fluctuated. Nevertheless, the institutional foundation was quite stable. Russian merchant guilds remained fiscal mercantile institutions as opposed to Medieval European mercantile guilds which were launched to cope with the challenges of overseas trade.

The negative association (or lack of association) of Russian guilds compared to European merchant guilds could be ascribed to the influence of two factors: the mismatch of formal titles and a slight chronological asymmetry of their evolution. The European guild merchantry existed, formally, between the ninth and eighteenth centuries. The Russian guild merchantry was only officially launched in 1721 and was formally abolished in 1917. I argue that while formal titles in Russia and Europe were mismatched, trends in the evolution of mercantile

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\(^{76}\) Rent provided its holders with insurance from political and economic disturbances, but capital could be transferred and circulated more quickly and therefore provided more protection from unanticipated political unrest.


institutions in Europe and Russia (of course, with some exceptions) were more synchronised than most scholars think. Additionally, since titles and the intensity of State control over mercantile and manufacturing agency did vary substantially, and each country had unique combinations with other institutions (such as serfdom in Russia, for instance), we should apply a more general framework for comparison. The institutional approach, in this respect, operates generally rather than with specific attention to legal regulations and definitions. In order to track the evolution of mercantile associations in Europe and Russia, I apply an extended chronological methodology and institutional approach. I do this instead of narrowing the geographical scope of my study. Furthermore, the aim of this section is to show that beyond different official titles, such as guilds in Europe, and gosti or sto in Russia, similar processes were occurring within Russian and European mercantile institutions.

In this section I will discuss the evolution of Russian mercantile institutions from the ninth century to 1917. I do not aim to provide an exhaustive list of legal regulations, the number of enterprises launched or the details of the evolution of trade revenues. Instead, I show how select legal regulations, informal conventions within the business community, and unofficial deals with authorities shaped Russian merchant institutions. This will determine whether the specific character of Russian mercantile institutions hindered the development of mercantile agency. I have identified seven significant chronological periods which I use to show how the Russian merchantry evolved. I demonstrate how an association of individual retailers and guild-like corporations transformed into modern, impersonal mercantile agents.

1.2.1. The Ninth Century Through the Mid-Sixteenth Century

Like in Europe, long distance trade associations appeared in Rus’ in the late Medieval period. The first mention of individuals performing long distance trade dates back to 882. The names of overseas merchants were first mentioned in 911 in a well-known contract between prince Oleg and the Greeks.

Scholars agree that the first mercantile agents originated from members of the feudal bodyguard (kniazheskaia druzhina). They were paid in kind through collected taxes (dan’, polud’e). To monetarise their “wages”, members of the bodyguard travelled abroad to sell these


80 The Russian terms for mercantile associations are gosti (overseas trade) and sto (translated as the hundred and pertains to craft guilds or guilds of local retailers).
valuable items. Similarly, scholars suggest that before the eleventh century Russian merchants acted more as individual agents (as in Europe). It was only in the twelfth century that associations began pooling capital to minimise transaction costs, which was known as *skladnichestvo* (or, literally, “pooling”).

Between the twelfth and the end of the sixteenth century, the Russian merchants of Northern Rus’ launched several long-distance mercantile trade associations (the aforementioned *sto*). These associations resembled European long-distance merchant retail guilds. Entrance into the corporation was restricted. To enter to the *sto*, candidates were required to pay the church treasury 50 ingots (a unit of measure amounting to over 10 kilograms) of gold and present the head of the city authorities (*tysyatskii*) with a lap of highly valuable cloth from Ieper (Flanders). The individual would then be issued a letter of privilege. Current members of the association had the power of exclusion. This mandatory double approval shows that like in Europe, the top mercantile associations in Rus’ existed as co-institutions with the political ruler. In other words, before the State instituted political control, social regulations, tax collection, and control over trade and production, merchants and rulers coexisted and cooperated in order to lower transaction costs. Prior to the mid-sixteenth century, membership in the associations was hereditary. Neither the ruler nor members of their administration were permitted to interfere directly in the corporation’s affairs.

During the feudal period, almost every big city in Rus’ (as in Europe), including Kiev, Novgorod, and Pskov, was divided into districts based on trade or production specification. The district was named after the part of the city where businesses were located (*konets*, or “end”). These associations could be compared to European craft guilds and guilds of local retailers due to their similar functions and degree of self-government.

1.2.2. The Mid-Sixteenth Century Through the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century

The distinctly corporate period of Russian long-distance mercantile trade associations occurred concurrently with feudal fragmentation (from the twelfth through the sixteenth century). The solidification of the unified Russian State in Moscow further determined the development of Russian mercantile institutions. Corporations began delegating control

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internally and actively cooperate with the state, economic transactions were further regulated. Nevertheless, while the unification of Rus’ provided some trade benefits including the introduction of codified legislation (sydebnik) in 1550, the institution of reliable taxation (sokha) in 1551, and the standardisation of currency in 1630. In general, the policy of internal colonisation where the state interest was always favoured before the interest of ordinary traders likely negatively influenced the development of both the mercantile institutions and the understanding and codification of the institute of private property. The introduction of State monopolies on lucrative exports (wax, salt, hemp, and other goods), the forced transfer of merchants to other cities, assets confiscations, the abolition of hereditary status and, above all, the loss of economic and institutional autonomy, were all damaging to Russian mercantile institutions.

Scholars generally agree that before Moscow became the capital, the feudal ruler and the members of mercantile elite operated as partners. By the Petrine period, merchant and State activities became more interdependent. I use the term “interdependent”, on the one hand, because independent mercantile agency was reigned in and institutions became more regulated fiscal institutions. On the other hand, the State sought professional help from merchants to manage State trade and production. The management of State enterprise and monopolies provided insiders with reliable wealth. The State provided selected merchants with favourable buyouts and contracts which sometimes required fewer transaction costs than independent enterprises. Importantly, those who were in breach of business contracts or failed to pay taxes (gosti) were materially liable and their property could be seized.

From the mid-sixteenth until the end of the nineteenth century Russian merchants became financially insecure both from above and from below. As S. Baron suggested: “the performance of duties imposed upon the gosti from above placed their lives and property in jeopardy from below”. Yet, the interdependent relationships reproduced themselves for many centuries. The question if this dependency was fully mutually compensable is still open.

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84 Though the inner state customs offices were abolished in 1754.
86 Perkhavko, Istoriya russkogo kupechestva, pp. 144–175. With Moscow’s ascendance the members of privileged long-distance merchant corporations, or gosti, were downgraded from independent traders to the “the gosti of the grand prince”.
87 Sushchenko, Predprinimatelstvo, pp. 43, 48-49.
88 Berlin, P. A., Russkaiia burzhuaziia v staroe i novoe vremia (Moskva, 1922); Karnovich, E. P., Zamechatelnye bogatyry chastnykh lits (Sankt-Peterburg, 1885).
89 Perkhavko, Istoriya russkogo kupechestva, p. 176.
90 Baron, Who were the Gosti, p. 17.
There was at least one important by-product of co-dependency: it stymied both State and merchant initiative to improve productivity and technologies. The State needed its agents (here, the gosti, merchants and entrepreneurs) to manage State trade, service and production. Merchants in turn, received valuable commissions and protective tariffs which substantially lowered motivation for improvements.91

The lack of easily available credit was one of the greatest hindrances to Russian economic development. Interestingly, however, credit in the original sense of the word was not entirely unavailable to merchants. If we view the State as the “first merchant” and a potential creditor, and the rest of the merchantry (roughly) as its agents, it appears that government credit could take a variety of forms: “from permission to withdraw quantities of furs from the treasury to be paid for later, advances on contracts to supply grain or vodka to the State, or loans to finance the development of industrial enterprises.”92 This form of advances was present (though the substance changed over time) both in the seventeenth and beginning of the twentieth century. Of course, this kind of credit was mutually convenient, but from historical distance it looks like a potentially risky trap as opposed to vital help in easing financial insecurity.

In the middle of the sixteenth century, the gosti were deprived of hereditary status and the assignment of membership was the Tsar’s responsibility. Previously, the survival of corporations and the introduction of new members was a matter of many considerations and required both sides to be in agreement. After the abolition of hereditary status and the change of membership regulations, the survival of elite mercantile institutions depended fully on the good will of the Tsar. Similarly, the institutions depended on the periodic filling of gosti vacancies with merchants personally chosen from other mercantile institutions. Yet, gosti success rates were low: only one in four families managed to succeed in the first generation, and only one out of fifteen in the second.93 During the sixteenth century in Russia only 70 letters of privilege were issued for entrance in the gosti mercantile institution.94

To ensure a permanent supply of candidates to fill potential gost’s vacancies, between 1568 and 1584, a new, but much less privileged mercantile institution was launched. The gostinnaia sotnia (translated as “the hundred guests”), whose name was likely a reference to earlier associations of long-distance trade merchants. Members of the gostinnaia sotnia, however,

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91 Sushchenko, Predprinimatelstvo, pp. 91–93; Berlin, Russkaia burzhuaia.
92 Baron, Who were the Gosti, p. 39; Sushchenko, Predprinimatelstvo, pp. 147, 166.
could only trade abroad after receiving individual privilege letters issued by the Tsar. Also, unlike gosti, the members of the gostinnaia sotnia could not buy land or landed estates (votchina, or votchiny in plural form). There was another substantial difference between gosti and members of the gostinnaia sotnia: the latter’s membership was hereditary while the former was deprived of hereditary status.\textsuperscript{95} In all other matters, the privileges of the gosti and gostinnaia sotnia were equal. Both were exempt from marginal custom taxation (melkie tamožennye sbory), citizen taxation (posadskoe tyaglo), the mandatory quartering of army troops (postoy) and chimney money (podvornaia povinnost’).

The seventeenth century did not bring any relief to the mercantile elite. On the contrary, the cancellation of hereditary status and the forced transfer to new trade centres in unified Rus’ led to substantial loses during the Time of Troubles (Smutnoe vremia, 1598-1613) and ruined many gosti businesses.\textsuperscript{96} The protective tariffs introduced by the new Romanov dynasty in 1653 and 1657 did little to alleviate the situation. By the mid-seventeenth century the number of gostinnaia sotnia members declined from 350 to 158. The number of members in another elite mercantile trade association (focused on Eastern European countries), the sukonnaia sotnia (“the hundred of cloth merchants”), also significantly declined (from 250 to 116). It did not survive the seventeenth century because it could not reproduce itself naturally. As a result, the government abolished the association and recruited new gosti corporation members from the urban population which also participated in trade and production.\textsuperscript{97}

Socially and materially close by the end of the fifteenth century, members of guild-like mercantile associations carried low specialized trade. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, trade specialisation increased and material inequality within the gosti emerged. This substantially depleted the strength of the gosti, gostinnaia and sukonnaia sotni. Thus, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, when European guilds declined and were sometimes forcibly dissolved, Russian mercantile institutions were also in decline with one exception: their numbers were forcefully depleted before they could naturally evolve to the next stage.

\textsuperscript{95} Perkhavko, Istoriya russkogo kupechestva, pp. 178–179.
\textsuperscript{96} For a more detailed discussion of the fate of gosti offspring and uninheritable status see Baron, Who were the Gosti, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{97} Aksenov, Genealogiia moskovskogo kupechestva, p. 38.
1.2.3. The Beginning of the Eighteenth Century Through 1775

Scholars do not usually pay much attention to the fate of Russian Medieval mercantile institutions at the time of Peter the Great. They tend to limit their discussions by shortly mentioning that the gosti and gostinnaia sotnia were simply replaced by European-style merchant guilds. But this institutional framework did not fit the realities of Russian social and economic structures and relations.\(^8\)

Why does this specific episode matter to a discussion about the evolution of Russian mercantile institutions within the framework of my thesis? First, it challenges the widely accepted notion that Medieval mercantile institutions in Russia were replaced because (a) they outlived their utility, (b) they were professionally degraded and downgraded, (c) they were financially debilitated and (d) they could not overcome the limitations of legal regulations.\(^9\) Other explanations blame the lack of a mercantile marine, internal customs, easily available credit, tax burdens and other challenges.\(^10\) Instead, I argue that financial debilitation was a consequence, not a cause, of the decline and dissolution of the guild-like mercantile institutions in Russia. Here I agree with S. Ogilvie and suggest that in Russia (as in Europe) merchant guilds became rent-seeking institutions which was fatal to their continued existence. The difference between Russian and European guild-like associations was that in Europe the evolution of trade institutions was not always directly interrupted by the State whereas in Russia the State was substantially invested in the decay of the gosti association.

Upon assuming the throne, Peter the Great found merchants to be the perfect resource for boosting the Russian economy and providing political and fiscal discipline and structure to


\(^{10}\) Perkhavko, Istoriya russkogo kupechestva, p. 251; Aksenov, Genealogiia moskovskogo kupechestva, pp. 50, 54.
Russian society. He understood the merchanty as his subjects, not partners, because the Imperial order required hierarchy. As S. Baron put it: “Peter had no sympathy for corporate privileges. But he might have tolerated privileges which, after all, were rather minor, and hardly a threat to the State’s authority, if the gosti had exhibited the qualities he valued”.

Among the qualities he valued were innovation and active participation in his reforms. Unfortunately for the gosti, these were not qualities they valued and there was no common ground. For example, in 1696 Peter called upon the gosti to participate in shipbuilding, which he believed would benefit both themselves and the State.

In 1699, Peter freed townspeople from the exploitive power of voevod and townspeople were granted with elected administrations. In return, the elected administration was obligated to provide extra services. The gosti and the gostinnaia sotnia were expected to participate, and neither appreciated their new obligations. Additionally, the gosti were likely offended that only one-third of the positions were offered to them, despite their high status. At first, the members of the gostinnaia sotnia refused to elect representatives since they were already overburdened with service obligations. The gosti, which were already penalised in 1696, agreed with the sentiments of the members of the gostinnaia sotnia, but they dared not openly refuse Peter’s decree. Instead, however, they submitted a petition which stated some of the elected representatives could not fully perform their service requirements (they were ill or had already retired from trade) and asked the Tsar to recruit new gosti. Peter declined this request.

While it seems that the gosti managed to collect taxes, in 1708 Peter repealed the 1699 reform and instituted the guberniia (province) reform. Afterwards, tax collection duties were transferred from the local administration to the heads of the guberniia. Meanwhile, it became increasingly obvious that any attempt at healthy collaboration between Peter the Great and the Russian mercantile elite had failed. The College of Commerce (kommerts-kollegiia) was introduced in 1717 and was meant to improve or create internal trade routes, build a merchant fleet, develop trading companies, and was also responsible for other vital functions with the aim of improving the economy. Again, the gosti failed to undertake these roles “either because they lacked the means and know-how or were too sluggish and adventuresome”.

103 Military commanders.
104 Baron: ‘Fate of the Gosti’, p. 497.
After 1699, Peter refused to fill gosti vacancies and did so until his death. S. Baron suggests that the collapse of the gosti happened swiftly and in only a decade (1700-1710). Importantly, Peter never abolished the gosti, gostinnaia sotnia, or Boyar Duma (the elite political administration). These Medieval institutions were, instead, left to shrivel on their own. As a result, by the beginning of the 1720s, Peter’s hopes for successful collaboration had faded: in 1720 he established the Glavnyi Magistrat which performed a range of duties from finance allocation to police control.

In 1721, Peter introduced a new division of the urban population which was based on regular and irregular citizens, divided by well-being and occupation. There were no more merchant guilds, but instead, two guilds of regular citizens. These included the European-style artisan guilds and retailer guilds of the Medieval period. The first guild was comprised of long distance traders, bankers, gold and silversmiths, icon painters, and other high status craftsmen. Local retailers and other craftsmen were members of the second guild. The group of irregular citizens (podlie liudi) included labourers of all kinds. While the first guild enjoyed some exceptional privileges, such as freedom from corporal punishment, freedom from military conscription (under the proviso of material reimbursement) and the right to buy peasants with land, they were equal to the rest of the population in that the poll tax (podushnyi nalog) was mandatory. Membership in both guilds was hereditary.

In his new Emperial society, Peter did not see a place for a Medieval mercantile elite. While there seems to be no particular reason the gosti and gostinnaia sotnia were not incorporated into the first guild, he also did not revoke their privileges. It was only in 1728, after Peter’s death, that members of both corporations lost these privileges and were obligated to pay the poll tax. They were also required to enrol in urban guilds based on their level of wealth, without any exceptions based on status or previous merits.

It would seem that both Russian and European guilds and guild-like institutions were dissolved for very similar reasons: first, they evolved from mercantile profit-maximising (or cost-sharing institutions) to rent-seeking activities which. This idea was articulated by A.

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108 Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, Sobranie I, Tom 6 (1720 - 1722) (SPb, 1830), art. 3708 (January, 1721), Reglament ili Ustav Glavnago Magistrata.
109 Kizevetter, Gildiiia moskovskogo kupechestva, pp. 18–19.
110 Perkhavko, Istoriya russkogo kupechestva, p. 258.
111 Aksenov, Genealogiia moskovskogo kupechestva, pp. 36–37; Baron: ‘Fate of the Gosti’, p. 509; Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, Sobranie I, Tom 8 (1728 - 1732) (SPb, 1830), art. 5300 (July, 1728), Senatski. - O bytii gostiam i gostinnoi sotne s podushnom oklade i v sluzhbakh nariadu s posadskimi.
Aksenov in Russia and S. Ogilvie in Germanic territories. Second, the rise of a stronger State provided mercantile agents with stability and infrastructure, which made guild networks and support irrelevant. The third common cause was the emergence of industrial production and new labour-saving technologies. These developments challenged long distance and local retail guild monopolies. In different countries, however, the process was nuanced.

In mid-sixteenth century Russia, the State cancelled free or limited (conditional approval by collegial consensus) entrance in gosti membership. The artificial replacement of vacancies within corporations became a matter of the ruler’s will, i.e. the gosti were not functioning independently from or co-dependently with the State. The most destructive feature of this regime shift was not the cancellation of inheritable membership, but that gosti members were unable to pass their businesses to the next generation. This was because the ruler could choose not to approve the gosti status of the merchant’s successors, which meant that successors could still inherit and work at the business, but the successors would have a lower status. Practically, however, the inability to pass on membership and the volatility of businesses meant that the gosti often invested in land (instead of business) which was safer to pass on through inheritance and was a more reliable form of income extraction. Thus, generally, both European and Russian merchants drifted from trade to land. In Europe, however, this transition bought merchants political power and influence, which was not the case for former Russian gosti.

Similarly, Russian guild-like associations were first and foremost focused on trade rather than industrial production, which was the primary interest of Peter the Great. The mismatch of specialisation and the ruler’s intentions, reinforced by merchant’s lack of motivation and knowledge, and lack of cooperation meant that guild-like associations could not survive and ultimately folded.

It is important to note that while the Great Northern War is usually mentioned (1700-1721) as one of the primary reasons for the acceleration of gosti and gostinnaia sotnia dissolution, this was not actually the case. Instead, it is a component in their accelerated collapse. The practical lack of a Russian merchant fleet meant that overseas trade was hardly flourishing and not particularly profitable. The gostinnaia sotnia, which specialised in internal trade, was also not substantially affected by the war. This small observation reinforces my previous argument that neither overbearing taxes nor political disturbances played the sole or most important role in dissolution of Medieval mercantile associations in Russia. Instead, there were many various

112 Aksenov, Genealogiia moskovskogo kupechestva, p. 59; Epstein and Prak, Guilds; Ogilvie: ‘Rehabilitating the Guilds’.
and complex factors involved, and the phenomenon should be understood and can only be explained by taking account of all these various components.¹¹³

12.4. From 1775 Through 1823

Did Peter’s reforms reach their intended goals? Yes and No. To answer this question, I will divide my explanation into three parts: the relationship between mercantile institutions and the State, mercantile associations’ internal organisation and membership policies and the economic success of new mercantile institutions launched by the reforms of Catherine the Great. Afterwards, I will discuss the results produced by Catherine the Great’s reforms of 1775.

There is common agreement among scholars that in abolishing old mercantile institutions, Peter the Great launched new corporations which were fiscally “incorporated into the State administration rather than previous associations of independent profit-seeking merchants”.¹¹⁴ While Peter’s reforms effectively dissolved guild-like associations, they did not fundamentally alter the interdependence of the State and merchantry. Though the State gained more power, it still relied on merchant trade and service.

In comparison to previous regimes, Peter transferred the importance of categorising individuals (enrolled in one of the three groups of the urban population engaged in trade) from their level of material well-being¹¹⁵ and production to the exclusivity and cost of the traded or produced goods (i.e. from wealth based to occupation/trade based). Between 1721 and 1775, membership in all three urban guilds was again hereditary. The question is whether the benefits of hereditary status and voluntary enrolment positively influenced the survival, succession and reproduction of these groups.

Alexander Aksenov calculated that over the course of the eighteenth century, the number of families in the Moscow first guild merchantry consistently declined. In 1748 there were 382 families, in 1766 there were 253, and by the end of the century the number of families

¹¹³ Aksenov, Genealogia moskovskogo kupcheestva, p. 45; Baron, S. H., The Weber Thesis and the Failure of Capitalist Development in "Early Modern" Russia, Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas, 18, 3 (1970), pp. 321–336, pp. 321–325. My concluding remark represents a merger of Baron and Aksenov’s interpretations. Aksenov fixates on the idea that the war substantially affected the gosti and only slightly affected the evolution of other mercantile institutions. Baron, however, setting all mercantile institutions besides the gosti aside, suggests that Russian overseas trade prior to the war was modest. Thus, the war was an additional, though not primary, reason for the dissolution of Medieval mercantile institutions during the reign of Peter the Great.

¹¹⁴ Sushchenko, Predprinimatelstvo, pp. 48–49.

¹¹⁵ At the time service was treated as an aspect of trade and not as an independent act of profit-seeking activity.
fluctuated but remained around 110. Boris Mironov’s data on Russian overseas traders from Northern ports supports the Aksenov’s assertion. In Saint Petersburg in 1773, the names of merchants on renewed merchantry lists was 59 percent in comparison with the previous year. In 1774 and 1775 the rate of renewal was 32 percent, in 1795 it was 75 percent, and in 1804 it was 52 percent. The succession of family capital was also low. Between 1772 and 1804, 289 merchant families were registered, although only 10 families survived over this 33-year period (or approximately 10 percent of all Russian elite merchant families who traded overseas). The trend was similar in Arkhangelsk. While this data is beyond the scope of my study, it nevertheless reinforces the argument that the presence or absence of hereditary mercantile guild status did not significantly impact the economic and social mobility both within and outside of the merchantry.

Mironov also suggests that while the overseas trade and capital of Russian merchants (based in Northern ports) grew compared to foreign merchants, this increase was modest. The main reason behind this stunted increase in Russian merchant capital was the tradition of independent trade. At the same time, foreign merchants traded jointly which significantly increased capital gains. Thus, Peter’s reforms did not provide increased impetus for individual trade, and trade activity remained much as it was from the mid-sixteenth century onwards.

The economic successes of new mercantile institutions and the motivations for joint retail were also rather modest. In 1727-28 the official boundaries between Russia and China were settled. Private trade between the two States was only allowed in two cities (Kiakhta and Tsurugai). State companies were, however, granted the right to send caravans into China. To the benefit of individual traders, in 1739 the Senate published a decree on the abolition of government owned caravan trade in China and introduced the Association of Individual Traders. Their joint capital was to be protected from confiscation by the government. Yet this produced minimal results: traders did not want to pool their capital and did not trust State promises. Wealthy merchants benefitted more through continued trade with Kiakhta and Tsurugai, and small merchant operations, which could profit from joint-trade under State protection, did not trust the government. Other trade companies, which were controlled by the

116 Aksenov, Genealogiia moskovskogo kupechestva, p. 60.
117 Mironov, B. N., Russkii gorod v 1740-1860-e gody. Demograficheskoe, sotsialnoe i ekonomicheskoe razvitie. (Leningrad, 1990), pp. 166–167. There is data available for 1772 to 1775, 1787, 1795 and 1804
government in one way or another, were similarly unprofitable and short-lived, with perhaps the exception of the Russian-American company which was launched in 1799.119

Internal trade, on the contrary, seemed more conducive to successful change. The abolition of internal boundaries in 1754 was unquestionably advantageous and accelerated the development of internal markets and local manufacturing, especially in peasant production. This in turn it gave birth to a period of proto-industrialisation. The heyday of Russian State mercantilism was from 1775 until the introduction of the patent system in 1824 and, in a sense, an entrepreneurial bourgeoisie developed during this time. This economic group was meant to exist across social boundaries and was based on wealth and talent rather than individual social origins. The emergence of proto-industry was among the positive outcomes of this economic initiative and motivated the emergence of new enterprises. There were, however, some setbacks, mainly generated by Catherine the Great’s attempts to navigate and balance liberalising ideas about ordered societies with clearly delineated social groups, the creation of an economic elite, the organisation of the tax system (which would pay for noble privileges) and economic development in new urban areas. In other words, she simultaneously tried to define and limit a bourgeoisie corporate economic class, but also sought to involve as many people as possible in trade.120

In 1775 (and acknowledged in 1785), the division of the population into regular and irregular citizens was abandoned, an citizens were recategorised into six groups based on the individual’s level of wealth, occupation, honourable status (if any) and foreign origin. Merchants (kyptsy), who were previously members of three urban guilds, were redefined, but their division between three guilds remained. After 1775, however, merchants received distinguished privileges: they were no longer required to pay the poll tax, which was replaced by a 1 percent fee of their declared capital (first guild members made above 10,000 roubles, second guild members made between 1,000 and 10,000 roubles, and third guild members should have declared between 500 and 1,000 roubles).121 Likewise, in 1775 the hereditary status of all three guilds was abolished, their freedom from military recruitment was again

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121 Zakharov, V. N., Petrov, Iu. A. and Shatsillo, M. K., Istoriia nalogov v Rossii. IX - nachalo XX veka. Ekonomicheskaiia istoriia - dokumenty, issledovaniia, percevody (Moskva, 2006), pp. 112, 166. At the time, the limits of declared capital for enrolment in guilds was the only way to tax the merchantry. To increase tax collection, the authorities expanded the proportion of fees to declared capital (by 1824 the proportion increased from 1 to 5.2 percent). They could also increase the minimal limits of declared capital or widen the circles of taxable mercantile agents.
acknowledged and this privilege was extended to members of the second and third guilds (in 1776 military recruitment was replaced by monetary compensation totalling 360 roubles, which later increased to 500 roubles). Members of the first guild could run both long distance and internal trade (i.e. they were allowed marine fleets). They were also allowed to own industrial enterprises of any size and productivity level and were prioritised above other merchants for State contracts. Members of the second guild could only trade internally (i.e. they were able to have river vessels) but could run businesses of any size and productivity level. Third guild members were allowed to run trade only within towns and the districts where they were enrolled. Nancy S. Kollmann suggests the delineation of the trading and entrepreneurial elite into three guilds was successful because it encompassed only 11 percent of merchants previously listed in the urban guilds. Additionally, Catherine’s reforms accelerated vertical social mobility which positively impacted the accumulation of private wealth.

I suggest that while Catherine’s reforms negatively affected the Russian guild merchantry in terms of occupational exclusiveness, they provided more equal access to wealth accumulation even if the greater part of peasant business revenues lined the pockets of their landlords.

The mandatory and voluntary declaration of capital as the basis for elite guild membership and low entrance fees did not flood the guild merchantry with new members. Instead, potential guild merchants cheated the State and avoided membership without substantial business loses. Legally, declarations of capital were free from inspection, and individual compliance was left without scrutiny. Nevertheless, in exceptional cases where declarations raised doubts, tax collectors were allowed to verify the individual merchant’s income by cross referencing it with his or her trade logs. To the best of my knowledge, there are no statistics or research about the frequency of inspections. Even if the inspections occurred frequently, merchants developed other strategies to avoid State oversight. In order to circumvent additional scrutiny and perhaps further taxes, merchants were able to downgrade their status to that of town dweller soslovie (meshchane) who, under the same reforms, were allowed to sell petty goods and

122 Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, Sobranie I, Tom 21 (1781 - 1783) (SPb, 1830), art. 15721 (May, 1783), Imennyi, dannyi Senatu.—O sbyre s kupechestva vmesto rekrut po 500 rublei za kazhdago rekruta.
124 Kollmann, Russian Empire, p. 381.
125 Interestingly the concept of commercial secrecy was one of the main barriers to the introduction of income taxes in 1916.
126 Rudchenko, I. Ia., Istoricheskii ocherk oblozhenia torgovli i promyslov v Rossii s prilozheniem materialov po torgovo-promysshlennoi statistike (SPb, 1893), p. 118.
manufacture handcrafts free from extra taxes on entrepreneurial activity (they only paid the poll tax).

Trading peasants were another legally established mercantile institution which eroded the boundaries within the mercantile community. In 1722, Peter the Great introduced trading peasants as a group who could run less profitable trade. Between 1755 and 1760 the Senate narrowed individual trade to guild merchants, but individuals could still produce and trade homemade goods (*produkty sobstvennogo proizvodstva*). This commercial activity was fairly common and allowed individuals to run a profitable trade outside of merchant guilds, decreasing merchant profits and State tax collection. In 1782, guild merchants regained their monopoly on trade from trading peasants. While the official grouping of trading peasants was abolished, peasants could still trade as temporary merchants, paying doubled fees for membership in both the merchant and peasant soslovie. Trading peasants re-emerged in the 1790s and were fully re-established in 1812.

Another loophole that individuals exploited to avoid State intervention related to enrolment procedures: an entire family, or even several strangers, would enrol together in the first guild, but conduct business separately. Before 1809, the size and family relations of individuals enrolled on one certificate was loosely defined. Individuals could also enrol as merchant representatives (singular - *prikazchik*, plural - *prikazchiki*) who paid smaller fees but enjoyed comparable rights. Though they could not legally conduct business with their own capital, they often did so illegally.

In 1755, nobles were officially granted the exclusive privilege to produce wholesale alcohol. While merchants could run retail taverns, this was a huge loss. In 1721 Peter the Great allowed first guild merchants to purchase populated villages to run industrial enterprises, and serfs would work in these businesses. In 1762, merchants lost this privilege to the nobility. Afterwards, merchants were required to hire labour (still serfs) to run an enterprise. Additionally, in 1775, merchants lost their previously granted exclusive right to start manufacturing enterprises. After 1775, the government allowed anyone to set up a manufacturing business without formal State permits.
1.2.5. From 1824 Through 1860

The individual taxation of Russian guild merchants as economic agents, introduced in 1775, was intended to be based on the actual scale and scope of commercial and industrial enterprises. It was a balance between protective economic policy and the creation of a socially ordered and actively engaged society involved in trade and production. By design, economic reforms were instituted to bolster Treasury funds. Before the Napoleonic invasion, the government successfully managed to increase taxes collected from the mercantile. From 1813, however, the sum of collected taxes started experiencing annual decline. By the beginning of the 1820s, the need for new taxes on entrepreneurs became urgently apparent.

In 1824, a new system of taxation was adopted. The newly adopted commercial tax system resembled the way businesses were taxed in many European countries at the time. The value of patents or certificates was based on the type of trade or manufacture, and while there were geographical variations, the only major difference was in the complexity of internal subcategories which governed the value of the certificate. One of the main goals of the 1824 reform was to eliminate disproportional taxation through introducing more concrete and defined trade and manufacturing specialisations. This extended taxes to formerly omitted groups of the population, and to commercial items which were previously untaxed. The initiative to tie taxation to levels of material well-being and the scale of business was the foundation of all subsequent commercial tax reforms. Unfortunately, the introduction of more financially proportional and less soslovie specific taxes was not beneficial to either the Treasury or businessmen.

The main differences in the 1824 patent system of taxation and the 1775 tax regime were three-fold: (1) the patent system was based on a fixed patent price (purchased annually) as opposed to the fixed proportion of declared capital. The latter did not reflect either the real wealth of the merchant or the scale and scope of their economic activity. The declaration of capital remained mandatory (taxes were fixed at 4 percent), but this lost practical sense for calculating taxes. It was only used to increase the value of taxes collected. (2) Taxation under the new system introduced so-called ticket fees (bilety) which individuals were required to pay.

131 Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, Sobranie 1, Tom 39 (1824) (SPb, 1830), art. 30115 (November, 1824), Dopolnitelnoe postanovlenie - ob ustoistve gildii i o torgovle prochikh sostoiani.
132 Ianzhul, I. L., Osnovnye nachala finansovei nauki: Uchenie o gosudarstvennykh dokhodakh (Moskva, 2002), pp. 334–338; Rudchenko, Istорicheskii ocherk oblozheniia torgovli, p. 120.
for each enterprise\textsuperscript{133} over the allowed number of establishments. (3) Special certificates were introduced for merchant representatives and meshchane.

The division of the commercial community into three guilds remained, but with some modifications. The main difference was a clearer definition of the value of contracts and the number of employees involved in industrial enterprises. Members of the first guild were allowed wholesale and retail activity domestically and overseas, and could have an unlimited number of industrial, trade and financial enterprises (except in distilling, which was still a noble monopoly and privilege). Second guild merchants were limited in the value of overseas trade (300,000 paper roubles annually), and the value of contracts, which could not exceed 50,000 paper roubles per annum. They were also not permitted to run insurance establishments or banks. Third guild members could only own retail enterprises and industrial establishments with fewer than 32 employees, and contracts could not exceed 20,000 paper roubles annually. Including all additional fees and taxes, guild patents cost 2,200 for first guild membership, 880 for second guild certificates and 220 roubles for the third guild patents.

After these reforms, urban dwellers were placed outside of elite guild mercantile institutions. They were allowed to own one commercial or industrial enterprises with a maximum of 8 labourers and could sign annual contracts below 4,000 roubles. They could also run taverns and bathhouses. Trading peasant status was also clarified. The trading peasant community was divided into six categories, three of which held the same economic rights and social privileges as guild merchants. Guild merchants, however, held an extra advantage: the cost of peasant patents was higher than those of guild merchants (for a first category patent peasants had to pay 2,600 instead of 2,200 roubles for guild merchants). Finally, nobles were granted the right to enrol exclusively in the first guild.\textsuperscript{134}

The severe restrictions and limitations imposed on all economic agents did not reflect the real capacity of mercantile agents. Between 1824 and 1825 the value of collected taxes from trade and industry increased from 9.5 to 13.2 million roubles, but by 1828 the amount collected was only 7.8 million roubles. This decrease in revenue resulted in the cancellation of many limitations and patent prices were lowered. Urban dweller commercial and low profit industrial businesses, for example, were freed from mandatory patent acquisition. Similarly, the cost of patents for trading peasants was also lowered, and in 1827 nobles were allowed to enrol in all

\textsuperscript{133} This was originally called \textit{lavka}, which could be applied to commercial and industrial establishments.

\textsuperscript{134} Rudchenko, I. Ia., \textit{Istoricheskiy ocherk oblozheniia torgovli i promyselov v Rossii s prilozeniem materialov po torgovo-promyshlennoi statistike} (SPb, 1893), pp. 122–125.
three guilds.135 If attempts to delineate elite mercantile institutions eventually introduced fiscally based soslovie institutions focused on social rather than economic exclusivity and wealth accumulation, the search for increased tax revenue ended up decreasing the value of taxes collected.

Kankrin’s 1824 patent reform, despite its limitations and inaccuracies, was the turning point in Russian financial conceptions of economic activities. From that moment, commercial establishments were accepted as profit-seeking institutions rather than an additional source of State revenue or a managerial service as it was in ancient Rus’. The introduction of a geographical coefficient in 1839, proportional to the material wealth of each province, was certainly a positive achievement in seeking fair taxation.136

Yanni Kotsonis suggests that the State policy of individual taxation in the nineteenth century was based on the individual rather than the collective.137 In the commercial sphere, individual taxation was replaced by taxing the commercial or industrial establishment, a transition from personal to impersonal taxation.

1.2.6. From 1863 Through 1884

The softening of the 1824 patent reform did not result a substantial increase in tax collection. Between 1824 and 1846 the value of collected taxes increased by only one million silver roubles.138 The government was again faced with the urgent need to reform the system of tax collection.

The late 1840s through the 1870s was a time of preparing and implementing great social, political and economic changes in the Russian Empire. The function of mercantile institutions also attracted government attention. In 1855, a government commission introduced the first draft (1853) of a ground-breaking proposed reform of Russian mercantile institutions. The project presented to the Senate suggested abolishing guilds which, they believed, hindered the development of trade and industry. Guilds were fiscal institutions aimed at the collection of direct taxes from merchants and did not reflect progressive and proportional taxation of businesses. Additionally, merchant guilds at the time remained fiscal and legal estates rather

136 Rudchenko, Istорicheskii ocherk obloženiiia torgovli, p. 139.
138 Rudchenko, Istорicheskii ocherk obloženiiia torgovli, p. 140.
than mercantile institutions since they provided more socially exclusive rights than economic privileges. The Senate did not support the project since it would introduce a parallel social order, or a professional association of individuals which would not fit into the hierarchical fabric of Russian society.\textsuperscript{139} The Senate, however, did not veto the project. They instead resolved to postpone the reform so that it was synchronised with other tax and social reforms which were already underway.

In 1861, the commission reopened the discussion of taxing merchant guilds. The new project was less innovative but was not publicly discussed. It is important and relevant to my argument that both the narrow government and wider public discussion about guilds did not support the cancellation of the unproductive ties between business activity and the social order, even though lack of progressive taxation was damaging to small businesses. For example, in 1839 all second guild merchants, irrespective of their type of business, their productivity or their profit were still required to purchase a patent of the same value, at 264 roubles.

Systems that prioritise social title before professional activity and profit are incredibly damaging to economic and occupational evolution. If only a small percentage of business establishments survive from generation to generation, in Russia even first-generation merchants had little chance of developing their businesses. As a result, these establishments often could not make the leap from small enterprises to big, profitable businesses. The sustained State policy of protectionism was additional hurdle in the development of Russian businesses. I want to emphasise that scholars dwell on the idea that the Russian government intentionally chose not to overburden merchants with taxes, and supported this estate more than the agrarian sector.\textsuperscript{140} Reading between the lines, however, one can see that State policies were most detrimental to small businessmen, and did not support all businesses irrespective of the size and level of profitability. Thus, it was not that the government did not overburden businessmen, but rather that it sustained disproportional business taxation. The irony of the history is that when the government was ready to introduce taxation that did not account for social boundaries and social hierarchy, a strong lobby of rich entrepreneurs blocked change because it would lower their profits. The small entrepreneurs, however, preferred not to get involved since they had already adapted to the contemporary system and reform would usher in changes which would require further adaptation to the new realities of the business world.

In 1861, the reform project was made available to the public. The main points were: (a) the

\textsuperscript{139} Rudchenko, \textit{Istoricheskii ocherk oblozhenii torgovli}, pp. 135, 136, 147.
\textsuperscript{140} Zakharov, Petrov and Shatsillo, \textit{Istoriia nalogov}, p. 209.
cancellation of the mandatory declaration of capital, (b) the cancellation of the third guild (which, in reality, was substituted by the melochnyi torg or petty traders), the group of trading peasants, and free certificates (bilei), (c) trade was to be divided into three types: wholesale, retail and petty (and was not dependant on the value of work, constituent capital or the value of transactions), (d) while the guild system remained, taxes would be divided on a “permanent” (the right to perform business) and “proportional” basis, centred on the value of revenue and type of commercial and industrial establishment (e) the introduction of some elements of progressive reform, including introducing different levies dependant on the type of business agency, the level of extracted net income, and geographic location, (f) installing a new merchantry into the old society, including the abolition of merchant social exclusivity and the dependency of business activity on social titles based on the scope, scale and type of business. 141

Ultimately, the law that was adopted substantially modified the external characteristics of mercantile establishments eligible for guild patents. The first guild was allowed wholesale rights internally and overseas, there were no limits on the number of industrial and trade enterprises owned (or the number of employees), and the value of contracts was also unlimited. Second guild merchants could only sell goods within the city and its districts (uezd) where they purchased patents. They were allowed only 16 workers per enterprise, and contracts could not exceed 15,000 roubles. The third guild was eliminated. Petty trade, production and service were redistributed among five types of non-guild licenses: petty trade (melochnyi), traveling traders (razvoznyi), street vendors (raznosnyi), city dwellers and small enterprises (both classified as meshchanskyi promysel) and trade assistants (prikazchik). 142

Scholars usually argue that the project, once legally accepted in 1863 and adjusted in 1865, did not substantially change the 1824 law. It did not cancel estate boundaries, nor did it introduce progressive and fair taxation. The merchantry was left as it was: one of several legal social estates. 143 The introduction of more equal and progressive taxation was postponed until 1885. This was because the fiscal system lacked a supervisory body focused on profit extraction and the actual revenues of real estate eligible for taxes, trade and industry. In 1885, a supervisory tax audit agency (podatnaia inspeksiia), was created to prepare laws on income tax, in addition to performing audits.

143 Rudchenko, Istoricheskii ocherk oblozheniiia torgovii, p. 199; Zakharov, Petrov and Shatsillo, Istoriia nalogov, pp. 177, 209.
Despite negative opinions about the guild reform of 1863-65, the legal abolition of membership limitations substantially expanded the economic opportunities and legal status of the Russian business community over time. Additionally, the Minister of Finance from 1881 to 1887, Nikolai Kh. Bunge, was a passionate supporter of progressive taxation and protectionism. He ushered in revolutionary ideas about Russian business taxation and transformed the relationship between the State and businessmen from relationships based on social status to relationships based on business ethic and profit which were not confined by social boundaries.

1.2.7. From 1885 Through 1917

In the 1880s, taxation drifted from attached to social titles to based on profit, wealth and ownership. The cancellation of the poll tax in 1885 was risky: there was the real possibility of a massive budget deficit. In order to avoid this problem, Bunge introduced additional, partially progressive (with respect to business profit), taxation. In addition to patents purchased, enterprises were liable for publishing annual financial reports (public companies, banks and joint-stock corporations) and had to pay a 3 percent net profit tax (or supplemental percentile taxation). Other guild enterprises were required to pay a supplemental levy (raskladochnyi nalag): every three years the government announced a required lump sum, which would be distributed among provinces and then among liable firms based on size and income. In 1889, the supplemental levy was extended to all sizable non-guild enterprises. In 1892-93, the percentage proportion of taxes was raised from 3 to 5 percent, and the amount of supplemental tax increased by 25 percent. The levy was also expanded to industrial enterprises, which previously were only responsible for excise tax.

Legally, there was no definition of how the levy would be collected, and additional information about annual profits were unverifiable. To fill this gap authorities introduced new legal administrative bodies such as the repartition commissions (raskladochnye prisutstviia) which were chaired by the director of the provincial (or city or circuit) Treasury office and other members were representatives of local business merchants, trading peasants, and so forth. The function of business representatives was to make firms visible. This was a challenging

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145 Zakharov, Petrov and Shatsillo, Istoriia nalogov, p. 211; Rudchenko, Istoricheskii ocherk oblozheniia torgovli, pp. 322, 361.
issue since the businessmen began their work on the commission by taking two separate oaths: (1) to guard the interests of the Tsar and State Treasury and (2) to guard the confidentiality of the tax payers.\textsuperscript{146} It was no secret to the Ministry of Finance that trade representatives would be dishonest, but they strove to make business practices visible and incomes accountable. This goal was reached in 1889 when about 420,000 firms underwent State assessment regarding supplementary taxes.\textsuperscript{147} State revenue, little by little, was becoming a function of private business activity. Yet, by 1898, very rough calculations show that about 10,000 firms were not recorded or supervised by any government office.\textsuperscript{148}

In the 1880s, increasing tax collection on businesses and mapping Russian enterprises took clearer shape. Between 1865 and 1891 the proportion of commercial taxation (promyslovoe oblozhenie) to the value of direct taxes increased from 20 to 55 percent. Within the same period, commercial taxation increased by 446 percent, or 15 percent annually. The value of fees collected from patents between 1863 and 1874 increased by 107 percent.\textsuperscript{149} Yet, the success in tax collection were not enforced by increased equality and progressiveness in business taxes. The new 1885 law dictated that first guild merchants registered in Moscow had to purchase one patent (565 roubles) and pay 55 roubles for each enterprise (the ticket fee). But if a merchant had 10 enterprises, the fee per enterprise was 110 roubles in total (without supplementary taxes). At the same time, a merchant who had only one first guild enterprise was required to pay 620 roubles.\textsuperscript{150} The lack of consideration for proportionality was clear.

The introduction of the so-called State Industrial Tax (gosudarstvenny promyslovyi nalog) in 1898 was the last big reform to business taxation and the de facto end of the “mutually reinforcing connection … [between the State and merchants], when the state located and governed firms through the guilds”.\textsuperscript{151} In response, guild merchants received socially exclusive rights from the State. Also, the reform signalled the end of cooperation between the State and rich merchants. Almost 40 years earlier the business lobby held enough power to postpone elements of tax progression, but by the late 1890s, when the lobby held public discussions about postponing or revising the progressive business income taxes, the government was unwilling to listen. The 1898 legislation retained a bifurcated business tax: (1) a basic fee (the basic licence fee of 500 roubles) and (2) supplementary taxes (based on assets and the

\textsuperscript{146} Kotsonis, States of Obligation, p. 132.
\textsuperscript{147} Kotsonis, States of Obligation, p. 129.
\textsuperscript{148} Kotsonis, States of Obligation, p. 127.
\textsuperscript{149} Rudchenko, Istoricheskii ocherk oblozhenia torgovli, pp. 361–362.
\textsuperscript{150} Zakharov, Petrov and Shatsillo, Istoriia nalogov, p. 212.
\textsuperscript{151} Kotsonis, States of Obligation, p. 128.
repartitional tax). The latter, however, became more progressive and expanded to many new enterprises that otherwise may have remained tax free.

If previous business taxation was based on external characteristics, such as the number of labourers or the value of renting accommodation, new conceptions of taxation were reoriented towards internal characteristics such as the net profit of an enterprise, its type, productivity and geographic location. Business taxation was transformed from membership fees in merchant soslovie to the more personal taxing of assets and businesses.152 The option to purchase a guild patent (soslovnoe svидетельство) remained open, but only for very rich merchants and entrepreneurs. The title of guild merchant was no longer an issue of legal rights and obligations. Industrial enterprises were divided into eight types, five devoted to commercial establishments, in addition to categories for personal service occupations (личные промысловые занятия) such as trade assistants, commercial travellers, brokers, and other similar careers. Taxation was expanded to many enterprises previously free from taxation, for example, the timber industry, cattle dealing, the grain trade etc.153

1.3. The Merchant Myth: The Decline or Balance of Russian Mercantile Institutions

In the first sections of this chapter I have shown how Russian soslovia, for the majority of their existence, remained fiscal institutions rather than social groups defined by levels of wealth or occupation. The main function of soslovie membership was to provide schematic boundaries between people and to attach them to geographic locations for better fiscal control. From the middle of the seventeenth century, the State made several attempts to organise and categorise merchants within the hierarchical soslovie system. Nevertheless, the vast geographic area of the Russian Empire and the methods of “internal colonisation” made this difficult, and the economy was primarily based on agriculture at least up until the end of the long nineteenth century. The low proportion of the urban population and the inherited shortage of bureaucratic apparatuses to manage the Empire (among other factors), substantially jeopardised the outcomes of reforms. As a result, the State introduced and maintained a system in which legal and socio-economic statuses were not congruous. Yet, this was probably not the main obstacle impeding the accumulation of personal assets or labour mobility.154 In this regard, I agree with

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152 Zakharov, Petrov and Shatsillo, Istoriia nalogov, p. 212.
153 Kotsonis, States of Obligation, p. 130.
154 I suggest that in the Russian context, labour/occupational mobility is a better term than social mobility: legal regulations and individual peasant/landlord agreements before and after the 1861 reform provided
M.K. Shatsillo, who suggested that the coexistence of dynamic economic development and outdated social norms still puzzles modern scholars but likely were not an issue for contemporaries.\textsuperscript{155} Moreover, it seems that it was not a crucial obstacle for occupational mobility or wealth accumulation.

Richard Pipes who extensively invested in one of the strongest preconceptions about the Russian merchantry, describing it as small, politically unambitious and unable to develop into a European-style middle class. At the same time Pipes was stuck by the numerous accounts of foreign travellers who described Russians as enthusiastic traders and described Russia as a place where almost everyone, from the Tsar to the peasantry, was involved in lively exchange and trade. The statistics, however, reveal that only a few hundred professional merchants and entrepreneurs were actively trading. Pipes explained the difference between official statistics and foreigners’ impressions based on the fiscal (rather than occupational) character of legal social estates and land hunger, which made peasants more likely to search for extra income to pay fees and taxes. Peasants, throughout their lives, went back and forth between urban and rural areas, or between agricultural and non-agricultural occupations in order to make enough money to maintain their household. Since agricultural and non-agricultural occupations were part-time, and the institutional framework of serfdom and post-reform regulations provided peasants with little chance to change their social and occupational status, they were not able to accumulate substantial wealth (property) or were limited by a kind of a “glass ceiling” of their owner’s regulations over peasant wealth and occupational mobility.\textsuperscript{156} Wealth accumulation was mainly hindered by peasant’s inability to be involved full-time commercial or production agency.

Pipes argues that guild merchants were also held hostage by the paternalistic and oppressive State, which limited business freedoms.\textsuperscript{157} The lack of accounting skills, underdeveloped capitalist ethics and life in a perpetual state of anxiety in the face of a repressive State explain why enterprises collapsed after the first generation and why merchants failed to accumulate wealth.\textsuperscript{158} While this is partially true, Pipe’s interpretation lacks specific knowledge of how peasant trade worked, and how the Russian mercantile community was intertwined with

\textsuperscript{155} Shatsillo, \textit{Sotsialnyi sostav Rossiiskoi burzhuazi}, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{157} Pipes, \textit{Russia under the Old Regime}, pp. 191–197.
\textsuperscript{158} Pipes, \textit{Russia under the Old Regime}, p. 207.
serfdom. His research similarly ignores comparative statistics which inflate in many of his conclusions.

While it is widely accepted that the social position of the businessmen based on the extend of economic power, social prestige and political influence they attract, the difference in business organisation in different national contexts deeply influence whether the business community would merge with the elite and the ruling class as it was in France and Britain or would remain rather a professional community composed of many different elites as it was in Germany. The main idea of this approach is to attract attention to the importance of national contexts before labelling (or defining it as downward or progressive) the business elites, and wider the proprietary communities, as a middle class, bürgertum, bourgeoisie or give it another title.

The definition of the Russian business elite, its personal income, wealth and social position is a deeply under researched topic, however some scholars try to define social identity of Russian society and to compare and integrate social estates with its European peers. In a society where legal social order mismatched socioeconomic status and occupational opportunities, I suggest one must build their argument on a balance of legal regulations, statistics, informal conventions and social networks which shape individual behaviour. Tracy Dennison’s work on serfdom and S. Antonov’s research about urban credit and debt relations in Imperial Russia are two recent works that adopt this approach.

Serfdom is often blamed for hampering Russian economic success. As Dennison suggests, however, the role of serfdom in economic growth is a challenging discussion. The institutional approach to researching serfdom (and attention to the subtle details of the landlord-serf-State relations) brought Dennison to important conclusions about why Russian economic development was delayed and how, in reality, serf’s accumulation of private wealth was obstructed. Dennison’s research focuses on the Sheremetyev estate Voshchazhnikovo and shows that while many peasants were able to buy plots of land and accumulate wealth (even purchasing personal freedom), those able to purchase land were officially classified as tenants. Similarly, a serf who bought land using their lord’s name had to pay 10 percent of the purchase price in taxes and an additional annual 1 percent asset tax. Those peasants who were engaged

160 Wirtschafts, Social identity, p. 97; Shatsillo, Sotsialnyi sostav Rossiiskoi burzhuazii.
in trade, crafts or manufacturing were charged with an annual tax of 1 to 10 roubles. Serfs who were caught in the possession of luxury items (above an allowed limit) were penalised and their possessions were confiscated. Additionally, those who accumulated over 500 roubles in money or goods were charged with an annual asset tax of 0.5 percent of each rouble over the limit. Part-time work, seasonal labour migration, permanent control of personal wealth accumulation, the limited personal property ownership of serfs and a wide variety of informal social contracts like, for example, blat (bribes), helped to maintain a sort of glass ceiling on economic development not only at Voshchazhnikovo, but at many noble estates.

The effects of the institutional framework of serfdom at the Voshchazhnikovo estate crossed serfs-landlord boundaries and substantially influenced the development of urban legal estates and guild merchants. The guild merchanty, throughout its history, remained small not only because monopolising State policies, but also because of the limited internal market and persistent presence of serfs, peasants and meshchane who were allowed to sell their petty goods and self-produced agricultural products freely and without fees. Any official attempts to remove or limit petty trade, and to introduce an occupational monopoly for guild merchants, would never succeed in Russia. As Pavel. A. Berlin stated in 1922, “the bourgeois circles in Russia were always closed and limited because a simple increase in the number of merchants would require the deep alteration of all basic conditions of Russian life”. This explains the failures of the first iteration of the Kankrin guild reform in 1824. The introduction of two separate mercantile organisations, one for merchants and one for peasants, meant that while both entities were given similar rights, obligations and structure, peasants were required to pay much higher fees. It soon became obvious that increasing fees, and the complicated structure of this economic system, would not bring reprieve to Russian guild merchants and to Russian economy in general. The existence of peasant trade was a fatal flaw because serfs, in selling agricultural and proto-industrial products, continuously fed into the system of serfdom and became even more bound to their landlord and the estate.

Thus, the small number of professional merchants was the result of many causes, but mainly due to the institutional framework of serfdom which partly caused a limited internal market. Nevertheless, many historians exploit the merchant myth, blaming the Russian merchanty

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165 Originally, it was Tracy Dennison who defined the “peasant myth”. Studies of the Russian guild merchanty also refer to this term.
for its own inability to adopt liberal ideas and reforms, to stave off the threat of revolution and to accumulate and to sustain wealth equal to the West.  

I argue that the merchant myth is built on a misinterpretation of official statistics. Considering the loose legal framework of Russian soslovia and its fiscal (rather than occupational or socioeconomic) framework, it is crucially important to extend the boundaries of the business community beyond the guild merchantry. A thorough study should encompass all business-related individuals that appeared in official statistics. In redefining these parameters, I approach a “real”, rather than artificial, community of business-related individuals. Even then, however, the picture remains incomplete since thousands of trading peasants and meshchane were allowed to engage in petty trade without patents in some periods during the nineteenth century and, thus, do not appear in any statistics.

I also discuss business survival and succession among Moscow guild merchants in 1879 and 1897. Comparing tabulated prosopographical information from 1879 and 1897 in Moscow, and general statistics of the fluctuations of the number of Russian guild merchants, I challenge the widely accepted idea that guild merchants were a fluid and bankrupt group. Instead, I provide data on the actual number of bankruptcy cases and the average number of years individuals continuously held merchant guild patents in Moscow in 1879 and 1897. I also discuss rates of intergenerational business succession.

The data for this section combines legal, fiscal, demographic and social (soslovia) statistics from both published and unpublished archival sources. I focus primarily on Moscow guild merchants as a soslovie and business community. This data covers the period from 1816 to 1912. More specifically, however, my data focuses on Moscow between 1864 until 1910.

I seek to show the difference between guild merchants as a soslovie and as a business community, and how the misinterpretation of the number of soslovie members and the number of patent holders affect previous scholarship. I combine archival data of tax statistics on the number of individual patents purchased to soslovie statistics, as well as the number of relatives enrolled in patents. Originally, Russian civil law did not distinguish between patent holders and enrolled family members: legally, they were all merchants since the patent granted the head of the family and family members with equal civil rights. As economic subjects, however, they

were not equal. The head of the family enjoyed full economic rights and obligations in regard to the specific patent, whereas family members were listed as dependants since they could not operate independently.

Merchant membership books and statistics of guild merchant patent holders, which play an important role in my argumentation, are rarely scrutinised. Yet, scholars who analyse both statistics and membership books have shown the authenticity of this data. I suggest that the process of issuing patents and obligatory annual renewal, together with the mandatory purchase of additional patents (in the case where an individual was eligible for guild merchantry activities in different provinces), mean that statistics can artificially inflate or deflate the number of merchants. This is because they do not reflect individuals who did not repurchase new patents or who purchased multiple patents for various regions. The lack of published registers of guild merchants across the empire means that the scrupulously estimating the number of merchants who held multiple patents is not possible. I suggest, however, that while mistakes have been made, collectively they are unlikely to seriously bias the results of my study. Also, the data (Table 1.1) suggests that the chance of doubly counting merchant guild patent holders in Moscow, which was the centre of internal trade in 1865, was minimal. The absolute majority of patent holders were Muscovites. By the end of the century, however, the proportion of non-Muscovite merchants substantially increased, especially among second guild merchants while the number of first guild Muscovite merchants decreased. This meant that, by the end of the nineteenth century, the chances of dually counting guild merchant members at the Imperial level increased, and that this data should be used cautiously.

Table 1. The proportion of Muscovite to non-Muscovite guild members in Moscow merchant guilds, 1865-1898

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1865</th>
<th>1870</th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1898</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>85.8</td>
<td>85.8</td>
<td>90.3</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


1.4. Russian Guild Merchants by Numbers (1816-1912)

Perhaps the most basic preconception about the Russian merchanty in the second half of the nineteenth century was that it was a fluid community and in continuous decline. In this section I will focus on the changing number of patent holders in Russia in general and compare these figures to general trends. I focus on Moscow as the centre of internal trade and production.

Figure 1. 1 Number of purchased guild merchant patents (without enrolled family members) in the Russian Empire, 1816-1912

The overall number of Russian guild merchants throughout the long nineteenth century was increasing (Figure 1). Despite substantial changes in legal regulations regarding fees and the number of guilds, the average number of Russian guild merchants annually increased by 1.3 merchants. The sharp drop in the number of guild patents purchased after 1899 was due to the cancellation of mandatory guild patent purchases: after 1899 guild patents were a matter of social prestige rather than a prerequisite of mercantile and manufacturing activity.
Figure 1. 2 The number of merchant guild certificates purchased in Central Russia, 1831-1911

Between 1742 and 1863, the Russian guild merchantry was divided into 3 guilds based on size, the geographic location of the business and the merchant’s level of wealth. From 1831 to 1858 (Figure 1, Appendix 1) we see that the proportion of the least productive, and likely the poorest strata of Russian merchantry (the third guild), made up approximately 95 percent of the total guild merchant community. Surprisingly, the abolition of the third guild was not a significant detriment to the Russian business community (Figures 1 and 2). In 10 years, or by 1873, the number of patent holders in the remaining two guilds had not only recovered but exceeded previous levels by 1.5 times over (Figure 1, Appendix 1). If between 1858 and 1867 the number of guild certificates dropped by 80 percent (from 70,858 to 13,745), by 1873 the number of purchased certificates increased by 576 percent, from 13,745 to 92,986. Also, the cancellation of the third guild increased the annual fluctuation in the numbers of certificate holders. That is, between 1816 and 1858, the average yearly fluctuations were +0.9, but by 1867 to 1897 this number doubled to 2.2. It also meant that, on average, every year the number of patent holders increased by 2.
If we look at the number of patents purchased after 1898, when guild patents became a matter of honour or social (to a in lesser extent business) exclusivity, we first see that after the initial steep decline of 70 percent between 1898 and 1899 (from 141,273 to 42,346), the number of patent holders fluctuated around 30,000 to 35,000 patents. In 1911, the number of certificate holders from both guilds grew substantially and by 1912 reached the initial 1906-07 levels. Another interesting observation is that between 1898 and 1912 the second guild, on average, decreased annually by 573 patents. Yet, the size of the first guild increased annually, by 47 people on average. In addition, this trend mirrored the U-shaped evolution of the size of merchant soslovie families. In Central Russia, in 1858, the merchant soslovie incorporated 195,000 people, in 1897 the number was 121,900 and in 1912 it was 143,800.168

Another observation relevant to the discussion of the merchant myth is that the abolition of the third guild (or two-thirds of guild patent holders) did not ruin the guild merchantry or the business community. Scholars have agreed that guild merchant patents provided substantial social privileges, and that their purchase (especially for the third guild members) was an opportunity to buy privilege rather than conduct trade and manufacturing.169 Instead, the data suggests that, for the majority of the long nineteenth century, the proportion of individuals who purchased merchant guild patents to receive social privileges was marginal. My calculations, based on Moscow merchant membership books, suggest that the proportion of non-trading merchants during the second half of the nineteenth century did not exceed 6.5 percent of the total number of patent holders. Surprisingly, by the end of the nineteenth century, but before the abolition of the obligatory purchase of guild patents, both the proportion and the absolute number of non-trading merchants increased from 5.2 (304 people) in 1879 to 6.2 (334 people) in 1897.

What motivated people to spend money on status without any real social privileges, such as freedom from conscription or corporal punishment in the second half of the nineteenth century, as was the case in the eighteenth and nineteenth century? I suggest that in the second half of the nineteenth century a new sense of honour appeared, based on exclusivity and sensitivity to

individual achievement, and that this was more important than actual soslovie membership. After the 1898 reform only rich businessmen were allowed to purchase guild merchant patents. In 1899, in comparison to 1897, 70 percent of the first guild merchants and only 28 percent of the second guild merchants purchased the honourable guild merchant patent (Appendix 1).

1.5. The Russian Business Community in the Context of Social Stratification and Urbanisation

Russia was divided among several sosloviia which organised society from top to bottom. Russian society was laterally organised by family or household. Yet, the merchant soslovie was one of the most prominent exceptions. The main distinction from other sosloviia was that membership was not inheritable. The loose connection of guild merchants to other sosloviia (by nature and obligation), and even within family and kin (family members could be in different sosloviia), meant that their social status was not firmly fixed either horizontally or vertically. Guild merchants drifted between occupations (class) and soslovie. In other words, guild merchants could be classified either by soslovie (patent holders with enrolled family members) or as active business subjects (the individual guild patent holder). Loose social, familial and occupational connections, and the contradictory outcomes which appear when we compare statistics with previous research, led me to question what merchant soslovie statistics actually represent? How did the evolution of soslovie members correspond to the evolution of business agents, at least those represented in the available statistics? And how did the evolution of the business community (all registered business agents) correspond to urbanisation and increasing customer demands?

In the previous section, we saw that the average number of guild patents purchased in the Russian Empire increased throughout the nineteenth century. This shows there are no grounds to support the misconception that the guild merchanty was permanently stagnating. Similarly, this data also shows that the guild merchanty were not a shrinking group within the Russian urban population.

170 Smith: ‘Honored Citizens’. Another example of the same trend can be seen in the evolution of the title of honorary citizen in the Russian Empire.
The number of patents, guild merchant soslovie members and businesses in the context of the urban population (Russian Empire, 1840 and 1897)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Individual guild patent holders</th>
<th>All business-related activities</th>
<th>The merchant soslovie (with enrolled members)</th>
<th>The Urban population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>37,380 (0.8) **</td>
<td>51,743 (1.05) **</td>
<td>219,400 (4.5) *</td>
<td>4,887 000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>141,273 (0.8) ***</td>
<td>914,881 (5.4) ***</td>
<td>225,600 (1.3) *</td>
<td>16,828 900*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: * Rashin, A. G., Naseleznia Rossii za 100 let (1811-1913) (Moscow, 1956), 119,123. ** Vedomost o svidetelstvakh i biletakh, vydanikh na pravo torgovli i promyslov a tak zhe o dopolnitelnom sbore s tseny torgovykh dokumentov v 1880 god (SPb, 1881), p. 48. *** Ezhegodnik Ministerstva Finansov za 1900, vol. XXX (SPb, 1901), pp. 140–141.

The ratio to the urban population is listed in parenthesis.

The merchant myth is based on the assumption that the proportion of merchant soslovie, within the urban population, permanently decreased throughout the nineteenth century. Indeed, between 1840 and 1897, the proportion of Russian merchants to the total urban population decreased from 4.5 to 1.3 percent (Table 1.2, column 4). The common (mis)interpretation is that the Russian economic elite (guild merchantry), despite the economic successes of the 1880s, did not reverse the trend which first appeared in late 1840s. Instead, their decline accelerated according to this school of thought. Scholars suggest that the guild merchantry, being locked between ordered society and the paternalistic State, could not overcome the challenges of rapid economic development and the backwardness of the social order which stunted their economic initiative. Nevertheless, if we look at what these numbers actually represent, we see they do not show a decline of economic potential but rather the decline of the previously dominant demographic model of universal nuptiality and high fertility. Also, the data is skewed in that it only reflects the choice of the head of the family, or perhaps the joint decision of the family, to enrol children and spouses on the certificate. In the context of accelerated social and economic transformation, and the increased opportunity to choose an individual career, it seems logical that fewer children were enrolled on their parent’s guild certificates.

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Another problem associated with the merchant myth is that the proportion of patent holders, in relation to the urban population between 1840 and 1897, remained stable at 0.8 percent (Table 1.2, column 2). This demonstrates that the proportion of guild merchant patent holders grew proportionally alongside the urban population. It is entirely another matter if the number of guild merchants seems small for the Russian Empire. I would suggest that this can be explained by the institutional framework of serfdom (the economic self-sufficiency of the household, for example), the conditions of emancipation and the numerous opportunities to be engaged in trade and production without a guild merchant patent.

The numbers also testify to an increase in the proportion of individuals involved in the business community between 1840 and 1897. Between 1840 and 1897 the urban population increased by 3.5 times and the proportion of guild merchants grew 3.8 times (Table 1.2, column 5). Yet, the entire business community grew 17.7 times (Table 1.2, column 3). The proportion of business-related (officially registered) individuals to the urban population, contrary to the proportion of guild members, also grew from 1.05 to 5.4 percent (See Table 1.2 column 3, appendix 1, in regard to the general evolution of the number of businesses).

The question remains that if the number of guild merchant patent holders grew proportionally to the urban population, and if the total business-related population likewise grew over time, why did the size of soslovie increase for the whole of the Russia merchantry when it shrank in Moscow? The simple calculations show that in 1840 merchant patents in Central Russia accounted for 5.9 family members the proportion of which, by 1897, had substantially decreased (1.6 see Table 1.2). My further analysis of merchant family demography in Chapter 2 suggests that the increase in the number of single merchants, rather than a decrease in family size, is responsible for the overall decrease in soslovie size.
Table 1. The number of Moscow guild merchants with enrolled in relatives, in thousand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calendar Period</th>
<th>Total Moscow population</th>
<th>Number of guild merchants with enrolled relatives</th>
<th>Number of patents purchased (in parenthesis number people per certificate)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1788-94</td>
<td>175,000 (6.8)</td>
<td>11,900</td>
<td>No data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1834-40</td>
<td>334,700 (5.3)</td>
<td>17,800</td>
<td>No data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>602,000 (4.8)</td>
<td>29,200 (17.1)*</td>
<td>5,007 (5.8) *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>753,000 (3.0)</td>
<td>22,900 (25.8) **</td>
<td>5,923 (3.8) **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>1,038,600 (1.8)</td>
<td>19,500 (27.5)</td>
<td>5,358 (3.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>1,174,700 (1.6)</td>
<td>18,500 (25.8) **</td>
<td>1,895 (7.4) **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910/12</td>
<td>3,734,200</td>
<td>23,000 (7.5) ****</td>
<td>1,720 (13) ****</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: column 2 and 3 except 1897 Rashin, A. G., Naselenie Rossii za 100 let (1811-1913) (Moscow, 1956), pp. 124–125.; column 2 and 3 for 1897 Ivanova, N.A., Zheltova, V.P., Soslovno-klassovaia struktura Rossii v XIX - nachale XX v. (Moskva, 2004), p. 277.; column 4 for 1871-1897 Spravochnaia kniga o litsakh, poluchivshikh kupecheskie i promyslovye svidetelstva po g. Moskve na 1871 (Moskva, 1871); Spravochnaia kniga o litsakh, poluchivshikh kupecheskie i promyslovye svidetelstva po g. Moskve na 1882 (Moskva, 1883); Spravochnaia kniga o litsakh, poluchivshikh kupecheskie i promyslovye svidetelstva po g. Moskve na 1897 (Moskva, 1898).; for 1902 Bokhanov, A. N., Krupnaia burzhuaziia v Rossii: konets XIXv. -1914g. (Moskva, 1992), p. 43.; for 1910/1912 my estimations on base of the proportion of the number of purchased patents in the Moscow province to purchased solely in Moscow Ivanova, N.A., Zheltova, V.P., Soslovno-klassovaia struktura Rossii v XIX - nachale XX v. (Moskva, 2004), pp. 282–283.

Column 2 in parentheses - the ratio of merchant soslovie (with family members) to the Moscow urban population.

Column 3 in parentheses – the proportion of purchased merchant certificates to the number of merchant soslovie members (heads of the family with enrolled relatives), in *1872, ** 1879, ***1907

Column 3 in parentheses - the number family members per patent

Though the Moscow guild merchantry generally followed the same Russian-wide tendency in decreasing the number of family members per patent (in Moscow from 5.5 in 1871 to 3.6 in 1897), after the cancellation of the mandatory purchase of guild patents in 1898, the number of family members per patent increased substantially (to approximately 7.4 in 1902, and 13 in 1910-12, Table 1.3). This reinforces the argument that the status value of guild merchants increased. When guild merchant status became a commodity in high demand and short supply, in which guild patents were issued to a limited number of businesses, more family members sought enrolment. Also, data on the increased number of family members enrolled on first guild Moscow merchant certificates, as discussed in Chapter 2, also points to this trend.

1.6. Moscow Guild Merchants: Professional Survival and Succession

Usually, when scholars discuss the long-term evolution of the Russian guild merchantry and business community, they opt for vague arguments about the decline of the community, the
number of bankruptcies, the substantial number of merchants who wasted their fortunes. Similarly, they note that businesses rarely survived beyond two generations. Business failures and risk-averse strategies were deeply imbedded in the cultural code and collective ethos of the Russian population. This was suggested by James L. West who explained that “Individual initiative for private gain ... derived from the peasant culture but [was] by no means unique to the peasantry”, and thus, individuals were not necessarily interested in the success of businesses or their profitability. I have already discussed that this kind of argument was not representative of reality and was a myth. Below I provide data on the average bankruptcy rates, business longevity and business succession in the Russian Empire and in Moscow specifically.

Table 1.4 The number of annual bankruptcy boards in the Russian commercial courts*, 1885-1898

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Bankruptcy boards for guild merchants in Moscow**</th>
<th>The total number of established bankruptcy boards for guild merchants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* At the time, commercial courts provided data for Saint-Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa, Taganrog, Kerch-Enikal, Kishinev and Arkhangesk.

** in 1846 the Senate applied trade bankruptcy to the entire population, whereas before it was applied only to guild merchants.


Between 1885 and 1898, the data on the number of established bankruptcy boards (konkurs) for members of the Moscow guild merchantry suggests that, on average, only 2 percent of Moscow guild merchants declared bankruptcy annually (Table 1.4). While the low proportion of bankruptcies among merchants substantially reinforces my argument, this data should be treated with caution. There are two factors which influenced the small number of bankruptcy proceedings: loose legal regulations on bankruptcy in the Russian Empire and the culture of debt.

Legally, the option to file a claim with the bankruptcy board (delo o torgovoi nesostoiatelnosti) was available for debts totalling over 1,500 roubles but was also mitigated by the approval of creditors.\textsuperscript{174} The legal regulations left the creditor and debtor substantial room for pre-court negotiations on the process of debt payment. Bringing bankruptcy petitions before court was an exception rather than a rule in Russian business history. Also, before the banking system developed, the business world was more informal. Russian merchants often relied on oral agreements between creditors and borrowers which disguised informal credit interactions.\textsuperscript{175} Sergei Antonov has suggested that “the Russian network of private credit was large enough to rival the State’s credit institutions [before the 1880s]”.\textsuperscript{176} Antonov’s research shows that the behaviour of Russian merchants and nobles was dependant on unofficial credit networks. This did not mean Muscovite merchants were unsuccessful, but rather that the lack of available credit was disguised. He also suggests that living debt-free was not a sign of prosperity and successful business practices.\textsuperscript{177}

The culture of debt among Moscow merchants and landowners was twofold: (1) debt burdens meant that loans were frequently taken out to pay for previous loans and (2) the role of kin and family, in the Russian system, meant that kin ties were used to help cope with indebtedness.\textsuperscript{178} Family and kin members used a variety of strategies to hide insolvent businesses, including gifts and launching trusteeships to avoid confiscation.

In 1880, the Ministry of Justice separated commercial and civil bankruptcy proceedings.\textsuperscript{179} The persistently small number of annual petitions regarding non-commercial bankruptcy also

\textsuperscript{174} Niurenberg, A. M., \textit{Ustav sudoproizvodstva torgovogo. Po ofits. izd. 1903 g.}, (Moskva, 1913), art. 392, 405.
\textsuperscript{175} Antonov, \textit{Culture of Debt}, p. 270.
\textsuperscript{176} Antonov, \textit{Culture of Debt}, p. 86.
\textsuperscript{177} Antonov, \textit{Culture of Debt}, p. 139.
\textsuperscript{179} Kalmykov, V. V., \textit{Dokumenty konkursnykh upravlenii i administratsii po delam o nesostoiatelnosti kak istochniki po sotsialno-ekonomicheskoi istorii Moskvy ser XIX- nach. XX vv.} (Moskva, 2001), pp. 26–28.
suggests that the culture of debt and personal credit was still widely spread among the Russian population: the creditor-debtor situation still relied on personal negotiations rather than on State regulations (Table 1.5).

Table 1.5 The number of bankruptcy petitions in district courts (civil cases) in the internal provinces of the Russian Empire, 1885-1897

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Moscow District</th>
<th>District courts in internal provinces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>2632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>2663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>2682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>2737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>2755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>2654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>3178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>3097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>3220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>2869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>2942</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sbornik statisticheskii svedenii Ministerstva Iustitsii za 1884 i 1885 gody. Svedenia o lichnom sostave i deiatelnosti sudebnikh ustanovlenii obrazovannykh po ustavam imperatora Aleksandra II, vol. 1-2 (SPb, 1887); Sbornik statisticheskikh svedenii Ministerstva Iustitsii za 1887 (svedeniia za 1885-1888), vol. 3 (SPB, 1888), 58,62; Sbornik statisticheskikh svedenii Ministerstva Iustitsii za 1889, vol. 5 (SPb, 1890), 64,68; Sbornik statisticheskikh svedenii Ministerstva Iustitsii za 1890, vol. 6 (SPb, 1891), 64,68; Sbornik statisticheskii svedenii Ministerstva Iustitsii za 1891, vol. 7 (SPb, 1893), 64,68; Sbornik statisticheskikh svedenii Ministerstva Iustitsii za 1892, vol. 8 (SPB, 1894), 64,68; Sbornik statisticheskikh svedenii Ministerstva Iustitsii za 1893, vol. 9 (SPB, 1894), 64,68; Sbornik statisticheskii svedenii Ministerstva Iustitsii za 1894, vol. 10 (SPB, 1895), 68,72; Sbornik statisticheskii svedenii Ministerstva Iustitsii za 1897, vol. 13 (SPb, 1899), pp. 80–81.

Taking into account the many official shortcomings of statistics, it is still unlikely that the Russian merchantry faced a “constant threat of financial ruin” in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The instances of astronomical debts cited by David L. Ransel are based on exceptions (merchant Ivan Tolchenov). In reality, this level of debt was likely uncommon.180

I also question the common argument that the 1,500 roubles debt limit negatively affected the number of bankruptcy court proceedings. Legal regulations on bankruptcy stated (article 405) that the court could not summon an individual to a bankruptcy proceeding based on a

creditor’s claim that the borrower refused repayment. An individual could become bankrupt only after the total value of his realty and personalty did not cover the total value of credit, and was also under 1,500 roubles.\textsuperscript{181} I also calculate, in Chapter 4, that average value of wealth at death (in my random sample of deceased Moscow guild merchants), was above 60,000 roubles which exceeded the 1,500 roubles needed to successfully file a bankruptcy petition. Certainly, merchant families could apply different strategies such as hiding property, the moneyless sale of property to spouses or family members, or declarations of trusteeship. If this was widespread practice, then official statistics show only a small number of cases where pre-court negotiations and family networking did not work. Nevertheless, I suggest that the pre-court negotiations and annual mandatory renewal of the merchant patent allowed merchants to successfully manage businesses on the verge of bankruptcy.

Another preconception about the Russian guild mercantile concerns the fluidity of its composition and business longevity. Digitised data from two annual membership books of the Moscow guild mercantile (1879 and 1897) and applied method of record linkage, however, show that many businesses were not as impermanent as previously suggested. During the 18 years that elapsed between 1879 and 1897, 17.2 percent of merchants (or successors) who purchased guild patents were still involved in trade by 1897, though perhaps in another guild. On average, the composition of the Moscow guild mercantile (only patent holders) changed annually by 4.5 to 5 percent (or approximately 250 people). This challenges the argument that fluidity in merchant populations was exceptionally high.

Using programming language Python, I was able make the record linkages between business succession by generation, but only for those business families that existed in both 1879 and 1897. To reconstruct familial relationships between Moscow guild merchants who purchased patents in 1879 and 1897, I used the first letters of ancestor’s names in 1879. This information was compared to the first three letters (to avoid false data) of descendants’ patronyms in 1897. Thus, the stems of the patronyms of the annual merchant membership book from 1879 were compared with the stems of the first names of the membership book from 1897. If these coincided, I recorded a match. I also checked matches for plausibility. For example, I took into account if the paternal head of household was young (16) versus elderly (80) when their children (primarily sons) were born. Other factors, however, were not a part of these calculations such as first or second guild membership, which could have changed over time.

\textsuperscript{181} Niurenberg, \textit{Ustav sudoproizvodstva torgovogo}, art. 405.
The outcome of the recorded linkages is that 411 fathers (who were guild merchants in 1879) were succeeded by 522 sons in 1897, or a statistical value of 7 percent.\textsuperscript{182} That being said, however, it can be assumed that the margin of error, which is less than 5 percent, means that my data is largely reliable. It should be noted, however, that with this type of record linkage certain relevant relationships are omitted such as business succession by kin relatives and spouses.

The omitted information about business succession might be reconstructed through tracing patent holders and their relatives who were also guild members, or detailing businesses transferred by parents or spouses. Also, Russian guild merchants who successfully resumed their businesses after the Napoleonic invasion (1812-1813) were granted with the honourable title of “senior merchants” (\textit{starinnoe kupechestvo}) which also was indicated in the membership books.

Table 1.6 The business or occupational guild membership succession by family or kin relatives among the Moscow guild merchanty in 1879 and 1897

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ancestors in guild merchantry or business inherited from relatives</th>
<th>1879</th>
<th>1897</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Senior Merchants</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: \textit{Spravochnaia kniga o litsakh, poluchivshikh kupecheskie i promyslovye svidetelstva po g. Moskve na 1879} (Moskva, 1879); \textit{Spravochnaia kniga o litsakh, poluchivshikh kupecheskie i promyslovye svidetelstva po g. Moskve na 1897} (Moskva, 1898).

In parenthesis - the percentage of the proportion of the actual number of patent holders in the year

The data suggests that by 1897, children and spouses resumed business less frequently after a parent or spouse died (446 in 1879 and 416 in 1897, see Table 1.6). At the same time, however, the number of senior merchants in both guilds decreased even more substantially (from 240 to 35 merchants). I suggest this decrease in senior merchants could only be partly ascribed to business mismanagement (bankruptcy), ill-inheritance strategies or the fate of three

\textsuperscript{182} According to Youssef Cassis, 52-54\% of the businessmen of the generation among European bourgeois in the second half of the nineteenth century were sons of businessmen. William Rubinstein also suggest that only 4.8\% of the most wealthy British entrepreneurs were self-made Cassis: 'Businessmen and the bourgeoisie’, p. 111; Rubinstein, W. D., \textit{Men of Property. The Very Wealthy in Britain since the Industrial Revolution} (London, 2006), p. 156.
generations (the Buddenbrooks’ syndrome where, by the third generation of the initial business initiator, the successor has exhausted possibilities or has sold/liquidated the business). In Russia by the end of the nineteenth century, as in other European countries, more impersonal forms of family business management had become widespread and relevant. This means that the substantial decrease in the number of senior merchants is more an issue of changes in family organisational structures as opposed to an increase in failed businesses, however this requires additional research.

Table 1. 7 The average number of years a guild merchant continuously purchased merchant guild patents in 1879 and 1897 in Moscow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1879</th>
<th>1897</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Guild</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Guild</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Spravochnaia kniga o litsakh, poluchivshikh kupecheskie i promyslovye svidetelstva po g. Moskve na 1879 (Moskva, 1879); Spravochnaia kniga o litsakh, poluchivshikh kupecheskie i promyslovye svidetelstva po g. Moskve na 1897 (Moskva, 1898).

Another misconception is the widely accepted fluidity of guild merchants based on the average number of years individuals held guild patents between 1879 and 1897 in Moscow (Table 1.7). It should be noted that the data does not indicate the average age of the business and how long it survived, or the amount of time that elapsed between the launch of the business and its liquidation, but instead the number of years an individual continuously purchased a guild patent in 1879 and by 1897. While the data does not provide us with the precise longevity of the business, or the professional life of Moscow guild merchants, it sheds light on the average lower limit of continuous guild membership. In reality, however, both business survival and longevity should be estimated as much longer than archival and published documents suggest. The available data suggests that in 1897 membership in both guilds, on average, was two years longer than in 1879.
Table 1. The average age of Moscow guild merchants (patent holders) in 1879 and 1897, by sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guild</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Median 1879</th>
<th>Median 1897</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Spravochnaia kniga o litsakh, poluchivshikh kupecheskie i promyslovye svidetelstva po g. Moskve na 1879* (Moskva, 1879); *Spravochnaia kniga o litsakh, poluchivshikh kupecheskie i promyslovye svidetelstva po g. Moskve na 1897* (Moskva, 1898).

The increase in the number of Moscow merchant guild members seems to partly correlate to increases in the average age of the guild patent holders (*Table 1.8*), at least in the first guild. The data from Moscow merchant membership books shows that between 1879 and 1897, the average male merchant of the first guild was five years older (46 and 51) and these numbers show that female merchants upheld the same trend (52 and 57). For second guild male merchants, however, these numbers remained the same, at 44 years whereas the average age of women merchants went from 44 and 46 years of age. In other words, first guild merchants were older than merchants of the second guild and that women tended to be two years older than their male counterparts. Nevertheless, male merchants of the second guild, who made up two-thirds of the total number of merchants, tended to remain the same average age between 1879 and 1897. It is also important to note that individuals were able to purchase guild patents much earlier in life by the end of the 1890s. Thus, by 1897 individuals were able to purchase patents much earlier and therefore remain in guilds longer.
Conclusion

Coming back to the initial question posed at the beginning of the chapter, as to whether the mismatch of social, economic and legal statuses of Russian merchants and entrepreneurs hindered the evolution of Russian business ventures and the group of guild merchants in particular, the data on evolution of Russian entrepreneurships of all (registered) types and profit-making capacities (together and separately) shows that through the nineteenth century the all-Russia trend was always positive, moreover, the proportion of guild merchants (family members notwithstanding) increased proportionally to the increase of the urban population. Also, between 1840 and 1897 the proportion of all registered enterprisers to the number of people living in the urban areas increased from 1.05% to 5.4%. It certainly debunks the widely-accepted Merchant Myth discussed in this chapter. Another part of the Myth suggests that professional survival and reproduction of Russian guild merchantry was low. My data, on the contrary shows that annually only under five percent (2% of them were bankrupts) of Moscow guild merchants quitted the soslovie. Also, the proportion of business successors which I was able to identify was about 12 percent in 1879, however, decreased by 1897 (8.4%). The decline was likely due to the increased number of membership years per guild merchant (decline of social and occupational mobility) and general transformation of entrepreneurship towards more corporative and less personal business management than due to the lack of managerial skills.

Finally, the inward character of Russian colonization deeply influenced the direction of Russian mercantile agency development and the way Russian business community was interpreted in comparison with Western mercantile institutions. I suggest that when Peter had titled Russian merchants and entrepreneurs as the members of the “guilds” he rather was motivated to force the development of corporative, joint-trade values typical for medieval European trading-guilds than to bring to Russia the outdated mercantile institutions. The title and the specific state-merchants relations finally mislead scholars who brought more attention to external discrepancies than internal similarities between Russian and Western mercantile institutions. Nevertheless, while Peter’s ideas were only partially and much later brought into being, and while the state did not cease to control trade and production (especially state monopolies) - one thing had changed: enrolment in all guilds and business-related occupations and inheritance of parental business were left free from state or corporative control. While it is still challenging to provide any clear definition of Russian mercantile agency such as: whether it is more similar to the contemporary middle class in Britain, German Bürgertum or French bourgeoisie, I am inclined to believe that the close path of general evolution (beyond nation-
specific definitions) of mercantile institutions in Western countries and in Russia, discovered in this chapter, does not contradict further conceptualization of Russian entrepreneurship, but on the contrary - motivates it.
Chapter 2: Social and Family Demography of Russian Urban Population

Demography, politics, educational policy, trade competition, finance and labour-saving technological advances are the main driving forces that influence changes in income and wealth inequality. Social and family demographic data additionally helps delineate why levels of wealth reproduction in late Imperial Russia were moderate. In this chapter I examine this issue by detailing how (if at all) formal and informal society stratification (or the mismatch of legal and economic statuses and regulations) influenced the demographic behaviour of the Russian population and guild merchants in particular. By analysing and discussing data on age, life expectancy, fertility, as well as family and household size and structure, I will challenge the commonly held notions that merchant families were predominantly composed of many children, nuptiality occurred in a high proportion of soslovie members, that the large proportion of aged guild members was connected to higher material-well-being and wealth provided exceed chances to live longer in period under consideration. Demography aids our understanding of wealth reproduction by detailing how age distribution, life expectancy, fertility, the size and the structure of family influenced inheritance practices and vice versa.

2.1. The Social Demography of the Russian Urban Population

Social demography applies formal demography data to social phenomena to better understand the ties between social and cultural dynamics. It seeks to explain the social consequences of demographic changes. In this section I will investigate whether basic demographic data on age and calculated life expectancy reflect formal society stratification.

The data in my sample suggests that the average age of soslovie members and individual survivability appear to correspond to gender, education and extreme wealth. Thus, I argue that the social demography of the period was driven by gender, education and in lesser extent by wealth (and perhaps occupation) rather than by social order.

2.1.1. The age structure of Russian soslovii

2.1.1.1 National level

Pre- and early industrial societies were usually dominated by youths. In this respect, the late Russian Empire was a clear example of a young society: only 70 out of every 1,000 people were over the age of 60.

Table 2.1 Population by county and age-groups (per 1,000), around 1912

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Under 19 Years Old</th>
<th>20-59 Years Old</th>
<th>60+ Years Old</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Russia</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In general, the age distribution of the population reflects the economic progress of the State (Table 2.1). The All-Russian census of 1897 calculated that 48.5 percent of the population in Central Russia was under the age of adulthood (21 years), though in urban areas this percentage was lower (38 percent of the population, whereas adults comprised 49 percent).\(^{185}\) In 1912 the proportion of the youth population had not changed substantially.\(^{186}\)

In contrast, by the middle of the nineteenth century France and the UK were the most industrialised states in Europe. Economically, however, due to domestic production of machinery and natural resources, the UK was in a more advantageous position than France. Additionally, the Napoleonic Wars (1789-1815) deeply affected birth rates in France. In the nineteenth century the French population was increasing at a slower pace in comparison to

\(^{185}\) Rashin, A. G., Naselenie Rossiiz a 100 let (1811-1913) (Moscow, 1956), p. 265, table 208.

other European countries: the proportion of old people was the highest while the underage population was lowest.

Table 2. Moscow Population by Age Groups (1871-1912) per 1,000 people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age groups</th>
<th>1871</th>
<th>1882</th>
<th>1902</th>
<th>1912</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-9</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-59</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-79</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In Moscow, between censuses, the proportion of small children grew, but this was not due to de-industrialisation and de-urbanisation (Table 2.2). Instead, it was the result of unbalanced work migration from rural areas to Moscow. The flood of migrants looking for work was primarily composed of adults aged between 20 and 50 and thus, this age group dominated the demographic landscape of the Moscow population. Four Moscow censuses (1871, 1882, 1902 and 1912) show a modest increase in the under-19 population (from roughly 31 to 34 percent). This increase should be primarily attributed to the number of children aged between 0 and 9 years old, the proportion of which per 1,000 people increased from 106 to 153 between 1871 and 1912. By the end of the nineteenth century, the stream of migration levelled because the nearby provinces had already exhausted their supplies of adult workers.

It is well known that until the late nineteenth century, work migration in Russia was gendered. Male workers moved seasonally to urban areas, leaving their families in the village. Female workers would migrate in two age groups: before marriage (i.e. around age 22) or if they were unmarried, or when their children were above the age of 10. Since men and women, despite their “urban experiences”, tended to marry individuals from their same village, female workers returned to the village in order to get married and have children. Male workers, however, returned, got married and subsequently left their family in the village. This explains the lower proportion of young children in urban areas. Only in rare cases were male workers lucky enough to move their family out of the village.
2.1.2. Age structure by soslovia

The distribution of the total population by age groups and social backgrounds is an important marker and shows the cumulative influence of different external factors. Soslovie membership was viewed by the State as one of the most important constituent characteristics of Russian society, however, the censuses rarely included data on the distribution of the population by soslovie and age. Yet, the Moscow census in 1902, unlike the All-Russian census of 1897, provided data on the distribution of its population by both soslovie and age.

Table 2.3 Distribution of Moscow population by age and soslovie, 1902, in percent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Groups</th>
<th>Nobles</th>
<th>Merchants</th>
<th>Honorary Citizens</th>
<th>Meshchane</th>
<th>Peasants</th>
<th>Clergy</th>
<th>Foreigners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 14</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The data in Table 2.3 shows important information about (1) the demographic behaviour of Muscovites, (2) social mobility from one group to another and (3) social identity. Social identity is the way people described themselves and is an excellent marker of demographic transformation in a given society. Since the census was not directly oriented to count the taxable population by social estate, it accepted any answers individuals gave about their social background.\(^{187}\)

Those who identified themselves simply as “citizen”, as urban dwellers, as children of honorary citizens, as members of non-orthodox faiths or recently baptized orthodox individuals, and all other similar individuals fell into the “meshchane” category. People who

\(^{187}\) For example, those who considered themselves “merchants”, “traders”, “merchant’s sons” were all counted under the title “merchant soslovie”. The self-identification of businessmen in regard to soslovie in 1902 is especially valuable. The 1898 cancellation of obligatory purchase of merchant certificates to run highly and moderately profitable businesses likely impacted the self-identification and composition of social groups.
indicated a rural background were ascribed to the category “peasants”. This means that the
table on the distribution of Muscovites by age and soslovie also reveals individual self-
perception of the social reality in late Imperial Russia, which gives the data additional value
(Table 2.3).

On the one hand, the flexible nature of the 1902 Moscow census questionnaire provides us
with rich material about individual identity and self-perception at a time of economic
transformation: the value of inheritable status was less important than occupational and
material opportunities. On the other hand, it blurs social categories for comparison with other
censuses. Luckily, the All-Russian census shows that self-identification was more or less in
line with official soslovie membership, or at the very least the social background of a given
individual. For instance, in 1897 the number of individuals in Moscow merchants families
totalled 19,491 people (5,358 heads of household), and in 1902 the number was 18,315. Right
after the obligation to purchase merchant soslovie patents was abolished, the number of people
who cared about this social status dropped by half in Moscow (from almost 6,000 to around
3,000 in 1899).188

The first trend that deserves mentioning in the distribution of sosloviia members by age
group is that the data supports the previous discussion about the lower proportion of young
peasant children. People who described themselves as peasants in the age groups between 0
and 49 were distributed almost equally without considerable fluctuation. The low proportion
of older peasants (60+) should be attributed to the tradition of returning to the village to live
with relatives rather than elevated death rates. Secondly, it is interesting that while the listed
sosloviia (except, maybe in the case of peasants) belonged to different social groups and
occupations with varying levels of prestige and wealth, the age distribution among the groups
was close. This seems to reflect the blurring of formal and informal boundaries between
sosloviia. Yet, the closeness of trends in the distribution of age in the different estates was the
outcome of different causal factors, which I will examine below.

The close trends in changing age-proportions of Muscovite sosloviia could be divided into
two groups: the first is nobles and merchants and the second is meshchane and peasants. It is
important to note that the close trends in age group distribution were only partly caused by the
same factors. Interestingly, while each group shows different dynamics before age 30 (this age
seems to be closely affected by social and professional mobility), the proportion of sosloviia
members in the age group 30-39 increases, and each group decreases at 40-49. This seems to

188 Shatsillo, Sotsialnyi sostav Rossiiskoi burzhuazii, p. 101.
coincide with the lessening proportion of age groups 50 and up, which is likely due to natural mortality.

Looking at the close trends in merchant and noble soslovia, the proportions of the age groups in both almost simultaneously increase by age 24, drop at age 25-29, then slowly increase up to 49 before declining at 50. This gives the impression that official social order, which placed these two soslovia in different categories (by prestige, rights and obligations), did not level the demographic influence of occupational, sanitary and demographic conditions. By this I mean that the specific character of the questionnaire in grouping nobles and merchants into broad soslovie categories, meant that the soslovie numbers represented occupational, non-inheritable groups who might not in reality, easily fall into traditional soslovie categories. Namely, the group of “nobles” included many personal nobles (non-inheritable status) and bureaucrats, whereas merchants incorporated individuals with commercial backgrounds. This accounts for the shifts in age groups. Overall, merchants and nobles followed the same trend of proportional decrease in members between 15 and 29 years old. The proportion of young children among merchants and nobles, however, was different. The proportions of the age groups reach their height at age 14, then decline towards their lowest point at age 29. It is likely that the number of people in in merchant soslovie decreased because the head of the family died, ceased business, or children went away to study which, before 1898, required them to (at least formally) to leave the merchant estate. In 1902 those who, for any reason, left the soslovie, could label themselves either as “citizens” or, if they were high school students, “honorary citizens”. For both the noble and merchant soslovia, the time between 30-49 was a period of self-achievement (upward social mobility), marriage and/or reception of parental inheritance, which positively influenced the age group proportion from 30 to 49 years old.

The low number of young children among nobles in comparison with other soslovia (excluding peasants) reflected the traditionally low birth rate in this soslovie. The decrease of the proportion of age groups prior to age 30 could very likely be attributed to natural mortality. The increase in the proportion of nobles aged 30-49 years most likely coincided with successful social mobility and marriage between members of different social estates. If in the first part of the nineteenth century the 50 percent increase in members of the noble estate was as the result

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189 My calculations of the median age of guild merchants show that the average age of the merchant entrepreneur in the second half of the nineteenth century was around 35 years old (for more information see Chapter 3, Section 2, Merchants by numbers).
of social mobility, by the end of the century the proportion of outsiders who achieved noble status increased to 66 percent.190

2.1.2. Socio-Economic Inequality in Life-Expectancy and Mortality

In this section I will explore how wealth impacted life expectancy in late Imperial Russia. Did wealth provide reprieve from premature death? Did wealthy people live longer? How did the social mortality gradient evolve over time and vary across different social and geographic contexts? The changing connection between wealth and a longer life is consistently one of the most powerful and universal explanations in the factors determining a decrease or increase in mortality according to scientists and medical practitioners.

In this section I argue that wealth and status provided little escape from early death among adult Moscow merchants even in the nineteenth century. I show that, at the time, the life expectancy gap between poor and wealthy people narrowed partly due to a decrease in income inequality between the poorest and the wealthiest in general, and partly because of changing marital behaviour among merchants in my sample. Numerous scholars who investigated different factors which affect life expectancy have discovered that, for example, bachelor status negatively affects life expectancy among men, while the bachelor status of women only makes a marginal but positive difference in their life expectancy.191 I provide evidence in support of Aaron Antonovsky’s divergence-convergence theory, that the decreasing gap in income inequality by the end of the nineteenth century negatively affected the positive influence of wealth on life expectancy.192 People lived longer mostly because of improved sanitary conditions among all population strata and decreased infant mortality. Additionally, I show that one of the primary factors that explains the moderate changes in life expectancy among Moscow merchants (irrespective of their level of wealth) was the increasing number of merchants who were never married or widowed (and did not marry again). My data shows a pronounced gendered gradient. While male life expectancy lowered or even declined, female

190 Korelin, A. P., *Dvorianstvo v poreformennoi Rossii 1861 - 1904 gg. Sostav, chislennost, korporativnaia organizatsiia* (Moskva, 1979), p. 34.
life expectancy remained stably high. My data supports the conclusion made by Edvinsson and Lindkvist about nineteenth century Sweden: that unmarried or widowed status negatively affected male life expectancy while it did not influence the average female lifespan.¹⁹³

The aim of this section is to assess the median life expectancy of Moscow merchants compared to the national level. I also investigate the level of merchant wealth and changes in life expectancy over time, looking at data from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In doing so, I explore whether wealth had an impact on premature death. Similarly, I investigate if the life span (in connection with the processes of demographic transition) was influenced by occupation and status stress, and if the positive effect of better nutrition and easier access to medical care were mitigating factors.¹⁹⁴

I base my research on two approaches: (1) socioeconomic mortality and life expectancy differences and (2) the methods of historical demography. To determine whether wealth correlated to the chances of living longer, I have analysed the prosopography data in personal profiles of Moscow wealthy philanthropists and their relatives from the merchant soslovie, lifespans of other Moscow merchants irrespective of wealth and compared this information to the national life expectancy at the time. This data is particularly revealing when discussing the influence of material well-being and social estate membership (and partly occupation) on life expectancy.

Scholarly interest in social and economic inequality of mortality has long history but can be condensed into two main overarching theories. The first is the theory of “fundamental social causes” developed by Link and Phelan and the second is the Aaron Antonovsky’s divergence-convergence hypothesis. Antonovsky, contrary to Link and Phelan, suggests that the connection between wealth and death was not positive and stable throughout history, but rather went through periods of divergence and convergence. Regional and national transformation in disease patterns, rather than personal wealth, was the main factor that influenced if the rich would live longer.¹⁹⁵

In this respect, Aaron Antonovsky’s divergence-convergence theory seems to be more nuanced. To see when the gradient in mortality appeared, Antonovsky approached the question from a long-term perspective. His research from the 1960s suggests that the gradient of socioeconomic mortality appeared with unequal living standards in Europe from 1650 and lasted

until 1850, when mortality levels again converged until 1960. Subsequent research about the evolution of mortality among post-war European populations found that contrary to the remarkable improvement in the life expectancy, the socio-economic difference in health inequality and mortality did not disappear, but instead widened. This was likely due to increased income inequality after the Second World War, as Thomas Piketty suggests.

According to Link and Phelan’s theory, the life expectancy and the mortality of a population is strongly related to the socio-economic status of the individual. This theory states that the level of wealth and social status, irrespective of any time period or particular century, correlate to better health and longer life. The main limitation of this idea is that it is applicable only to short periods of time, especially to the mid-to late nineteenth century, when the gradient of mortality appeared.

To a large extent, Link and Phelan’s theory is based on Malthusian ideas which state that when the population increases faster than its means of subsistence, poverty, famine and increased mortality are inevitable. Malthus focused on nutrition as the main variable that shaped mortality rates. But this is a debated topic among scholars. For example, B. Harris saw healthy food as one of the main positive factors in decreasing mortality and increasing life expectancy. Other scholars are sceptical about the wider influence of food quality on life expectancy, and instead believe personal behaviour (healthy or other underlying living habits) are more important. Extensive consumption of alcohol and tobacco usually coupled with lack of physical exercise which was wide spread among the wealthy population were “hazards of wealth” which mitigated the positive effects of wealth on mortality. The unhealthy personal behaviour of aristocrats balanced the unhealthy living conditions of the poor. This resulted in almost equal life expectancy on both ends of the spectrum of material well-being.

Contemporary Russian medical practitioners and scholars were ambiguous about nutrition’s role in shaping the demographic characteristics of Russian society in the nineteenth century.
Since the rural population (peasants) were the largest portion of the overall population, this group has received the most attention. Likely inspired by Quetelet, Vanneus, Bertillion and Malthus, Russian statistician V. Pokrovskii compared fluctuations in vital statistics in the provinces of Central Russia with harvest data. Pokrovskii indisputably claimed that harvest failures cause an increase in mortality rates. In later publications, the indisputable correlation of harvests and vital statistics in the Russian Empire was questioned as was the correlation of grain prices and mortality in Europe.

One of the main critics of Pokrovskii’s research, V. L. Zaitsev, noted that in Europe, where the agricultural population made up a smaller part of the overall population, good harvests and the decreasing prices of agricultural products led to positive changes in demography. In the Russian Empire, the positive influence of good harvests and the deeply destructive effects of harvest failures is highly disputable. Zaitsev argues that good harvests indeed increased nuptiality and reproduction. As a result, the extra births caused higher infant mortality rates in the two years following extremely good harvests. Bad harvests, however, primarily targeted the adult population, increasing death rates among the 15 to 40-year-old population in the following year. In other words, inasmuch as failed harvests primarily affected the adult population, extremely good harvests led to increased birth rates but also increased infant mortality.

The marked positive effect of increased agricultural productivity on vital statistics was the combined evolutionary effect of increased cultural and education levels of the population, which motivated more productive means of agricultural cultivation and lowered infant mortality. The decrease in infant mortality was one of the most important changes which motivated improvements in the life expectancy of the population at the beginning of the twentieth century.

206 For a more in-depth exploration of this argument, see Vorobev, G. A., Mediko-topografichesko opisanie goroda Kronshhtaada. (Materialy po sanitarnoi statistike) (S.-Peterburg, 1911).
208 Zaitsev: ‘Vliianie kolebanii urozhaev’.

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The decrease in infant mortality, short-term increases in birth rates and, finally, the increase in adult life expectancy are usually the main features of a demographic transition period. During the period of demographic transition, the influence of wealth on mortality rates is obvious. It means that in the demographic statistics there is a clear gradient between death rates and life expectancy among the poor and wealthy.²⁰⁹ Thus, if before the end of the nineteenth century poor families suffered from high infant mortality more than better-off peasants, at the turn of the twentieth century both enjoyed better infant survival rates. For example, among peasant families in the Voronezh province, each unit of increase in material well-being correlated to a decrease in morbidity, mortality (through all age groups) and invalidity.²¹⁰

In the Russian Empire, the initial interest in the relationship between social estate membership, occupation and income inequality appeared with the accumulation of data about the social and occupational status of the deceased at the end of the nineteenth century. Before 1877, the registration of the number of deceased and their cause of death was collected by the police, but primarily it was the duty of the church to provide the local administration with this information. Since priests understood vital statistics as extra work which did not directly fall under their responsibilities, the quality of the information provided is highly questionable.²¹¹

By 1913, a system of medical practitioner death registration was introduced in 120 towns and cities, covering around 9 million people out of the total Russian population of 25 million.²¹² Nevertheless, the quality of collected information appeared to be poor. The 1914 annual report on the health conditions of the Russian population read that:

“the proper registration of the causes of death by the medical practitioners of satisfactory quality …was only carried out in four cities in the Russian Empire: Moscow, S. Petersburg, Odessa and Warsaw … in other towns and cities the data is usually incomplete or, even when reported to the medical practitioners, it was by clericals basing it on parish registers”.

²⁰⁹ The gradient is the vector-valued function which points in the direction of the greatest rate of increase. For example, if before there was no difference between infant mortality in poor and wealthy families, now we see that in wealthy families there is a higher rate of survival in the first 5 years.
²¹¹ Trudy Soveshchaniia po tekushchim voprosam sanitarnoi statistiki 14-16 aprelia 1910 g. v Moskve pri Pravlenii Pirogovskogo Obschestva (Moskva, 1910), pp. 56–69.
²¹² Uippl, D. and Novoselskii, S. A., Osnovy demograficheskoi i sanitarnoi statistiki (Moskva, 1929), p. 291. Not including the Baltic provinces or Finland.
²¹³ Otechet o sostoiании narodnogo zdraviia i organizatsii vrachebnoi pomoshchi v Rossii… za 1914 (SPb, 1916), p. 5.
The collection of death statistics on Muscovites began in 1868. They were gathered and published by the Central Statistical Committee of the MVD (Ministry of Internal Affairs) as part of digests on population statistics. It should be noted that collecting reliable death statistics about Moscow’s population began only after the 1871 Moscow Census, when the number and composition of the urban population were established. In 1877, the system of death registration was modified. There were two main improvements in comparison to the previous system of death registration. First, each death was required to be registered by a medical practitioner. Second, the medical practitioner had to fill in an individual “death record” (kartochka registratsii smerti) that indicated the cause of death along with eleven other mandatory fields including name, gender, social status, occupation, place of residence, along with other questions.

A new procedure of death registration was then introduced: the deceased was examined by the medical practitioner, who either by himself or with the help of the deceased’ relatives filled in the death record, then the death record was provided in exchange for a burial certificate and the body could be laid to rest. The death certificates were sent to statistical or medical agencies either by the local administrative authorities or by clerics, where they were revised and prepared for publication.

Unfortunately, data on the social origins and occupational backgrounds of the deceased was never officially codified or published since information on the age and cause of death was more essential to improving medical care and the health of the overall population. The downside of the prioritisation of gender, age and cause of death which was coupled with financial shortcomings and qualified staff to extract the primary (original) data from individual death records, is misleading to scholars who either state that there is no data on the socio-occupational status of the deceased, or, knowing that this data exists, do not have the resources to explore it. It comes as no surprise that Moscow authorities funded only a single person (V. M. Ostroglazov, the Chief of the Moscow Medical Office) to collect, explore and tabulate all individual death records (in 1885 there were 27,115 deaths registered in Moscow). At the end of each month, beginning in July 1877, he published death charts in the Bulletin of the Moscow town council. Up until 1891, the monthly tables we not annually summarised nor were the death records fully explored.

215 Uippl and Novoselskii, Osnovy statistiki, p. 291.
216 Grigorev, Smertnost naseleniia, pp. 5–6.
217 Chuprov, Statistika narodonaseleniia, pp. 92–99.
218 Grigorev, Smertnost naseleniia, predisolovie.
There is a lack of research about the correlation between material well-being, occupation, life expectancy and mortality in the Russian Empire. That which is available focuses on specific occupations and prioritise the cause of death over other indicators. Among the urban population, scholars primarily focus on industrial workers because they were the most vulnerable group of city inhabitants.\textsuperscript{219} To my knowledge, before the 1917 Revolutions only four studies were published that specifically focused on the influence of living standards (and especially occupation) on morbidity and life expectancy, based on the new death records.\textsuperscript{220}

While the indisputable difference in mortality between the poor and the rich over time has long been established (for example by N. Karasevich and Yu. Giubner), the first published research to consider the entire urban population divided by occupation, in respect to cause of death and average life expectancy, appeared only in 1898.\textsuperscript{221} The author, Landshevskii, based his research on the death records of individuals over 16 years of age who died between 1887 and 1897 in Saint Petersburg.\textsuperscript{222} The next scholarly study was a 1904 dissertation by I. F. Shevchenko, who based on Landshevskii’s research, investigated the following period between 1897 and 1901.\textsuperscript{223} Though both scholars applied different methodologies, the general outcomes of their research were similar.

The two other academic studies that investigated the interrelation of occupation and mortality (with a specific focus on tuberculosis deaths) were carried out by A. I. Baranov in Saint Petersburg in 1892 and V. N. Shnaubert in Moscow in 1893.\textsuperscript{224} Shevchenko’s and Landshevskii’s studies deserve special attention. In their studies they unexpectedly discovered that “traders”, irrespective of their material well-being, seemed to have a higher life expectancy than other groups. While the majority of traders were expected to die between the ages of 41 and 60 (the same as all educated individuals who were not

\textsuperscript{219} For example, Sviatlovskii, V. V., Fabrichnyi rabochii San. issled. zdorovia rus. fab. rabochego. San. polozhenie fab. rabochego v Privilsian. krae i v Malorossii. Materialy dlia med. geografii i statistiki Rossii (Varshava, 1889); Spasskii, I. A., Opyt izucheniiia vliiania nekotorykh rabot izhevskikh oruzheinikov na ikh zdorove i fizicheskoe razvitie. Seriia dissertatsii, dopushchennykh k zashchite v Voenno-meditinskoi akademii v 1887-1888 uchebnom godu (SPb, 1888).

\textsuperscript{220} Finkel, Issledovanie o smertnosti v Odesse, p. 33; Markuzon, Ocherki po sanitarnoi statistike.

\textsuperscript{221} Giubner, Statisticheskie issledovaniia; Landshevskii, Materialy k voprosu o smertnosti; Karasevich, Kurs statistiki.

\textsuperscript{222} Excluding children under 16 years old was essential because the high infant mortality and the death rates of children obscure the overall picture of vital statistics. Importantly, by removing this group from consideration we see a clearer picture of which age groups were affected by disease and other less obvious factors such as wage and occupation.


\textsuperscript{224} Shnaubert, V. N., Legochnaiia chakhotka v Moskve 1880-1889 (Moskva, 1893); Baranov, A. I., K voprosu o vliianii nekotorykh professii na smertnost ot chakhotki. Stat. material (SPb, 1892).
involved in manual labour), industrial workers were expected to die between the ages of 20 and 41. The average age of death for men at the time was 45 years old, after which point it was likely they would die from either cancer and tuberculosis.

I suggest that this higher life expectancy was not due to better nutrition or easier access to medical care, but instead to the specific characteristics of occupations (i.e. the so-called “problem of selection”, when specific occupational characteristics influence demographic statistics). For example, statistically foster mothers were “expected” to die at age 26 because there was little chance of having this occupation at age 40, even if their mortality rates were low and working conditions were favourable. Two more similar examples can be seen in women who lived and worked in charity institutions and engineers/architects. The former on average died at age 75 and the latter at age 59, not because they were healthier or richer, but because they had to receive an education to work in this sphere. They also usually never changed occupation as opposed to labourers, whose occupational lifespan was not interrupted or dependant on education. It should be noted that the connection between life expectancy and the specific character of occupations never actually appeared in either Landshevskii’s or Shevchenko’s research since the authors were more focused on introducing new data rather than providing interpretations. In many places they ambiguously pointed to the occupational selection factor but merchants, based on the specific requirements of the occupation, were on average older. This probably influenced the commonly held notion of a positive connection between wealth and health.

Also, both scholars agreed that while the quality and completeness of the death records were adequate, the internal classification of occupations were vague and raised obstacles for further research about the influence of material well-being on life expectancy. In particular, the use of the category “tradespeople” (torgovtcy) in death records was an umbrella term for all people who provided services or sold and produced goods of any size or type and was connected to official soslovie titles. Thus, the vague classification made impossible to divide the economic elite from petty traders.

225 Shevchenko, Smertnost naseleniia S.-Peterburga, pp. 35–36.
226 Landshevskii, Materialy k voprosu o smertnosti, pp. 67–69.
227 Landshevskii, Materialy k voprosu o smertnosti, p. 114.
228 Landshevskii, Materialy k voprosu o smertnosti, p. 119.
229 Landshevskii, Materialy k voprosu o smertnosti, p. 100.
230 The omission of occupation in individual death records was rare, about 15% of all records, and primarily in records on women.
231 Occupations such as horse-cab drivers, innkeepers (traktirschik), brokers and contractors were classified separately from those who provided retail services.
High life expectancy among educated professionals (or the scientific elite) was also the result of *selection*, as shown in the research of modern scholars. Andreev and a group of researchers reached this conclusion when, in 2011, they compared the life expectancy of scientific elites in Russia between 1724-2006 (4,264 samples) and Britain between 1660-2007 (7,348 samples). The researchers based their findings on high quality data provided by the list of fellows of the Royal Society in Britain and the list of the members of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The results suggest that academics “would not usually have accumulated enough achievements [in the first 20 or 30 years of their professional lives] to be elected [to these Academies] if they had suffered from persistent poor health in early adult life or middle age”. The difference in life expectancy between the two groups was “surprisingly stable over time” and only varied between 3 and 4 years.

In Britain at the end of the nineteenth century, the difference in life expectancy between academics at age 50 and the national average was 5 years (27.0 and 22.0). This research indicated that in the case of the Russian Empire, such comparisons are problematic because before 1950 there was no information on this exact topic. This assertion seems surprising since Novosel’skii published the well-known death tables for the Russian Empire (1896-1897) in 1916. The death tables provide specific information divided by gender and residual life expectancy at different ages from 0 to 90. If we take the national life expectancy at birth, which was 31-32 years for men and 33-41 for women, it would not challenge the outcomes of Andreev’s study (that the scientific elite enjoyed an increased life expectancy in comparison to the national average). The introduction of the data on residual life expectancy at age 50 calculated by Novosel’skii, proves otherwise – academics were not expected to live longer than the national average. Novosel’skii’s tables show that at age 50 the average Russian male was expected to live 19.98 more years and the average female, 20.22 years. Paradoxically, by Andreev’s calculations Russian male academics at age 50 (between the years of 1875 and 1899) were expected to live on average fewer years (19.0) than the national average (19.98), though

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237 Novoselskii, S. A., *Smertnost i prodolzhitelnost zhitni v Rossii* (Pj., 1916), pp. 169–170. At age 15 the life expectancy for males and females was 44.95, totalling around 60 years.
female academics were expected to live longer (21.5) than the national average (20.2). 238 By the middle of the twentieth century, according to Andreev and his colleagues, the trend reversed, and Russian male academics tended to outlive the national population by 1.9 years on average. In 2000-2006 the gap widened to 13.4 years on average.

Thus, the outcomes of this data appear to be rather unpredictable. The application Novosel’skii’s data to residual life expectancy of academics challenges the suggestion that the selection of individuals (here academics) is, in some ways, highly relevant irrespective of time and country. The gap, however, between British academics and national population also tended to widen (for academics in 1780 it was 3.3 years and in 1920 it was 6.8 years) which suggests that both selection and education level do not automatically translate to mortality advantages before more fundamental factors such as infant mortality and morbidity. In other words, education and occupation became highly relevant only when basic life conditions improve.

The selection factor could also be applied to the life expectancy of “tradespeople”. The expected age of death, around 50 (by Landshevskii), was less likely due to the positive effect of wealth and instead to the time merchants needed to accumulate assets to launch their enterprise. The low death rates after 60 had little to do with a stressful life or dangerous working conditions, but instead by age 60 “tradespeople” had likely accumulated enough money to retire or change occupation.239 Thus, wealth provided no guarantee of a long life. In late Imperial Russia, a house painter with Rockefeller’s wealth would still die between 20 and 41 from the lung disease. Work cost people their lives.

This correlates with the outcomes of the latest research (and the only of this kind for the Russian Empire) on the level of association between mortality risks, socio-economic status and occupation in late Imperial Tartu (the Governorate of Estonia and the second largest city in the former Russian Empire). Hannaliis Jaadla, Allan Puur, and Kaja Rahu linked data from parish registers in Tartu to the data from the first Russian Imperial census in 1897. Their research suggests that while there were significant inequalities in mortality associated with registered socio-economic status, the results show that “even in context of low living standards and marked social inequality, socio-economic advantages do not automatically translate into

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238 Apart from important control data for the specific influence of gender on life expectancy in the chronological period, Andreev’s calculations suffer from a lack of geographical and high infant mortality data. Ptukha’s calculations suggest an uneven life expectancy rate across the Russian Empire. Academics in Saint-Petersburg lived longer than their Muscovite colleagues. Data on life expectancy see in: Ptukha, M. V., Smertnist u Rosii i na Ukraini (Kharkiv, Kiiv, 1928), pp. 145–146.

239 Landshevskii, Materialy k voprosu o smertnosti, pp. 67–68; Shevchenko, Smertnost naseleniia S.-Peterburga, p. 41.
survival advantages, at least among adults”\textsuperscript{240} This idea questions both Landshevskii’s and Shevchenko’s general suggestion that the material well-being could correlate with longer life expectancy.\textsuperscript{241}

Jaadla, Puur and Rahu’s paper also challenges Landshevskii’s and Shevchenko’s suggestions that “trading” occupations were, in general, mortality-advantaged and healthy in comparison with other urban occupations. The data on Tartu shopkeepers and small-scale entrepreneurs reveals elevated death risks among the members of these groups.\textsuperscript{242} While scholars explain the disadvantaged position of small-scale entrepreneurs through “selection” and that the data should be considered as “artefactual”, I would suggest that the highly-disadvantaged mortality position of petty entrepreneurs should not be taken as a statistical discrepancy of any kind.

Elevated mortality risks could be ascribed to the familial character of urban enterprises where family members, in order to keep the enterprise intact, pooled their efforts irrespective of age and gender. Usually both spouses and children aged 8 and up took part in the family enterprise. Small family enterprises were usually not incredibly productive but consumed all available human resources. Thus, families probably could not afford day care and breastfeeding for infants and small children. In the case of illness, adults had to keep working. Children probably did not receive proper attention since mothers were busy and had fewer connections to help with childcare, which was common in rural areas.

My suggestion that specific work conditions of petty traders negatively influenced mortality partially based on a review of the results of a questionnaire survey of Saint Petersburg workers in 1912. Medical practitioner N. A. Vigdorchik compiled 765 completed questionnaires (out of 5,000 sent), and discovered a strong association between a father’s wage and infant mortality. In families where the father’s monthly wage was below 20 roubles, 28.4 infants per 100 died. When the monthly wage was above 51 roubles, only 11.5 infants died.\textsuperscript{243}

Another important observation Jaadla, Puur and Rahu made in their paper on socio-economic and cultural differentials in mortality in late nineteenth century Tartu, is that there was no significant difference in mortality rates between different ethnic or linguistic groups (although they observed a substantial gender gradient). The adult mortality advantage associated with education and employment in skilled labour jobs and domestic service was

\textsuperscript{240} Jaadla, H., Puur, A., Rahu, K.: ‘Socioeconomic and Cultural Differentials’, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{241} Landshevskii, Materialy k voprosu o smertnosti, p. 26; Shevchenko, Smertnost naseleniia S.-Peterburga, p. 78.
\textsuperscript{242} Jaadla, H., Puur, A., Rahu, K.: ‘Socioeconomic and Cultural Differentials’, p. 25.
driven by women rather than men. With each point of increase in education and material well-being (in this case, skilled labour occupations), female workers tended to live longer. In contrast, the same factors had no influence on male life expectancy, though lack of education implied a mortality disadvantage for men. “The sex-specificity of the association tends support the arguments that among affluent men an unhealthy lifestyle, including the excessive consumption of food, tobacco, and alcohol, must have cancelled out the benefits of a secure economic position”.

In the pre-industrial and early industrial periods, infant mortality should be considered separately from the adult mortality. Some scholars, however, still fall into the trap of calculating average life expectancy figures based only on gender without taking into account the proportion of deceased infants and small children. This can be observed in the research on merchant life expectancy in the Central Black Earth Region in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Table 2.4 Average longevity of life among of merchant soslovie members, Central Black Earth Region, 1781-1825

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Revisions</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4th (1781-1787)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th (1794-1808)</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th (1811)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th (1815-1825)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Grebenniukov, D. S., Smertnost i prodolzhitelnost zhizni kupechestva Tsentralnogo Chernozemia v kontse XVIII - pervoi chertverti XIX (2013), p. 94.

Collecting a large amount of data from four revisions (1781-1825), D. S. Grebenniukov suggests that the most reliable data available is in the 7th revision. This is because it provides more complete information on infant mortality, along with the life-spans of the heads of household and other members of merchant families. The logic behind this method is as follows: a greater number of years elapsed between the revisions, fewer infants died, and more deceased adults were registered. Unfortunately, the 6th revision was not complete because of the Napoleonic invasion, but Grebenniukov still used it for in his research (Table 2.4).

This method shows that Grebenniukov focused more on the merchant soslovie as a social rather than a professional group. Grebenniukov suggests that by the end of the period, merchants

lived longer, even though his calculations show otherwise. The scholar claimed that in the time that elapsed between the 6th and 7th revisions, there was a flood of data indicating an exceptionally high number of infant deaths, which lowered the average longevity of life. In general, he suggests that while some merchants had higher incomes, “many merchant families were not living better than peasants and meshchane, though perhaps starving less”. A subsequent question which should have been proffered by Grebennukov is whether or not the presumably large proportion of low-income merchants influenced the average longevity of life in the group.

Boris Mironov, one of the most well-known advocates for using historical anthropometry to interpret pre-revolutionary Russian living-standards, suggests that the better diet of wealthy merchants and aristocrats protected them from disease and premature death when compared to the population as a whole. I would suggest that the overall calculations of calories presumably consumed by members of different social and wealth strata, together with the changes of height among conscripts, unlikely provide a reliable argument in favour of a connection between wealth and life expectancy in the nineteenth century. The lack of scholarship and especially demographic data on this topic made it difficult for him to provide any reliable data that wealthy merchants and aristocrats lived longer irrespective of time and place.

Table 2. 5 Average mortality in Urban and Rural areas in the Russian Empire (per 1000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Urban Areas</th>
<th>Rural Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1700-1799</td>
<td>40-60</td>
<td>30-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800-1850</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851-1859</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909-1913</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Nevertheless, while his arguments based on anthropometrical data require additional elaboration, Mironov’s speculations on the non-linear connection between wealth and health seem valuable. In the mid-nineteenth century, Mironov suggests that statistics on sosloviia


246 While consuming almost the same number of calories, wealthy merchants and aristocrats consumed more fats and proteins than peasants and poor urban dwellers.
(irrespective of urban or rural origin) show mortality rates in the following order from highest to lowest: aristocrats, meshchane, merchants, honorary citizens, clergy and peasants. In urban areas, the highest rates of mortality were among peasants and the lowest among merchants and clergy. Further, Mironov speculates that if the mortality rates were strictly dependent on material well-being, we would not see any difference between urban and rural mortality within the same social groups. We can, however, see differences (in rural areas morality rate among meshchane was higher than among peasants), which means that wealth was not the only important factor in determining life expectancy (Table 2.5). To support his argument, Mironov notes that while the mortality rates of social estates (per 1,000) show a clear correlation between soslovie and mortality, nevertheless “it is highly unlikely to show the social character of mortality”. The coincidence of improving sanitary conditions, medical care and the education of the population, along with increased income inequality, created urban areas with poor outskirts and wealthy residential districts in the centre. This probably accounted for decreasing mortality rates more than increased income alone according to Mironov.

To see the possible effects of wealth on life expectancy, I compare data on the average lifespans of Moscow wealthy philanthropists and their families (gathered from the appendix of Galina Ulianova’s research on Moscow philanthropists) with data on the average lifespans of merchants from soslovie member registers, irrespective of the level of wealth at the time of death.

The data on philanthropists and their relatives’ lifespans should be recognised as representative since, in both sources, the data on individual lifespans was transferred from parish records. Galina Ulianova noted all cases where she was not exactly sure of the accuracy of dates of birth and/or death. To prove the validity of the questionable dates in my general results on average longevity of life, I first ran the calculations without these dates. I then ran the same calculations with the questionable dates. The results were close. This proves that if there is a divergence in the data, the level of error is low.

Initially, Galina Ulianova focused only on philanthropist’s lives, occasionally adding information about their relatives. Her appendix was composed of 225 philanthropists and 245

247 Mironov, Sotsialnaia istoriia Rossii, p. 194.
248 Between 1904 and 1910 the gap between the wealthiest 10% and the poorest 10% narrowed. In addition, around the same time (between 1850-1913), the proportion of literate people increased from 15 to 40% of the population, and from 1870 to 1913 the number of medical centres for peasants increased from 530 to 2970. Mironov, Blagosostoianie naseleniia, pp. 607, 605; Mironov, Sotsialnaia istoriia Rossii, pp. 190–191.
249 Ulianova, Blagotvoritelnost moskovskikh predprinimatelei.
relatives of a variety of kin relations. Unfortunately, some individual profiles did not include lifespan dates, which reduced the final list of philanthropists to 194. From the beginning, relatives with incomplete birth and death data were removed from my study.

The question of whether the lifespans of philanthropists and their relatives diverge or not was challenging. Could I merge data for a better representative sample and lower deviation? In my initial excel file I categorised individuals based on their charity donation, though in case of mortality risks, this division is likely artificial (since individuals from both groups were of the same kin or household). I then calculated the average longevity of life of both groups separately and by gender. This revealed that philanthropists, especially women, appeared to live longer compared to their relatives. This finding led me to explore other applied groupings of relatives and philanthropists to see which variable (wealth or sex in the eighteenth or nineteenth century) was most powerful. In some cases, both groups were put together to create a bigger sample. The quality of data from soslovie registers also raises no serious doubts in regard to accuracy. The total sample size, including data from both sources, is around 650 individuals.

When it comes to the discussion of whether the final sample size and the parts of the sample are representative to the answer to the question posed in this chapter, I inclined to be positive since I have based my methodology on preference of the sample source over the sample size to research the target group of Moscow guild merchants. As we saw above the Russian authorities never focused or provided enough funding for gathering statistics over social and material background of the deceased population. Also, there are only two scholarships which tackled the questions of life expectancy of the Russian population (Novosel’skii and Ptukha), moreover both of them limited their research to one, 1897, year. Thus, my calculations of life-spans of Moscow merchants in the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century are unique, though could be to some extend biased via underrepresentation bias. Nevertheless, I suggest that we can rely on this sample, however, not as the single-standing example to draw final conclusion over the connection between material well-being and occupational status on average longevity of life but rather as the sign that there are other, may be more reliable and diverse in composition, sources beside of limited official statistics to carry research over social and family demography of the imperial population.

My applied method is as follows. I have estimated the average longevity of life of merchants separately by gender, by their relationship to the business (relatives and the heads of

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250 Ancestors – 141 (57.5 percent), Descendants -13 (5.3 percent), Siblings – 29 (11.8 percent), Spouse – 58 (23.7 percent), Others – 4 (1.6 percent).
enterprises) and by kin relationship to see the effects of occupational stress and gender on lifespans. In addition, I have specified the year of birth, residual life expectancy at age 15, and by the sum of charity donations to see in which factor the gradient in life expectancy appears.

My data on the average longevity of life of Moscow merchants is divided into several specific subgroups: by the level of wealth, kin relations, sex, calendar period of birth and religion. This is designed to reveal any advantages or disadvantages for Moscow merchants compared to the national population and other social groups.

2.1.2.1. The Effect of Wealth, Gender and Education on Life Expectancy and Average Longevity of Life

Table 2.6 The average longevity of life of philanthropists and their relatives, 1704-1896 year of birth, Moscow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only philanthropists</td>
<td>65.1</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only relatives</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philanthropist and</td>
<td>62.3</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>their relatives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The general data on average longevity of life (Table 2.6) suggests that philanthropists lived longer on average (67) than their relatives (62) and that female philanthropists lived longer (70) than male (66). These results led me to acknowledge the positive influence of wealth on women as was suggested by Jaadla, Puur, and Rahu’s regarding their Tartu data. For philanthropist relatives, the question remained if they appeared to die younger due to data corruption, a small sample size, if the sample should be grouped on the basis of linear succession (from grandparents to grandchildren), or instead chronologically and by gender rather than donation. In other words, the results raised the question of when the gradient in average longevity of life appeared and if it reversed over time. Additionally, was the lower average longevity of life among relatives the result of the sample composition since about 60 percent of all relatives were ancestors of philanthropists? Could it mean that average longevity of life increased over the time or that the figures deflated with an increased sample size?
Table 2.7 Average longevity of life by Birth Cohorts for Philanthropist and their Relatives, Moscow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1704-1749</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1750-1799</td>
<td>67.1</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800-1849</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850-1896</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Combining data by birth cohort supports a gender gradient in favour of females (Table 2.7). The average longevity of life by birth cohorts suggests that male and female average longevity of life followed the same upward trend before 1850, but then diverged. If a man from the mid-nineteenth century was expected to die sooner, women’s average longevity of life, on the contrary, showed a subtle increase (from 66 to 67).

Next, I wanted to see how the introduction of more subtle variables (such as geography, kin relationship and level of wealth) would challenge the first rough estimations that philanthropists, especially female philanthropists, lived longer, and if the positive male trend reversed in the mid-nineteenth century. To my knowledge, before 1896 there are no calculations of either national or residual life expectancy for the Russian population. Lacking this information, it is challenging to make broad comparisons across time and gender. The first known calculations of average mortality by gender, social estate and occupation in Moscow are from the late eighteenth century and were conducted by Androssov and Gastev. Unfortunately, they did not specify residual life expectancy at different ages in their calculations, which makes it difficult to apply their findings to my research.

Calculations of average longevity of life rates at birth that are not sensitive to geographical differences should be treated with great caution. The high level of infant mortality and different levels of living standards between provinces of the Russian Empire meant the average national life expectancy statistics are quite inaccurate. For example, in 1916 Novosel’skii calculated the average national life expectancy for different age groups of the Russian population (1896-1897). At birth, Russian males were expected to live 31.3 years and females 33.4 years. When Ptukha later specified life expectancy for some provinces the national levels appear to diverge at the provincial level. In general, if we set aside the north-western provinces and Finland.

251 Androssov, V., Statisticheskaia zapiska o Moskve (Moskva, 1832), p. 185; Gastev, M., Materiały dlia polnoi i sravnitelnoi statistiki Moskvy, vol. 3 (Moskva, 1841).
(where the life expectancy was higher), and only consider the European part of Russia, life expectancy at birth (according to Ptukha) declines for both males and females by 3.8 and 3.6 years respectively (27.5 and 29.8). But women were still in a more favourable position than men. At age 15, the difference remains though it is less visible (1.6 for men and 1.2 for women). Additionally, Ptukha initially calculated the life expectancy at birth not only for the 11 different nationalities of the former Russian Empire, but also looked at several cities specifically. For example, life expectancy at birth in Moscow (1896-1897) was 23.05 and 26.72 for men and women respectively. For comparison, in Saint Petersburg these numbers were 25.36 and 31.45, and in Riga 33.17 and 38.71 for men and women respectively.

In comparing the life expectancy at birth in Moscow and European Russia as a whole, Ptukha shows that urban areas, and Moscow specifically, had elevated mortality and morbidity risks. Living in Moscow decreased life expectancy at birth for men by 4.44 years and for women by 3.1 years. Unfortunately, Ptukha and other scholars did not evaluate life expectancy in Moscow at different ages and times (focusing on 1896-1897). To some extent, my calculations fill this gap.

To see when the gradient in life expectancy appeared or reversed, the sample was divided into four chronological groups by birth year. Then, I calculated life expectancy at ages 15, 45 and 50 grouping by year of birth and gender.

Table 2.8 Life expectancy at age 15 for philanthropists and their relatives, Moscow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chronological period</th>
<th>All</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1704-1799</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800-1849</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850-1896</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>35.7(43.3)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>46.5(43.7)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


(Ptukha’s calculations of national levels are included in parenthesis)

252 In European Russia, life expectancy was, in general, lower and mortality rates were higher than in the Baltic Provinces and Finland.


254 Ptukha, Smerntist u Rossii, pp. 145–146.
Table 2. 9 Life expectancy at age 45 for philanthropists and their relatives, Moscow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1704-1799</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800-1849</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850-1896</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Ptukha’s calculations of national levels are included in parenthesis)


As in the estimations of life expectancy by birth cohorts, the calculations of life expectancy at ages 15 and 45 follow the same trend (Table 2.8 and 2.9). First, women were expected to live longer than men. Second, the gradient reversed in the first half of the nineteenth century and women held the advantage in life expectancy. If between 1704 and 1799 the median life expectancy of males at age 15 exceeded females by 3 years (54 and 51), from the first half of the nineteenth century women held the advantage. Interestingly, in the second half of the nineteenth century the males in my sample appear to be behind the national average by more than 7 years, while females, on the contrary, were above the national level by almost 3 years.

Surprisingly, at age 45 the difference between genders increased (Table 2.9).255 What is even more fascinating is that the previous advantage held by wealthy women (above the national level) not only levelled but reversed. While the residual life expectancy of women in my sample between the first and the second halves of the nineteenth century decreased from 24.8 to 21.2, they also appeared to be behind the national average by 1.4 years.

If we take a step back and look at the data focusing not on calendar periods but rather on genealogical succession, from grandparents to philanthropists, the results also reverse. Surprisingly, if the average longevity of life in the mid-nineteenth century inverted, and slid to 53.4 years in late nineteenth century, the average longevity of life of grandparents compared to philanthropists increased over generations. Philanthropist’s grandparents were expected to live 64.5 years, parents of philanthropists were expected to live to 66, and philanthropists lived to 67 on average (median). By gender, the gradient was more overt: male ancestors were expected to live 67 years while female ancestors were only expected to live to 61 which in general could be ascribed to many pregnancies and high childbirth mortality which was in decline in late Imperial Russia.

255 This likely should be attributed to a small, unbalanced sample.
Table 2. Life expectancy for philanthropists with relatives and academics at age 50 by gender and calendar periods, 1720-1899

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calendar period</th>
<th>Unspecified</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>1720-1849</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>1875-1899</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philanthropists</td>
<td>1704-1849</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philanthropists</td>
<td>1850-1896</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novoselskii*</td>
<td>1896/7</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* I took data by Novoselskii* My data is from Novosel’skii’s research since Ptukha did not calculate residual life expectancy at age 50 (though Novosel’skii did collect this information).

** This is my rough calculation – Novosel’skii did not provide this information

The number of observations is listed in parentheses

I am not conducting an in-depth analysis about the nature of this paradox, as why the trend in life expectancy reversed as opposed to improving for both sexes, but before I discuss the influence of the level of wealth on life expectancy, I would like to return to the data on life expectancy of Russian academics. If female academics had an advantage in average longevity of life over time (2.3 years between 1720 and 1849 and 2.5 years between 1875 and 1899), and the average longevity of life for both sexes improved between 1720 and 1899, there is no such correlation in the groups of philanthropists and their relatives (*Table 2.10*). As stated previously, while the average longevity of life dropped by almost 2 years for female philanthropists, they not only continued to enjoy longer life, but they also appeared to be above national average provided by Novosel’skii.

It is important to note that from 1724 until 1934, the Russian Academy of Sciences was located in Saint Petersburg, which means that one should be cautious comparing academics who lived in Saint Petersburg with philanthropists in Moscow. Ptukha estimated that the life expectancy (at least at birth) in these two cities was slightly different. The same caution should be applied to Novosel’skii’s average life expectancy since his estimations are more generalized.
The results of comparing the influence of education and wealth on life expectancy seem to support previous research. Russian data also shows that education had more of an effect in prolonging life than wealth. Women seemed to benefit more from wealth than men, and perhaps not necessarily from education, though it is likely that wealthy women were also highly educated.

Table 2. 11 Average longevity of life of Moscow philanthropists by the sum of their donations and gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Median</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000-50,000</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>67.3</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50,001 – 100,000</td>
<td>64.9</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>68.9</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100,001 – 99,999</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>69.8</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000,001 and up</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>75.9</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Focusing on average longevity of life with regard to the value of charity donations reveals that with each unit (here group) of increase in the value of donations, the average longevity of life also increases (Table 2.11). While women’s average longevity of life increased steadily through all groups of charity donations, male life expectancy, on the contrary, seems to be affected only by extremely large donations. Namely, men who donated less than one million roubles appear to have benefitted less from their wealth than those who donated larger amounts. Women seem to benefit equally from both education and wealth. While the value of donations is a rather indirect measure of wealth, and while statistically the small sample size could obscure the actual influence of wealth on life expectancy, there a clear positive correlation which, however, requires further research.
The introduction of data on the average longevity of life of average merchants, irrespective of the level of their wealth, likewise shows a decrease in merchants’ average longevity of life from at least the mid-nineteenth century (Table 2.13). Between the two calendar periods, the expected median lifespan decreased from 63 to 47 years (Table 2.12). Thus, if before the mid-nineteenth century wealth was not a factor that impacted life or death, (the average longevity of life in both groups varied insignificantly, 63 and 64 years, (see Tables 2.7 and 2.12), but by the second half of the nineteenth century wealth inequality came into play. The gap between the poorer and wealthier merchants widened to 7 years (54 for philanthropists and 47 for ordinary merchants see Tables 2.7 and 2.12). The further combination of data from both samples makes this same trend more obvious: in terms of average longevity of life, a philanthropist’s wealth or higher status (or what M. Marmot calls “status syndrome”) provided
them with an advantage in comparison with those who were less wealthy. The combined data for average longevity of life of both groups (Table 2.13) shows that wealthier merchants lived longer. It must be noted, however, that while the data from both samples demonstrate coherent results on the average longevity of life of merchants, these results should be treated with caution because the sample size is still relatively small, however, big enough to see whether the level of wealth, education, sex or membership in social estate was the most powerful factor which amplified the phenomenon of demographic transition.

2.1.2.2. The Effect of Religion on Average Longevity of Life

Jaadla, Puur and Rahu’s research did not reveal a significant difference in life expectancy between ethno-linguistic groups because their data was only collected from Lutheran parishes in Tartu. Ptukha’s calculations of residual life expectancy among the 11 nationalities of the former Russian Empire, however, reveal that Lutheran provinces had a mortality advantage in comparison to the Orthodox populated areas of European Russia. For example, at age 5 the average Russian male was expected to live 48.76 years, while the average Estonian male of the same age was expected to live to 52.57, nearly 4 years longer.

To the best of my knowledge, there is no specific study that focuses on the difference in life expectancy and mortality rates between Russian Orthodox and Old Believers. S. A. Novosel’skii provides some indirect findings, indicating that there was indeed a gradient in vital statistics between different religious groups in the Russian Empire. Novosel’skii calculated (for 1896-1897) that infant mortality was lowest among Jews (130 per 1,000), followed by Catholics (149 per 1,000), Muslims (166 per 1,000), and Lutherans (178 per 1,000). Orthodox Christian mortality rates were much higher at 282 infant deaths per 1,000 born. While data on national infant mortality and life expectancy between religious groups does not easily correlate, because of specific character of data collection and registration which differ from one religious community to another. Indeed, there is an obvious trend showing that Jews had the lowest infant mortality rates. This, however, did not mean they were advantaged in terms of life expectancy. Russians had the lowest life expectancy and highest infant mortality

256 Marmot, *Status Syndrome.*
rates while Muslims and Catholics had both higher life expectancy and lower infant mortality rates.

Table 2. Average longevity of life for Orthodox and Old Believer philanthropists, 1704-1896

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Old Believers</th>
<th>Orthodox</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>66.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Looking at the data on average lifespans of merchants with Orthodox and Old Believer religious backgrounds we see that there is a subtle gradient in average longevity of life favouring Orthodox philanthropists compared to Old Believers (Table 2.14). Not specifying data for calendar periods or gender (because it would substantially fraction the data) Orthodox philanthropists were expected to live, on average, 2.6 years longer than Old Believers. These results are rather surprising. The outcomes (rather intuitive conclusions) of previous research on the influence religion on vital statistics show that, in general, Old Believers were healthier (and usually wealthier) in comparison to Orthodox Russians, so one might expect Old Believers to have an advantage in terms of lower morbidity and higher life expectancy.

It is difficult to tell if this Orthodox Christian advantage is representative. It is not clear if these findings signify an actual advantage or statistical error based on the small sample size. In the context of uneasy relations between the Russian State and religious groups outside of the Russian Orthodox Church, the lifespan of Old Believers probably was negatively influenced by inherent stress. Moreover, many who officially accepted the Orthodox faith continued old religious behaviours. It is important to approach these results with caution since it is impossible to identify any clear influence of religion on life expectancy.

In short, my findings could be interpreted and explained as follows: Before the beginning of the demographic transition period when income inequality was higher than subsequent periods, wealth did provide mortality benefits for adults (I do not focus on the influence and difference in infant mortality). In addition, there is subtle sex-specific gradient in favour of

men (Table 2.7, period 1750-1799), which, by the middle of the nineteenth century, reversed in favour of women. At this time, the male life expectancy advantage for merchants dropped below the national level.

From the beginning of the demographic transition period and the decrease of income inequality by World War I (as Mironov shows), the advantage in life expectancy which was provided by wealth remained, but was decreasing, especially when comparing men and women (in favour for women). While men seem to live shorter lives, women continued to enjoy the vital advantages of wealth. At age 15, women philanthropists were expected to live longer than the average national female population by almost 3 years (and almost 10 years longer than male philanthropists). Male philanthropists life expectancy rates, however, dipped below the national level. By age 45, both male and female philanthropists appeared to die earlier than the national population as a whole (Table 2.9).

Why, by the end of the nineteenth century had the trend in male merchant average longevity of life reversed in favour of women? Since women continued to have an advantage in average longevity of life based on wealth and education (in the case of Russian academics), and the proportion of marriages decreased, it seems that factors other than only wealth and status influenced male average longevity of life. I suggest the lowered average longevity of life among men is partly linked to the increased number of bachelors among male merchants (see section 2.2). Unmarried men were strongly affected by the influence of unhealthy lifestyles (diet and smoking) and stress while unmarried status of women positively influenced their life spans.

The positive influence of wealth appears to only affect men at the top of the wealth hierarchy (Table 2.11). It seems that the positive effects that individual autonomy (lowered stress factors) and wealth provided can only been seen in the crème de la crème of Russian wealthy elite. Extreme wealth removed all negative effects of lifestyle and behaviour choices, including marital status. In this regard, it seems that the education of the academic elite, rather than wealth, provided individuals with personal autonomy and increased life expectancy. Among the educational elite both men and women had a life expectancy advantage which tended to increase over time (Table 2.10).

Orthodox merchants’ life expectancy advantage is surprising and could be explained by elevated stress among Old Believers. While tensions between Old Believers and the Russian Imperial State had lessened by the second half of the nineteenth century, and especially by the 1905 Revolution, they still distrusted one another. Elevated stress levels throughout the lives
of Old Believers were unlikely mitigated by healthy behaviours as previously believed (Table 2.14).

2.2. Merchant Family Demography

Household (or family) economies replicate the market economy at a microscale. Family members make decisions about the allocation of assets (including inheritance transfers), how much to save and invest, whom to marry and whether family planning is necessary. While these decisions themselves cannot strictly be determined by profitability, which can be calculated for the market economy nevertheless decisions by the nature and applied mechanisms would be still economic argues Akerlof and Shiller.\(^{261}\) Joel Mokyr makes a similar argument about British eighteenth century households. Over the course of two centuries, in vastly differing economic environments (the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries), British households consistently made decisions basing on the same mechanisms of formal and informal exchange as did economists.\(^ {262}\)

Changes in the size and structure of the household over time are a basic and sensitive indicator of the shifting economic and social life of a given population. In theory, the fewer the number of dependants in one household, the more economically productive the household is per capita (of course, before a certain limit). The opposite is also true: a more complex household structure (number of small families, generations, distant relatives, dependants and servants) is less economically productive per capita. For many years, it was believed that the sustainability of peasant households was based on its complexity and that bigger households would have more workers, and consequently, would be more profitable. In practice, however, this was inverted. The first thing that increases with the growth of a household’s complexity is the number of dependants, not income per capita. The income per capita, before a certain number of dependants increases and then decreases.

This section will be devoted to the phenomenon of the urban family in late Imperial Russia. Understanding the family as an economic institution that combines tools of both behavioural and market economies on a daily basis, I will structure my discussion on the interplay of three different types of data. First, I look at the demographic aspects of family size and structure of the entire population in the Russian Empire. Second, I examine the Muscovite


population and finally, I investigate Moscow merchant families in comparison to families in other social estates (where possible).

Discussing merchant household demography is particularly important to the scope of this study because it exposes internal tactics and external challenges during the life cycle of families. This information is usually hidden in formal demographic data. I aim to explore how individual choices, state regulations and occupation specific factors shaped merchant families and households. I am interested in uncovering the extent to which individual choice was affected by searching for more effective mechanisms (here, the size of the family) to increase business. I question if choosing a more economically advantageous family size and the fiscal interests of the State coincided. Similarly, what were the role of family networks in the merchant soslovie? Was it a compromise between fiscal interests, a side effect of underdeveloped credit organisations, or a safety net? Additionally, by looking at the life cycle of individual households, especially at time when children commonly separated from the parental household, I want to challenge the myth of the “infantile merchant son”, who could not act or think independently because they lacked the skill of independent decision-making. Of course, there were some examples of this phenomenon, but they were the exception rather than the rule.

The demography of urban households is a large topic, and unfortunately the poor preservation of sources and data dispersion makes the historical demography of urban families in the post-reform Russian Empire a deeply under researched subject. In recent years, however, there have been several scholars who attempt to approach the subject from the regional perspective, while others investigate urban social groups and religious minorities.263

Researchers that examine the evolution of households usually rely on the average number of household members, their relations, and the number of children or dependants. This approach is usually known as Peter Laslett’s method, which was first employed in the 1970s. It is problematic to employ the Laslett’s method to my research because it does not take into account the influence of official and unofficial contracts between the State, society and the family and how these factors impact the evolution and size of the household.264 Peter Laslett’s


264 Here I am primarily referring to the influence of controlling State fiscal policy, see section on “State interventions...”.
theory is based on Hajnal’s framework of an imaginary demographic boundary between East and West. Hajnal proposed dividing family types roughly into traditional and transitional categories. Thus, in the West families were mainly simple, or nuclear, while in the East they were big and complex (i.e. traditional). This rough division obscures the complex changes and external factors which affected families over time. Though the average size and type of a household usually reflects regional or spatial variations, it masks the impact of religious and social minorities in regional averages. For example, in Barnaul, a town in the southern Siberian province of Tomsk, the average size of a merchant household in 1867 was 4.4. In 1916, it rose to 5.9. Merchants from two religious groups shared membership in the soslovie: The Old Believers and Russian Orthodox Christians. While Old Believer households made up around 12 percent of the Tomsk merchant households, the former substantially influenced the town’s demographic averages. In 1900, the average number of members of Orthodox households was 4.7, but in Old Believers’ households it was 8.3, while the average size of merchant households in general was 5.2 members.265 Jewish merchants, another religious minority during the post-reform period, show a clear decrease in the size of their household. As a result, they became less complex, which also influenced the provincial average.266 By looking at more data on family demography, Laslett’s approach does not hold weight.267

While merchant families were subject to State regulations, the data on family demography was not published in a simple or approachable way. The Moscow Merchant Office (from 1869) published the annual membership books of Moscow merchants. These publications, however, did not contain full information about family size or structure. The only data contained in the membership books were the names and ages of male successors because these records were important for military service and acted as hypothetical business agents of the head of the family. The names and ages of female family members were not included, though marital status was usually indicated.

To access more in-depth data on the composition and age structure of the merchant household, I have consulted the unpublished merchant registration books, which provide records of merchants and their family members who moved in any direction within or outside the soslovie. These annual record books were necessary for registering the social mobility of Muscovites, because social order and taxation was built on the prescription of social titles to all subjects of the State. The books contained data for those who did not repurchase their

265 Goncharov, Kupecheskaia semia, p. 225.
266 Goncharov, Kupecheskaia semia, pp. 123–126.
267 Avdeev, Troitskaia and Ulianova.: ‘Soslovnye razlichiiia’, p. 76.
merchant patents, for those who died, and also for the members of the family who died, entered high school or the service (in which case they had to leave the merchant soslovie).

For the period before the 1860s, historians consulted lists of the taxable population (*Revizii*, 1718-1859), which provide comparable data.²⁶⁸ Importantly, this data should be approached with some reservations. The most important difference between the *Revizii* and the lists of former merchants is that the *Revizii* were counted merchant household members who lived under one roof, however, in the lists of former merchants were indicated only family members allowed to be enrolled in merchant patent. In this respect, listings of the taxable population are more detailed sources than the merchant soslovie membership books. The tax listings help explain the high proportion of multiple family households which made up around a quarter of all merchant households in the first half of the nineteenth century.²⁶⁹ The latter source does not include this information. Thus, one must be cautious when comparing the two sources to one another.

The most recent research of merchants’ family demography (based on the *Revizii*), was the conducted by Alexander Avdeev, Irina Troitskaia and Galina Ulianova in 2015-2017.²⁷⁰ In questioning the well-known model of democratic transition between West and East (or the Hajnal model),²⁷¹ these scholars concluded that, in order to be valid, any holistic model needs to specify the social background of households. But only grouping households by geographic location, by the number of members, or even by marital and cohabitation status (which was Laslett’s approached based on Hajnal’s methods) masks the influence of socio-economic factors on family demography.

A comparison of Moscow merchant households with peasants who lived in nearby Vykhino shows the principal differences between these two groups in the relative size and structure and also partially demonstrate the direction of development trends. Adveev’s and his colleagues show that before emancipation, families in both towns and villages consistently gravitated towards a simpler household structure but in a different ways. Merchants, however, were transitioning to single member households while peasants tended towards less complicated family structures. Specifically, between 1834 and 1858, the size of Moscow merchant households, on average, decreased from 5.56 to 4.97 members. Peasant household

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²⁶⁸ In total, there were 10 listings between 1718 and 1859.
²⁷⁰ The title of this project is “The Demographic History of Moscow Merchantry by III -X Listings of the Taxable Population (1762-1858): Marriage and Family, Reproduction and Mortality, Social and Spatial Mobility”. The sample was composed of a 10 percent sample of peasants living near Moscow and 10 percent sample of merchants in Moscow to compare the family demographic behaviour of both groups.
²⁷¹ The model was developed by the group of researches in 1950, working on the European Fertility Project.
size decreased from 11.78 to 6.6 members. The proportion of single male and female households changed, but also in different directions: the number of single merchant households increased almost twofold, from 12 to 21.7 percent, but the number of single peasant households decreased from 6.9 to 2.9 percent. We also see that the proportion of simple merchant households dropped by a factor of 10 percent, from 58.1 to 47.9 percent, which occurred despite the increased number of single merchants. For peasants, the proportion of simple households increased from 4.7 to 27.1 percent.\textsuperscript{272}

R.J. Morris, J. Mokyr and other scholars agree that the gravitation of merchants (or entrepreneurs in general) towards simpler households was connected to a search for more effective mechanisms of conducting business.\textsuperscript{273} In a recent paper, Greif and Sasson compared two opposite types of business agency systems: (1) pre-modern, clan-based, risk-averse Chinese institutions and (2) more risk-friendly English entrepreneurs. These scholars suggest that “small family size, coupled with an economic safety net (such as the Poor Law in England), allowed entrepreneurial individuals to make more risky business decisions based on innovation. In an extended family or clan system, risk-averse individuals might have vetoed innovative but risky projects”.\textsuperscript{274}

The shortcomings of the economic safety net, at least until the third quarter of the nineteenth century in England, were balanced by networked families\textsuperscript{275} which provided risk-friendly individuals with advice and loans. Networked families were invisible in formal demographic data and lists of official credit establishments, however, provided, in practice, visits, services, gifts and were visible in the “process of probate and inheritance itself”. Thus, behind risk-averse individual business decisions stood effective means though which the decision-maker could spread risk.\textsuperscript{276}

Another reason why family and household demography is very sensitive to household grouping is the mismatch between the size and kin relations of household members. Extended family households and multiple family households differ in structure due mainly to the presence or absence of distant relatives or non-kin members. Yet, the size of the household could be close. For example, households with 5 members or less were usually simple, whereas

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{272} Avdeev, Troitskaia and Ulianova.: ‘Soslovn"{y}e razlichiiia’, p. 80.
\item \textsuperscript{275} Which, as opposed to clans, were more flexible and provided individuals with more decision-making freedom.
\item \textsuperscript{276} Morris, \textit{Men, Women, and Property}, pp. 370–371.
\end{itemize}
households with 6 members usually included the extended family and households of 7 or more were usually multiple family households. In reality, however, a household of 6 members could be a simple, nuclear family.

Incorrectly grouping households by size and structure can cause serious misinterpretations. For example, in Britain, a simple family household with an average of 4.75 members was common in urban society both during the pre-industrial and industrial periods. Using Laslett’s method and paying more attention to the size rather than to the structure of the household, one could conclude that the Industrial Revolution may have had an impact on the family as an institution, but the lack of specific data limits any real findings. An in-depth examination of the composition of pre-industrial and industrial households revealed that in the eighteenth century, households usually had live-in servants, but in the nineteenth century, many urban households removed servants, took in boarders or resided with relatives due to high rents in urban areas. Thus, while the size of the household remained the same, the structure changed considerably.

The best way to interpret the evolution of the household is to simultaneously address the size, social or religious background, marital and cohabitation status, as well as the age of dependants and the head of the family. Unfortunately, I know of no holistic interpretative study of the evolution of the Russian household in the post-reform era. Boris Mironov explains that this gap in the historical demography of the Russian population is due to the complex nature of this research and time-consuming methodological approaches. This is because the topic requires the inclusion of dynamic data over several years and an in-depth analysis of each household.

Data. Forty very important years elapsed between the final 1857 census of the taxable population (Reviziia naseleniia) before the abolition of serfdom and the First Russian Imperial census in 1897. Important that, since the tax listing of the population and population census had different purposes, different questionnaires, and differed in scope, this data can only be compared generally and with hesitation. Urban censuses help fill in the gaps. In Moscow, for example, not including the All-Russian census, information about the population was recorded three times: in 1871, 1882 and 1902. Unfortunately, all of Moscow censuses had a different structure, questionnaire and different population groupings. Yet, all three censuses give some indication of the evolution of the urban population in terms of changes in the number of

278 Mokyr, Enlightened Economy, p. 310.
279 Mironov, Sotsialnaia istoriia Rossii, p. 223.
members in a given household. They provide basic knowledge of the structure of the household (whether it was composed of relatives or not), the number of children, and other information. Yet, none of the three censuses noted if households were composed of members of different urban social estates (usually the social background of household was indicated by the head of the family’s soslovie membership), how the household structure evolved depending on the age of the head of the family, and missed sensitive information which would have shed light on the household as an economic institution.

To give my research an additional level of detailisation, and so that it is more sensitive to the geographic, social and demographic contrasts in household behaviour, I have collected data on the structure and size of Moscow merchant families from lists of merchants who did not repurchase their merchants’ patent or who died. This source shows the (relative) longevity of the business, the structure of the family registered on the certificate (patent), along with the age (published lists of merchants contain only names and the age of male relatives) and the lifespan of merchants and their relatives.

2.2.1. State and Family

In very general terms, the difference between a family and a household is that a family is a group of individuals related by blood, adoption and marriage. The members of one household, however, could be united by cohabitation and share some resources, but are not necessarily relatives. An individual could comprise an entire household, while one household could contain any number of family members or unrelated individuals. In this sense, families are households of individuals (more than two) related by blood or marriage but without the strict rule of cohabitation. As I will show below, while the State intervened in both rural (peasants) and urban (guild merchant) families and households, the difference was that in rural areas the State was motivated to preserve households, whereas in urban areas authorities aimed to preserve families and undivided business. The family based on age- and gender subordination was an important mechanism to manage the population despite religious or ethnic difference and to install the new groups in the imperial framework.²⁸⁰

²⁸⁰ Wirtschafter, Social identity, p. 9.
2.2.1.1. Rural Areas

A compelling example of misguiding methodology of household topography are peasant households in rural areas of Central Russia. For a long time, peasant households were treated as a classic example of extended or multiple households. Additionally, scholars ascribed the complex character of these households to member’s voluntary choice. Recently, some rigorous scholars have discovered that the extended family structure was only one stage in household life cycle. For about half their lives, peasants lived in simple households.

The available data on the size of peasant households and the proportion of dependants in the Perm’ province in 1850 shows that the best ratio between profitability and the proportion of dependants was a household of 10-11 members. The proportion of dependants in these households was less than half. Prokopovich argued that usually, when the household reached this size, it was divided equally between adult male members. Thus, divisions in peasants’ households were usually associated with the number of household members i.e. the number of dependants, rather than the death of the head of the household, as was the case in urban families. In her research on peasant households in regions with developed proto-industrial economies, Herdis Kolle shows that peasant households in regions engaged in industry and manufacture used to divide households earlier than agricultural households (and usually during the lifetime of parents).

The average size of peasant households in mid-nineteenth century European Russia was 8.5 family members. In 1917, the average peasant household was composed of 6.2 members of both sexes (the 1897 census registered 5.8). The average size of urban families from the mid-eighteenth century to 1897 decreased from 6.2 to 4.2 family members. There are, in general, three reasons why peasant households remained complex after the abolition of serfdom (1861) and the poll tax (1885). Peasant households were usually divided twice in the life cycle of a given generation. Unfortunately, the timing of households’ divisions was not due to personal affection but rather external enforcement from the peasant community and the State (before 1861 this practice was enforced also by the landlord).

283 Kolle: ‘Marriage, Household Division and Headship’.
284 Mironov, Sotsialnaia istoriia Rossii, p. 221.
The first reason why both the State and landlords enforced the complex structure of peasant households was because it was an easy and cheap way to control the rural population.286 This structure of hierarchical control was simple and functional, and was enforced on four levels: the State, landowners, the rural community, and the complex patriarchal household. The eldest male of the household played the role of the patriarch who oversaw taxes, social interactions, work, moral principles and the leisure time of all other household members. Above the pater familias was the rural community and a village Elder (Starosta). Secondly, the fiscal interests of the State and landlord also reinforced this family structure. Collecting taxes from a hierarchically ordered and mutually dependant household was easier than trying to collect money from individual families tied neither to a particular household nor a specific rural community.

Military service was the third reason why the State intervened in reinforcing the complex structure of peasant households. The State maintained its military forces by requiring every peasant household (which was usually composed of three or more adult men) to provide one male adult for military service (which lasted 25 years). The abolition of this type of military recruitment and the introduction of obligatory service for all adult males in 1874 did not change this recruiting process since one duty was replaced by another.

Control over the household as an institution within rural communities was deeply embedded and cemented by many factors from the harsh climate to an imbalance in State and society relations. It does not matter how intensively the State collaborated with nobles and how sophisticated the system of enforcement and punishment was, the reward of economic independence from complex households was still more desirable for the individual. In some provinces, the number of families that separated without any share of the household property was as high as one quarter or more of the total number of families.287 Between 1861 and 1890, official registers show that annually there were approximately 108,000 to 150,000 household divisions, but some evidence demonstrates that many households divided unofficially.288 For example, in one district of the Kostroma province, only 7 households were officially registered as divided, but 484 households were divided without authorization.289 The most recent research,

286 See the discussion of the serfdom as an instrument of social policy in: Etkind, Vnutrenniaia kolonizatsiia. Imperskii opyt, p. 197.
however, suggests that peasant communities rarely declined or challenged the household divisions in post reform period.290

2.2.1.2. Urban Areas

The example of peasant households demonstrates that the State was particularly interested in maintaining big households because it facilitated tax collection and control over the rural population. The urban population with the exception of guild merchants, did not attract such interest from the State. As was shown in my discussion about merchant soslovie evolution (Chapter 1), from the mid-sixteenth century merchant families (and wider households) were indirectly treated not as a group of individuals united by blood (or adoption) but rather as a kind of business firm.

Catherine II's 1785 Charter of Rights and Privileges for Cities dictated that after the death of the head of the family, the legal inheritors could purchase one merchant patent for all successors since the assets of merchant families were familial and not personal (“the assets should not be treated as personal but as assets of a business company”).291 This meant that the State treated merchant families as an association of business agents, one of which (the head of the family) formally held the “prime authority to sign”. While the permission to run jointly inherited business was a positive decision for enterprise since all assets were still pooled together, it was against the fiscal interests of the State, since it lowered the value of collected taxes.

From 1809, the State became directly involved, introducing a restrictive policy about which relatives could enjoy the social and economic advantages of the patent holding merchant and which were not. The law of 1863-65 granted merchants of all nationalities, social backgrounds and both sexes the equal right to conduct business.292 The law, however, was not entirely egalitarian for men and women regarding the circle of relatives allowed to be enrolled on their certificate. For instance, a male merchant was allowed to enrol his spouse, sons, unmarried daughters, officially adopted children, unmarried sisters and grandchildren on the condition that their parents did not have their own merchant patent.293 Female merchants were not allowed

291 Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, Sobranie I, Tom 22 (1784 - 1788) (SPb, 1830), art. 16 187, par. 95,97, p. 368.
292 Women (including widows) were never officially prohibited to enrol as independent business actors, however it was only after 1762 that this right could actually be exercised.
293 Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii. Sobranie II, Tom 40 (1865), part 1 (SPb, 1867), art. 41779, par. 67, p. 167.
to enrol their husbands or sisters, married or unmarried, in their certificates. An interesting exception was made for merchants’ widows and daughters who were left without a male family member able to purchase a patent. They were granted the right to stay in the merchantry. The paradox of this status was that while it granted these individuals with the civil rights of the merchant class, they were not allowed to trade, produce goods or provide services independently from the head of the family. The testator was prohibited dividing the business, and instead had to leave the enterprise intact and undivided. After the death of the testator, however, the inheritors could to sell the business.

By the law 1863-65 the circle of relatives allowed to be enrolled in one certificate was again (after 1809) narrowed. Namely by law, male siblings, if they jointly inherited a business, were no longer allowed to purchase a single certificate. The law left two options: the inherited business could be officially separated and each individual could purchase independent certificates, or alternatively, they could establish a public company and purchase not an individual but a company certificate. Brothers who registered joint enterprises under one certificate before 1863 were allowed to run it until they will decide to separate. The consequences of this decision were twofold. On the one hand, the enforced separation of inherited enterprise, even if it was only a formality, could negatively affect the personal relationships between inheritors and destroy the business. Thus, a by-product of this reform could be the reduced longevity of inherited businesses. On the other hand, the challenge of forced separation could reveal weak points in the managerial sphere of the inherited business which could then be corrected. Thus, the compulsory separation could have a cleansing effect on Russian merchant enterprises or enterprises inherited by unmotivated successors, which would likely not survive the challenge of separation or coexistence. In officially recognised merchant households, the transfer of a patent to the next generation was allowed only as an exception. If the head of the merchant family transferred his or her acquired property to one of their adult children or close relatives during their lifetime, they were allowed to be enrolled on the certificate on general terms. Relatives enrolled on the merchant certificate were granted with civil rights equal to the head of the family, but they were not able to conduct business independently and could only act as agents of the head of the household. The law did not specify the official status of these kinds of familial business agents. Whether they were salaried

294 Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii. Sobranie II, Tom 40 (1865), part 1 (SPb, 1867), art. 41779, par. 78.
295 PSZRI, Sobranie II, Tom 40, part 1, art. 41779, par. 78.
296 PSZRI, Sobranie II, Tom 40, part 1, art. 41779, par. 75.
workers or altruistic helpers, the law stated only that “family members are allowed to be the business agents of the head of the family, or sales representatives of the 1st and the 2nd class without the additional sale representative certificate and an employment contract”.

Decisions about salary and working conditions were left to the heads of the family. If and when a son’s ambitions surpassed the limitations of their position as an agent, they could ask to be separated from the head of the family household and request an allotment of household property. In rural households, the village community and the landowner both had the authority to deny the request. In urban households, only the head of the family could legally deny the request for a share of the property during their lifetime. In cases where the head of the family would deny allotting the property the children would still be free to separate but without their share.

For peasants, the household division usually meant a decrease in material well-being for some time afterwards. For merchants, however, who usually conducted business under home equity loans and mortgages, the in-life property division was usually either impossible or would likely result in bankruptcy. Thus, the law protected the parental right to keep the household property undivided as they saw fit (see section 3.2, Chapter 3).

As the result, children, to some extent, were hostages of the State’s regulations over family and property law. Being tied to the parental household by moral obligations and inheritance for 45-50 years was perhaps not very healthy for developing money management skills. Children could, however, profit from their dependant status. After years of acting as agents for the head of the household, the most ambitious sons could build up social capital so that by the time they received their share of the inheritance, their name would already be trusted and associated with the business. This was the best outcome after years of dependency. On a positive side, the postponed inheritance motivated social and occupational mobility of prospective inheritors.

2.2.2. Merchant’ Family Life Cycle

In this section I will address family demography related to the number of family members, their ages, marital and cohabitation statuses, the evolution of intergenerational and gender ties between members of the family and household, family types and family planning. Russian pre-
revolutionary society was structured around two deeply interrelated spheres: family and soslovie. The discussion in this section will bring together three aspects of individual experience within these spheres: personal, familial and soslovie membership. I will enrich this examination by showing how socio-economic mobility, in relation to the personal and the familial life cycle of its members, impacted Moscow urban society and the merchant soslovie in particular.

The merchant soslovie was a clear example of a social body where State fiscal interests and Imperial ambitions converged to create and maintain a united society. The differing economic and social bases of the mercantile have caused some confusion among scholars studying the evolution and vitality of the merchant soslovie. State statistics which counted the guild merchant soslovie like other soslovia have misled some academics, who mistook the declining number of members of the merchant estate as evidence of a declining number of economic actors and the increasing bankruptcy of Russian entrepreneurs. In fact, on the one hand, during post-reform period the number of Moscow merchants (patent holders) fluctuated between around 5,000 and 6,000, subtly growing in number and the proportion of official and potential bankrupts were marginal. On the other hand, the number of guild merchant soslovie members in Moscow between 1871 and 1897 decreased from 29,200 to 19,500.

Table 2. 15 Moscow merchant family demography, 1863-1910

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Households</th>
<th>Median Size of the Household</th>
<th>Percent of Simple Households</th>
<th>Single Male/Female Household (percent)</th>
<th>Married Without Children (percent)</th>
<th>Without Marital Partner but With Relatives (percent)</th>
<th>Percent of Relatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


298 Wirtschafter, Social identity, p. 9.
Comparing pre- and post-reform data (Table 2.15) on the size of merchant households/families shows that the official reduction of the number of family members allowed to enrol in merchant patents probably influenced the size of the family (on average from 4.97 in 1858 to 3 in 1863 and 1910). It is not that merchants reduced the number of family members enrolled with them: instead this data is affected by an increase in the number of single member households which was 21 percent in 1858 and around 30 percent in the post-reform period and different methods of registration in the list of taxable population and merchant soslovie registers. The number of simple family households, despite a slight decrease, still comprised around 50 percent of all merchant families, though this number fluctuated slightly.

The increased number of the single member households could also be attributed to the limitations of the data used in estimations. The high proportion of single member households among merchants who left the soslovie (my sample) could be the result of the absence of network or familial support, which Morris finds crucial to maintaining businesses in the nineteenth century and afterwards. But there appears to be no difference in the average number of family members in families where the head of the family died, compared to families where patents were not repurchased. This means that the character of this data unlikely influenced my overall results.

In this regard, the number of officially registered family members in the merchant soslovie is relative. Merchant family members that are visible in official statistics (in censuses) were members who, in that part of family life cycle, were in need of social or economic protection. The registers are a snapshot of merchant family size and structure at a time when the head of the family was above 40 years old. By that time, most elder children were either married or were pursuing intermediate or higher education and, as a result, had to leave the merchant soslovie. The chance that families had only one child was high. The 1882 Moscow census suggests that about 60 percent of Moscow families had only one child. The chance that a spouse might die was also high, but the percentage of merchants who remarried was moderate to low. Statistics suggests that by the end of the nineteenth century the rate of remarriage for the entire Russian population was only 23 percent for men and 4 percent for women. Taking this into account, the increased number of single member merchant households seems plausible.

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299 Data and calculations for period before 1863 see in: Avdeev, Troitskaia and Ulinaova.: ‘Soslovnye razlichia’, p. 80.
301 For more detailed data and further discussion, see section Merchants by Numbers, section 4, Chapter 1
302 Mironov, Sotsialnaia istoriia Rossii, p. 172.
Although one third of merchant households were made up of a single member, almost two-thirds of households were married couples. The proportion of registered relatives who cohabitated with merchants were low but visible (around 15 percent).

Table 2. 16 Family members by age (median) and marital and cohabitation status, 1863, 1881, 1897

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital and Cohabitation Status</th>
<th>1863</th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1897</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head of the Family</td>
<td>35 (75)</td>
<td>45 (89)</td>
<td>52 (5358)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>30 (43)</td>
<td>35 (36)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>9.5 (55)</td>
<td>13 (68)</td>
<td>17 (3280)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>11 (46)</td>
<td>16 (47)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandchildren</td>
<td>4 (15)</td>
<td>11.5 (8)</td>
<td>9 (407) *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>42 (5)</td>
<td>32 (8)</td>
<td>45 (65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter-in-Law</td>
<td>22.5 (9)</td>
<td>26.5 (10)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Families</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>5358</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* Only male

The number of relatives of this kind in my sample is listed in parenthesis

The most common relatives who cohabitated with merchants were brothers and daughters-in-law (Table 2.16). In theory, the 1863 legislation meant that the official enrolment of adult brothers on merchant certificates was abolished. The only exception was for those families where brothers inherited or launched a joint enterprise. In this case, the law granted those brothers an indefinite term to either separate the business or to officially launch the joint enterprise as a public company. In 1881 and 1897 this group of cohabitating adult brothers, in theory, should not exist. In practice, however, it did not vanish but instead increased in proportion.

Another aspect of merchant soslovie family demography worth examination is the age and proportion of children by gender, and the size of the family with respect to the age of the head of the family (Table 2.17, 2.18).
Table 2. 17 The number and percentage proportion (in parenthesis) of sons and daughters to the total number of family members enrolled in merchant certificates in Moscow, 1863-1910

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Sons</th>
<th>Daughters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>56 (21.4)</td>
<td>50 (19.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>108 (22.9)</td>
<td>91 (19.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>31 (19.7)</td>
<td>27 (17.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>67 (25.8)</td>
<td>49 (18.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>87 (24.6)</td>
<td>81 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>149 (32.7)</td>
<td>80 (17.6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2. 18 The number of merchant sons (stepsons and male adopted children included) enrolled on certificates as the head of the family, by age groups, in Moscow, 1897

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Groups</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-20</td>
<td>2,069 (63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-40</td>
<td>1,126 (34.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41+</td>
<td>91 (2.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Specified</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,289</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Spravochnaia kniga o litsakh, poluchivshikh kupecheskie i promyslovye svidetelstva po g. Moskve na 1897 (Moskva, 1898).

(percent of total in parentheses)

The widely held notion that male successors would stay in the parental household after the age of 20 to help the head of the family maintain the business (which they would later inherit) is not supported by the outcomes of my research. My calculations show that at the end of the nineteenth century, only one third of male successors (age 21-40) stayed under the “parental roof”. But nearly two-thirds of male children did not.

The image of the despotic power held by the head of the family and of less charismatic, weak-minded sons is portrayed on several occasions in memoirs and novels. Yet, this primarily referred to the pre-reform era and scholars automatically applied it to post-reform


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society. The lack of sources and the time-consuming nature of family demography and inheritance led to unintentional confusion and misinterpretation. Goncharov, Ulianova and Mironov’s research, the scholars who have published the most cited studies on the topic, is fascinating in both the depth and scope of the primarily and secondary sources. Their research, however, is still confined by the perspective of despotic family relationships and low intergenerational mobility. Each author suggests that by the end of the nineteenth century, interfamilial relationships became closer, but there is a lack of large-scale direct evidence to make any statement or claim beyond mere suggestion.\(^{304}\)

The close distribution of the number and median age of sons and daughters enrolled in merchant patents (Table 2.17) suggests that both male and female successors left the parental household in search of their own, independent livelihoods when they reached adulthood. The sharp decrease in the number of male children aged 41 and up should be attributed to the natural mortality of their parents (Table 2.18).

Families and households are, first, dynamic institutions which are highly sensitive to the influence of time, space and social environment. The main source used in studies of family demography, population censuses, provide limited information and ignore the temporal aspects of family evolution. This misleads scholars and as a result they can come to false conclusions about the size and structure of the family or household. Instead, I will base my exploration on annually published merchant soslovie membership books. Comparing the age of the head of the family with the number of male relatives (mainly sons) enrolled on the certificate brings another perspective to discussing merchants’ personal life cycles and family demography (Table 2.19).

Below I will attempt to discuss the merchant family as a dynamic body which changed with respect to the age of the head of the family. On a positive note, I suggest that membership books give the largest and most accurate representative data for calculation. Unfortunately,
however, they only include information about male relatives. This means that merchant families without children or without male children or separated are not included. Nevertheless, as discussed above, data on the close proportion of sons and daughters per family, and also the proportion of spouses, allows me to estimate the number of absent individuals, and reach general conclusions that are unlikely to be strongly affected by the concrete absence of this data.

The first thing which attracts attention is that the size of the first guild households (3.1 male relatives) was bigger than the size of the second guild households (2.5) if only male relatives counted. The average first guild family was composed of 2-3 male relatives, or “sons”. Hypothetically if we take the proportion of family members from Table 2.16 and estimate the proportion of daughters to sons as 0.75 to 1 and the both parents as 0.5 to 1, the size of a household of 2-3 sons would be at least 5 members (other relatives not included). Second guild families appeared to have 3-4 members based on the observation that the average second guild family was more inclined to have only 1 or 2 sons. Another difference between the first and the second guild households is that, on average, male first guild members tended to have their first child a bit later (ages 50-59) as opposed to men in second guild families (ages 40-49). Again, it is a statistical approximation that at age 40-49 second guild merchant families likely had at least one child: it does not mean that second or first guild merchants, in reality, began to have children that late.

While first guild families gravitated toward later marriages and more children, households of both guilds appeared to have the most members when the head of the family was aged 60+. At the same time, if the increase in the number of male relatives in the first guild was substantial (from 2.8 to 4.2), in the second guild the increase was moderate and, in general, the number of male relatives fluctuated around 2.5 members.

If we compare the distribution of children (with respect to the age of the head of merchant families) with the life cycles of other soslovie families, we can see that parental occupation and soslovie membership regulations had an impact on family size. To my knowledge, the only detailed analysis of family size in respect to the age of the head of the family is a study about clergy families in the Vologda province in the mid-nineteenth century (1859).305 Despite the difference in time and geography, this example can show general tendencies shared by both soslovie groups. In addition, the clergy soslovie had one of the highest birth rates in the

305 Cited by Mironov, Sotsialnaia istoriia Rossi, p. 223.
Russian Empire. They tended to marry early, had relatively high living standards and were the least likely to engage in family planning or the intentional reduction of fertility.

Before the abolition of inheritable clergy soslovie membership in 1869, the number of children per family grew until the head of the family reached the approximate age of 40-44 (4.24 children per family) and then steadily declined until the head of the family reached the age 60+. In old age (60+) clergy families were usually composed of 1.87 children: generally, one son who was meant to inherit his father’s position, and one underage daughter. The abolition of inheritable membership in the soslovie probably lowered the size of families where the head of the family was over 60, leaving the aged clergymen with only one underage daughter.

Peasant households also shared the ∩-shaped evolution of family size, although at the highest point of the family life cycle, the household was at least two times bigger. This increased size was mitigated by three related factors: private property, living standards and State regulations (military service). As discussed above, the large and extended nature of peasant households was to a great extent enforced by the nature of property ownership and its cycle. First, in peasant households, property was not considered individual or private but rather communal and owned evenly by all male members. This explains why redistribution was not always caused by the death of the head of the family, but by the age and marital status of the male successors. Secondly, military service seems to affect the ∩-shaped family life cycle as well. Every third son, before 1874, was eligible for 25 years of recruitment duty which surly impacted family size. Finally, lower living standards also had an effect. The State, together with landlords and the rural community encouraged larger families in order to secure higher tax payments. For peasant households, a big family was a pre-requisite for easing the burden of tax obligations and maintaining the living standard of all members of the household. In small families, this stability would be in jeopardy. It is still unclear, however, if bigger families provided a better standard of living than smaller families.

The merchant soslovie also experienced the ∩-shaped evolution in family size. The close distribution of the number of male children through all age groups of Moscow merchants was the result of the interaction between the same factors: State regulation, inheritance practices (personal property) and living standards.

306 Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, Sobranie II, Tom 44 (1869), part 1 (SPb, 1873), art. 47138, p. 521.
Before the 1874 Army Reform, members of the merchant estate were free from conscription. It is widely accepted that this motivated people to purchase membership certificates even if they did not run an enterprise.\textsuperscript{307} When universal conscription was introduced in 1874, it meant that every man above 20 years old was liable for military service. Neither merchant nor noble soslovie membership provided an exemption from conscription. Although the Russian defeat in the Crimean War was the main reason for the Army Reform, the restructuring of the army actually led to its reduction in size. But the universal character of conscription meant the number of available men above the age of 20 was much higher than the army needed. In 1874 only 30 percent of men matched army requirements for enlistment. A large proportion of men were exempt from the military service on the grounds of poor health or family circumstance (as the only son or the sole breadwinner). This means that universal military service did not perhaps affect the family demography of merchant nor noble soslovie substantially.

The increase in the number of male relatives (sons) by heads of the family aged 60+ (Table 2.19) could be attributed to the increased education among all groups of the urban population. In addition, by the 1874 reform, all soslovia were granted the opportunity to attend military schools. Though women’s access to education was uneven until the end of the nineteenth century, male access to education increased substantially. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the nobility no longer represented the majority of middle and high school students. In 1914, nobles, citizens and peasants made up 32 percent, 37 percent and 20 percent of male gymnasium students. Universities were also predominantly attended by citizens (42 percent), with nobles and peasants accounting for 29 percent and 21 percent of attendees respectively.\textsuperscript{308}

In the case of first guild merchants my data suggests that many male children left the soslovie during their education and then returned to take over the business. The sons of the second guild merchants, however, seems rarely returned after leaving the parental household. This could be because, during the course of their education, their parents left the soslovie voluntarily (the median time of membership was under 10 years according to my estimations). Alternatively, because the living standards among second guild merchants were lower in comparison to first guild families, male successors chose not to wait for parental inheritance and instead chose to pursue their own career. Also, this meant that intergenerational social

\textsuperscript{308} Leikina-Svirskia, V. R., Russkaia intelligentsiia v 1900-1917 godakh. (Moskva, 1981), pp. 9, 15, 24.
mobility among poorer members of the merchant estate was higher than among wealthier, first
guild merchants.

The similarity between first and the second guild families was that neither were inclined to
have extremely big families or many children. The proportion of families with more than 4
sons in the first guild was 33.5 percent and in the second guild it was 20.6 percent compared
to totals in each guild. This again shows that first guild families probably due to higher living
standards tended to have more children or children survived at larger proportion in comparison
with less wealthy families. In a sense, this validates the results of the 1902 Moscow census
(Table 2.3) which showed that the merchant soslovie and honorary citizens were the two groups
most populated by children (the proportion of children below 14 years was 28.7 and 27.2
percent respectively). The larger proportion of children among wealthy merchants and
honorary citizens who, a priori, had higher living standards in comparison to meshchane,
suggests that wealth motivated members of these groups to have more children (or more
survived) and to reproduce their business success. More likely, however, was that having more
money meant they did not limit the number of children. Wealthier parents were more flexible
in terms of inheritance strategies since they could easily provide each successor with a sound
inheritance share.

The idea of stronger demographic reproduction in wealthier families also supported by the
statistical data that less wealthy and less prestigious groups, such as the meshchane, had fewer
children and probably were engaged in family planning earlier (Table 2.3). Nobles, however,
represent a reversal in this trend. The Russian nobility was the most prestigious soslovie and
provided its members with respect, but not always money. At the eve of the abolition of
serfdom (1858) only 12 percent of nobles had over 100 peasants and an estate. Personal nobles
made up 30 percent of the soslovie, and were part of the nobility not by birth, but were granted
noble status based on successful service or rising through the ranks.\footnote{Mironov, Sotsialnaia istoriia Rossii, p. 88.} This is also a proof of
substantial social mobility in the noble soslovie that we see in Table 2.3. Personal nobles made
up 50 percent of the 30-39-year-old age grouping, which indicated that by this age they had
had a successful career. It also means that the low average birth rate and low proportion of
underage children in the noble soslovie corresponded to the moderate living standards and
inheritance strategies shared by the majority of nobles. I suggest that nobles had fewer children
not because of successful family planning but because the tradition of partible inheritance
distribution negatively affected the survival of noble estates. Merchant’s and honorary citizen’s wealth, on the contrary, was composed of urban estates and money which could be easily divided. Additionally, since the division of noble estates affected not only the estate, but more importantly the honour and status of the family, limiting the number of potential inheritors was the easiest way to ensure that status was maintained across generations.

A similar strategy was shared by peasants in the second half of the nineteenth century. After the abolition of serfdom, the correlation between the allocation of land and the birth rate became closer. In the industrial provinces, the correlation was 0.83 and in the agrarian provinces it was 0.62. In addition, the lowered provision of land per person affected marriage patterns in rural areas. Fewer families could provide sons with land or, alternatively, fewer families were unable to feed extra mouths. If in the industrialised provinces the proportion of marriages per thousand remained stable (9), in the agrarian provinces the proportion decreased from 13 to 8 marriages per thousand between 1861 and 1900. Moreover, the character of redemption payments did not encourage a numerical increase in marriages and birth rates. Merchant status and soslovie membership was not dependant on the size of the family. In this respect, the merchant soslovie in the second half of the nineteenth century provided a certain degree of freedom for its members.

During the nearly two decades between 1879 and 1897, while the size of Moscow merchant families generally remained stable, their structure showed a subtle decrease in the number of merchants who enrolled relatives (of any kind) in their patents. Nevertheless, those who enrolled relatives registered more people on average in 1897 than in 1879. Namely, in 1879, 31.8 percent of all Moscow merchants had male relatives on their certificates which translates to 2.56 relatives per certificate. In 1897 the proportion of merchants with enrolled relatives decreased to 27.2 percent but the average number of enrolled relatives increased to 2.62 male relatives per certificate (1,461 certificates were registered to 3,831 relatives).

Interestingly, first guild families had more members than the second guild families, and first guild families with women as the head of the family were more populous than those with male heads of the family in both 1879 and 1897. For 1879, calculations suggest that if we take only

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310 Honorary citizenship was an award and introduced in 1832. It was bestowed upon the most outstanding citizens. Usually it was granted to the most successful merchants. Depending on the extent of the individual’s merits they could receive either personal or hereditary honorary citizenship.

311 Mironov, Sotsialnaia istoriia Rossii, pp. 173,180.

312 In my calculations I included only merchants with relatives. In 1885, there were 4,839 male relatives listed on merchant patents.
merchant families with male children, and exclude all single member and childless households, then a male head of the family in the first guild had 3.2 male relatives registered, while a female head of the family registered 3.4. Calculations for members of the second guild show the number of male relatives registered as 2.4 and 2.6 for males and females respectively.

The proportion of females who had male relatives listed on their patents (likely sons) was also higher than in the group of male merchants. Of the 28 women in the first guild, 18 (or 64.3 percent) had male relatives enrolled on their patent, but for men this proportion drops to 38 percent. In the second guild the proportion of males and females who had sons in their patents was close, 30 and 37 percent respectively.

The 1882 Moscow census shows a similar trend for the entire urban population. Only 6.8 percent of single parent male households had children. At the same time, almost a quarter of single parent female households included children. The main similarity between the average Muscovite household and the average Muscovite merchant household was the close proportion of unmarried individuals and single member households. As was noted above, merchants more frequently entered the soslovie and ran their businesses with a marital partner and /or child. The same appeared for the average Muscovite who was married and ran their household with a spouse (63 percent). While single parent households were statistically visible (37 percent), they were a minority when compared to two parent families.

Single female households among the Muscovite population were, in general, more common than single male households. Of the total number of Moscow households in 1882 (83,924), single female households represented almost a quarter (23.2), while single male households made up only 13.8 percent. For comparison, in Berlin the proportion of single female households was 17 percent at that time.

It is difficult, however, to identify how many female heads of the household needed to purchase merchant certificates to make ends meet, though census data indicates that the proportion was low. Of the 19,443 single-female households, 12.3 percent (2,391) lived with employees, and the majority of women (54.2 percent) sublet parts of their homes to tenants. This means that if we take the number of single female households who lived with employees (2,391) and the number of women with merchant patents in Moscow at the same year (531) we see that hypothetically, in 1884, only 22 percent purchased merchant patents to make ends meet. In reality the proportion should be lower since the first guild female merchants probably

313 As noted above, the publisher of the annual merchant membership books only included the names, ages and cohabitation status for male members enrolled on the family merchant certificate

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had better housing conditions and those who had live-in employees probably had less profitable enterprises than those who purchased merchant certificates.

For single male households, this hypothetical proportion was estimated to be three times higher. Over 60 percent of males (or 2,725) who had live-in employees were potential Moscow guild merchants (4,285 in 1884).  

Another visible tendency in the group of wealthy guild merchant families (the first guild) was that they were aging (Table 2.3). Since it is unlikely that merchants were marrying and having children earlier than before, and people were entering the soslovie later, I suggest that this trend is visible for two reasons: social mobility decreased, and individual businesses survived longer.

The increase in the average age of family members and heads of the family (Table 2.16, 2.20) which coupled with the generally stable number of guild merchants, points on lowered social mobility both in and out of the merchant soslovie. This occurred in part because the number of motivated individuals entering the soslovie, as a result of peasant migration to Moscow, was mostly exhausted by the end of the nineteenth century. Additionally, the aging merchant soslovie could reflect the growing number of other equally profitable, or more attractive, occupations generated by the Industrial Revolution. The data shows that in 1879, 507 people entered the Moscow guild merchant soslovie, which made up 8.5 percent of the total number of members that year (5,923). In 1897, the proportion of new members dropped to 5.8 percent or 312 people out of a total 5,358.

The aging trend in the Russian merchant population has also been articulated in other scholarly studies. For example, L. Lerner pointed out that during the second half of the nineteenth century, the proportion of merchants of aged 40 and 50 increased substantially and that this tendency can be seen throughout Russia. This suggestion is surprising, particularly because Lerner did not collect basic demographic data about the group she was studying (the Kursk merchanty) to be able to reach such conclusions. Moreover, Lerner suggests that the increased average age of the Kursk province merchanty was partially due to increased life expectancy and partly because sons usually did not separate from their families until their parent’s deaths.  

Lerner’s research did not take into account the sex-specific age distribution, though Galina Ulianova, on the contrary, has focused on female entrepreneurship. Ulianova collected data on

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315 Perepis Moskvy, 1882, p. 86; Moskovskaia kupecheskaia uprava, Spravochnaia kniga o litsakh, poluchivshikh kupecheskie i promyslovye svidetelstva po g. Moskve na 1884 (Moskva, 1884).
female merchants in both Russian capitals and found that between 1869 and 1895, the average Moscow female entrepreneur became younger (in 1869 the average age was 54.4 and by 1895 it was 51.1 years old) than female entrepreneurs in Saint Petersburg, where in 1869 the average age was 47.7 and rose to 48.6 in 1895. Ulianova concludes that this was the result of the increased number of married female entrepreneurs in guild merchantry.\footnote{Ulianova, G. N., ‘Zhenshchiny-predprinimateli Rossiiskoi imperii v 1890-e gg.: ekonomicheskaia deiatelnost i sotsiobiograficheskie i etnicheskie peremety’, Ekonomicheskaia istoriia. Ezhegodnik, 2016/2017 (2017), pp. 140–169, p. 150.} The outcomes of my research contradict Ulianova’s conclusion – Moscow female merchants became older during the second half of the nineteenth century.

The introduction of sex, guild number and age provide more detailed and specific data and overall improve research results.

Table 2. 20 The average age of Moscow guild merchants by sex and guild, 1879, 1897

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guild</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Median 1879</th>
<th>Median 1897</th>
<th>Count 1879</th>
<th>Count 1897</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>4657</td>
<td>4202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>476</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Spravochnaia kniga o litsakh, poluchivshikh kupecheskie i promyslovye svidetelstva po g. Moskve na 1879 (Moskva, 1879); Spravochnaia kniga o litsakh, poluchivshikh kupecheskie i promyslovye svidetelstva po g. Moskve na 1897 (Moskva, 1898).

We can see that between 1879 and 1897, while the averages age of second guild male members remained the same and the average age of female, increased on 2 years first guild members of both sexes appear to age by 5 years (Table 2.20). This data contradicts Ulianova’s research. Female entrepreneurs in Moscow did not become younger, on the contrary, there was a decrease in the age gap between first and second guild members (from 5 to 2 years), also the first guild female merchants aged faster than their colleagues of the second guild.
Table 2.21 The proportion of male and female merchant heads of family by age groups in Moscow, 1879 and 1897

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1879</th>
<th></th>
<th>1897</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-19</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Spravochnaia kniga o litsakh, poluchivshikh kupecheskie i promyslovye svidetelstva po g. Moskve na 1879 (Moskva, 1879); Spravochnaia kniga o litsakh, poluchivshikh kupecheskie i promyslovye svidetelstva po g. Moskve na 1897 (Moskva, 1898).

The distribution of merchant soslovie heads of family by age groups clarify why the median age of males between 1879 and 1897 remained stable while the median age of females increased (Table 2.21).318 In comparison to 1879, in 1897 the number of underage male merchants decreased from 11 to 2 individuals. The main change between these two chronological points was that by 1897, male merchants, who were previously loosely distributed among age groups, became more concentrated in the group of 40-49-year-olds and the group of 60+. The group of female heads of the family followed the same U-shaped trend as male family heads and show a decrease in young groups, middle-aged groups remained stable and finally, a slight increase in the group of aged female merchants (age 60 and up).

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318 Here I refer to the more populous second guild, which influenced the average.
**Conclusion**

The connection between demographic parameters, state regulations of family size and structure and material well-being of Moscow guild merchants in the nineteenth century, explored in this chapter, suggests that while an increase of wealth did not automatically lead to higher life expectancy [at least among males], it, indeed, positively influenced the number of children in merchant families. Families of the first guild merchants were larger and children tended to return to parental household after receiving an education, while the second guild male children were more socially mobile and had less siblings. Also, my research discovered that material well-being and education positively influenced life-expectancy of Russian women [here from guild merchantry] as it was established by other scholars for their European peers, while male life expectancy was more dependent from general improvement of sanitary conditions and decrease in infant mortality.

My data also did not support the intuitive conclusions of some scholars that higher material well-being of merchants and the specific character of mercantile agency automatically provided them with the longer life. It does not reflect reality because: the average age of merchants in my sample was above 40 for the second guild and above 50 for the first guild members, the average time they purchased the guild certificate before the dates I have used for calculations was 8-14 years, therefore they entered the guilds at the age of 30-35, meaning that prior to that, at the younger age they usually had experienced much lower living standards. Also, since the proportion of second/third generation merchant families was moderate it is unlikely that better living standards during several years of adulthood could possibly increase life expectancy in general. My research suggests that before the general decline of infant mortality in Russia (1910s) the high average age of guild merchants should be explained by the selection factor (to enter the guild individuals had to receive an education or/and accumulate a capital to run a business) rather than by positive influence of wealth.

In Russia, the state was actively involved in regulation of family size and structure of at least two social estates: peasants and guild merchants. While in rural areas family policy was aimed to decrease state spending on control apparatus and easier the tax collection (households supposed to be extended), the merchant families, at least from the beginning of the nineteenth century were legally decreased in composition but not in size. The guild merchant patent provided with social and [reduced] economic privileges only members of nuclear families.
Surprisingly, the family policy in Russia which seemed to be repressive went along with world-wide trend over the decrease of the family size or even unmarried state among businessmen. The lack of family i.e. underage dependents provided businessmen with an extended freedom to be engaged in risky projects, especially when they could rely on family network. In my sample, while the proportion of single male/female household fluctuated around 30 percent, the proportion of simple households slightly decreased in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Thus, the combination of formal and informal issues deeply influenced the democratic overview of the guild merchant soslovie.
Chapter 3: Personal Property Rights in the Russian Empire

In general, the term property is usually possessing at least one of the following features: (1) a relationship between two or more subjects; (2) a relationship between a subject and an object; (3) a relationship between individuals (property owners) and the State (authorities). As early as the unification of Rus’ under the supremacy of Moscow in the fifteenth century, State-society relations regarding private property rights were unequal. According to Michelle Lamarche Marrese, the official private owner in the Russian Empire was treated more as a property guardian. The full owner was the State. The State enjoyed the right to dispense private property and substantially limit the rights of the individual owner. While it is difficult to find a State that does not place limits on property rights, particularly in relation to wealth transmission, the case of the Russian Empire is interesting because it is largely under researched.

Historians, until recently, have agreed that the way personal property was valued by the State and individuals had a negative influence on the increase of personal wealth in the Russian Empire. They argued that the State practised active confiscations, withdrew patrimonial property from free disposition through inheritance, and limited the development of social meanings of property by associating it with the negative connotations of constraint, privilege and repressing power. Thus, wealth was not associated with positive concepts such as individualism and personal rights. The combination of these factors meant that there was little chance to accumulate wealth over generations. The lack of personal motivation to accumulate and the legal base to preserve personal assets left the Russian Empire economically “backward”.

Recently, several scholars have cast doubt on the idea that personal property rights should be solely “blamed for hampering industrialisation” and for the extreme inequality of wealth.

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320 Karnovich, Zamechatelnye bogatstva.
distribution in Russia. Scholars based their findings on debt records, last-wills probations and appeals, interfamilial correspondence, petitions of financial assistance and sources which uncover issues of public property. They argue that (1) only “a property system cannot brake or engine industrial development” and (2) that society, to a great extent, is a self-balancing entity which can overcome the limitations of State regulations (or lack thereof) by introducing practices supported by society but not approved by the authorities (for example, inheritance practices or creating unofficial credit networks).

In this chapter I investigate and further expound upon this recent historiographical trend in researching private property rights and its connection to wealth accumulation in the Russian Empire. I argue that in Russian society, from peasants to nobles and merchants, the social meaning of property first and foremost referred to equity and biological reproduction rather than individualism, and the survival of professional and social status influenced proprietary behaviour more than State regulations.

In the next two chapters, I aim to show the practical outcomes of inheritance strategies and personal property rights. In this chapter I show that the inheritance strategies of Muscovites did not develop in a vacuum of individual values or relationships with family members and other inheritors. On the contrary, I demonstrate that official legal regulations created the basis for individual decisions. When the State enforced or created laws individuals did not appreciate, testators came up with a variety of strategies to manage personal property. State enforcement triggered the production of many individual responses which influenced wealth distribution generationally, and sometimes not in the way the State intended. For example, Peter I’s introduction of primogeniture in 1714 was deemed socially unacceptable. The substantial part of the landed elites responded with numerous unofficial practises boycotting the law. As a result, in 1731 the law was dismissed. Russian was not unique in such protests, for example, the law of equal inheritance shares which promulgated during the French

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325 Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossii i Imperii, Sobranie I, Tom 3 (1713-1719) (SPb, 1830), art. 2789 (March, 1714), O poriadke nasledovaniia v dvizhimykh i nedvizhimykh imushchestvakh.
Revolution: it was equally met with disdain in some provinces. According to M. Darrow, local judges “did not enforce inheritance laws [which] they found grossly unfair”.326

The feudal nature of Russian personal property legislation (which remained unchanged until the end of the Russian Empire), shaped the specific character of historiographical and legal discussions about the topic. On the one hand, because Russian personal property rights lacked the initiation of civil freedoms and until 1917, it was based on feudal privilege rather than civil rights (or “the natural law”).327 Ekaterina Pravilova suggests the history of Russian property rights not yet accepted by Western historians as part of global, European or comparative property histories.328 Renowned American historian Sejmur Bekker, however, thinks otherwise. In his sophisticated research into noble privileges, he argues that Russian history, from around the eighteenth century, became part of the Western historical (though maybe not historiographical) processes and that the Russian nobility evolved in tandem with the nobility in other European countries.329

On the other hand, legal experts, historians, and authorities did not pay any particular attention to the influence of the rapidly growing, but deeply unregulated, sphere of acquired property (blagopriobretennoe imenie) or personalty. On the contrary, the legal and historiographical discussion, until recently, largely focused on the social reproduction of nobles and the regulation of patrimonial property transmission, predominately through inheritance. In this chapter I intend to balance these historiographical focuses and provide several suggestions as to how unbalanced State regulations gave property owners more freedom or larger spectrum of opportunities to manage property than authorities originally aimed to.

In the first section of the chapter I will introduce the main legal regulations as well as the basic and (mostly) sustainable aspects of Russian personal property and property rights. I will also discuss how limiting personal property rights could influence wealth inequality in the Russian Empire. The second section will specifically investigate the right to distribute property through gifts and inheritance. I will pay special attention to the influence of the freedom of testation on the transmission of acquired property (how free was free). I will also discuss the influence of inheritance taxation (its regimes and classes) on social and material reproduction in Britain, France and Russia. My main question: did legal regulations and the nature of private

328 Pravilova: ‘Unlocking Hidden Resources’, p. 3.
329 Becker, S., Mif o russkom dvorianstve / Nobility and priviledge in Late Imperial Russia. dvorianstvo i privilegii poslednego perioda imperatorskoi Rossii. Historia Rossica (Moskva, 2004), p. 3.
property in the Russian Empire undermined personal wealth accumulation? As my research shows, State regulation of private property did not substantially affect the personal wealth of the Russian population. Similarly, these regulations were less rigorous and socially exclusive then usually suggested in the literature.

Through investigating the work of Russian legal experts from different schools/camps, exploring the evolution of Russian legislation on property rights, inheritance transmission and will-making practices, I argue that there were substantial grey areas in regulation which allowed individuals to interpret the law in many ways. Similarly, I show that these grey areas, with remained until 1917, feudal character of private property rights rather positively than negatively influenced more free assets disposition. The substantial informal freedom (rather than legal freedom) of non-landed property disposition allowed property owners, testators and inheritors to dispose of property in ways that were most favourable for them.

3.1. Personal Property Rights

3.1.1. Patrimonial Landed Property

Personal property, broadly speaking, is the “mean[s] which formed individual[s] in relation to others”.\textsuperscript{330} As the legal norm, personal property rights appear when the State begins to appreciate the individual’s (civil) rights over group interests by making individual freedom a basic value of State-society relations.

Following this interpretation, the legal concept of personal property would not have appeared in the Russian Empire until 1905 for the majority of the population. The introduction of some basic civil rights was a result of the first failed Russian Revolution. But, unfortunately, this was not the case regarding property rights. The lack of any mention of protected and appreciated property rights (with unlimited freedom to dispose property, extract income, transfer, alter or enforce property rights) was symptomatic of the urgency with which Tsar Nicolas II signed the October Manifesto (he did so only to calm the violent revolt that followed the “Bloody Sunday”). The Manifesto only granted the population of the Russian Empire with constitutional freedoms of conscience, speech, association and the inviolability of the person. In Russia, property rights and personal property in general were never treated as the basis for

individual freedom. On the contrary, property was a feudal privilege which could be granted and taken away at the whim of the authorities.

Richard S. Wortman argues that in the political debates throughout the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century discussions about personal property rights were marginal. Traditionally, the elite’s narrow understanding of property, including the full-ownership of land and freedom, seriously limited both political discussions and the selection of revolutionary privileges listed in the 1905 Manifesto. In the Russian political culture the healthy meaning of private property as the means of economic development, individual freedom and personal opportunities lacked its “ethical justification” because personal property symbolized “oppression and exploitation”.331 While these negative connotations first of all were related to landed property, the Orthodox belief in the “godlessness” of wealth additionally contributed to hostility towards wealth and property ownership among both the urban and rural populations. Additionally, social factors which promote the development and legalization of private property rights (urbanisation, abolition of serfdom, industrialisation) occurred very late in Russia.

Unfortunately, as Richard S. Wortman suggests, Russian legislation never overcame the limited and feudal character of personal property rights and the “transition from property-privilege to property-attribute of freedom never took place”. As a result, the full legalization of private property never occurred.332

In this chapter, I expand upon chronological boundaries of my thesis to more fully discuss the nature and evolution of private property from the eighteenth century onwards. As Ekaterina Pravilova suggests, the evolution of personal property rights in Russia was extremely compressed in time and highly eventful.333 The seminal legislative acts which determined the development of Russian personal property until the end of the long nineteenth century occurred under the reigns of Peter I and Catherine II. The social exclusivity of personal property rights and their feudal and patrimonial character were established by Catherine the Great and remained almost untouched until 1917.

The word “property” (sobstvennost’) came to Russia from the Germanic regions of Europe. Ekaterina Pravilova suggests that the first official appearance of sobstvennost could be attributed to the Peace Treaty between Sweden and Russia in 1721.334 Later, in the eighteenth

333 Pipes: ‘Private Property’.
334 Pravilova, Public Empire, p. 297.
century (and before the Nakaz in 1767), the word sobstvennosti’ was a direct translation of the German Eingenthum, which was used to officially refer to landed property in the Baltic provinces. While there is little doubt that the modern concept of personal property arrived in Russia under Catherine the Great, the empress herself claimed that she reinvented personal property. Yet, the reinvention of property (or at least the word sobstvennost’) under Catherine was nothing more than a “simple change of terms”, according to Pravilova. She simply replaced the commonly used term imet’/ imenie with sobstvennost’, and as a result, Catherine only slightly improved upon the old feudal meaning of property. However, it calls any doubt that the legal appreciation of an individual freedoms for nobles (personal and property) was new.

Volume 10, part 1, articles 383 – 2334 of the Digest of Laws of the Russian Empire contains several sections on the legal meaning of property. It also defines property ownership and their property rights, along with potential limitations. According to the first note in article 420, property rights (parvo sobstvennosti) were first legally defined in 1649 and included the right to possess (imet’ parvo na ...) land in two forms. The first definition, “parvo votchinnogo i krepotnogo” (Votchina) included patrimonial landed property received mainly from kin as a share of inheritance. The second definition, “prava pomestnogo i vechnogo vladenia” (pomest’e), included land received from the State as payment for service which could not be transferred through inheritance. Yet the definition only covered landed property.

While the legal definition differentiates between purchased property free for disposition and that received for service (and therefore limited in disposition), in reality, in Muscovite and Petrine Russia the individual did not exist as an individual entity and property owner separate from the State. Personal and property rights were limited to secure national stability. First, during the unification of Rus’, the authorities aimed to conquer external enemies, and suppress individualism to pull forces together. Later, Peter the Great aimed to protect land from an internal enemy by the introduction of partible inheritance distribution which substantially affected the nobles’ material well-being and land integrity.

In the Pre-Petrine period, people were liable to the State both materially and personally: almost all land was State owned and all other material objects were counted as personal movable possessions, free for disposition. As the State evolved, its monopoly on land ownership and management eroded. Over time the amount of privately possessed land

335 Potkina, Pravovoe regulirovanie, p. 33.
337 SZRI, Vol. X. part 1, art. 420, p. 800.
increased. Similarly, some nobles passed their land \((\text{pomest'e})\) to their male inheritor under the condition and understanding that the inheritor would continue their fathers’ service. Also, noble widows with underage children or without a male head of the family were allowed to continue living in \(\text{pomest'e}\), and the new \(\text{pomest'e}\) holder had to feed her and her underage children. Later regulations dictated that after the death of the head of the family the widow should leave \(\text{pomest'e}\). In return, she would receive a share of the old estate in order to make ends meet.\(^{339}\)

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, both types of noble land possession in Russia \((\text{votchina and pomest'e})\) became interwoven into one property domain which nobles managed almost freely. Land property was transferred as dowry, divided between male inheritors or bequeathed to wives who survived the head of the household. Peter I ended voluntary State property disposition by nobles, especially in the partible division through inheritance because it was destructive to the unity of his domain.\(^{340}\) Nobles’ inheritance strategies, while providing subsistence for the inheritors, resulted in rapid estate fragmentation and the pauperization of the military skeleton of the State.

To prevent the negative outcomes of noble inheritance and proprietary behaviour, Peter introduced a new order to the old State-noble relationships: First, he equalized \(\text{votchina}\) and \(\text{pomest'e}\). All landed property, from that moment on, became patrimonial immovable property. He introduced the de-facto unlimited State control over personal landed property. In several acts at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Peter reinforced the State monopoly on resources. He granted all his subjects the freedom to search and mine natural resources on both State and private lands.\(^{341}\) He also limited the personal property rights on private forests valuable for industry, particularly those used for shipbuilding. Peter I also legally distinguished between movable (individual or personal property) and immovable property. The former was free for disposition, while the latter was limited for free transfers through gifts and inheritance. Furthermore, all landed property received as a share of an inheritance was to be hereditary or patrimonial. Land or estates purchased by parents were free for disposition, but once transferred to their children it became locked within the kin. Finally, Peter I established patrimonial property regulations meaning property could only be transferred to the eldest male successor (primogeniture).

\(^{340}\) The title “Empire” was officially introduced in 1721.
\(^{341}\) \textit{Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, Sobranie I, Tom 4 (1700 - 1712)} (SPb, 1830), art. 1815 (November, 1700), O priiske zolotykh, serebrenykh, mednykh i inykh rud po vsemu prostranstvu Rossii; ob osmotre Voevodam priiskannykh rud na meste, i o nagrazhdenii uchinivshikh takovoi priisk chastnykh liudei.
In these reforms, Tsar Peter I nationalised natural resources and bound landowners to the will and benefit of the State. A lack of empirical evidence prevents us from judging whether or not the State prospered from the “freedom of mining” (gornaia svoboda), primogeniture and extended State monopolies. One thing, however, was obvious: “the state monopoly over resources required a machinery of regulation and enforcement well beyond what the country possessed”.

Despite historians and legal experts’ differing in their understanding and interpretation of the concept of private property in Russia, they almost unanimously agree that its modern history begins under the reign of Catherine the Great. The ideology and positive influences of private property on the social, economic and political well-being of individuals in a newly Enlighted Europe was not lost on Empress Catherine II. Her project to complete Russia’s first modern property code, however, did not come to fruition.

To make property more visible and undisputable, Catherine even before establishing monopoly of land ownership (1782), initiated the General Land Survey in 1765 (General’noe Mezhevanie Zemel’). Contrary to, this was before her establishing a monopoly on land ownership in 1782) previous attempts at inventorying private land possessions in 1731 and 1754, this survey was comparably quick and remarkably successful. By the end of Catherine II’s reign the survey was completed in 18 provinces, although 20 percent of all surveyed land remained in “common” or disputed ownership. The disputed land was left to be resolved by a “special” land survey initiated only in the 1840s which resulted in mixed successes and continued into the last years of the Russian Empire.

In 1782 Catherine the Great confirmed noble freedom from compulsory service and established the inviolability of private property rights as their monopoly and privilege. Shortly after the nobility was freed from compulsory service in 1762 and allowed unlimited property rights (as of 1782), they finally received basic personal rights related to life, title, and personal property. Similarly, they were freed from corporal punishment, and were granted the choice to perform any service or occupation in Russia or friendly foreign powers (1785). If, by natural law, personal rights serve as the basis for property rights in Russia, in reality the

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342 Pravilova, Public Empire, p. 29.
344 Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, Sobranie I, Tom 17 (1765 - 1766) (SPb, 1830), art. 12474 (September, 1765), Manifest o generalnom razmezhevanii zemel vo vsei Imperii.
345 Pravilova, Public Empire, p. 30.
346 PSZRI, Sobranie I, Tom 21, art. 15447 (July, 1782), Manifest - O rasprostranenii prava sobstvennosti vladelcsov na vse proizvedeniia zemli na proverkhnosti i s nedrakh ee soberzhhashchiiasia.
opposite was true: first came occupational freedom (1762), then property rights (1782), then personal freedoms (1785). Thus, Catherine’s legislation on Russian personal property rights confirmed their social exclusivity.

Catherine the Great’s reign was undoubtedly the Golden age of the Russian nobility. Their liberation from compulsory service by Peter III, with all its visible benevolence was rather the act of liberation of the state Treasury which was previously responsible for paying noble salaries. From this perspective it was clearly not a celebration of nobles’ individualism. Within the twenty years between noble liberation from compulsory service (1762) and the advent of the absolute private domain (1782), the fate of land which was in State possession but still provided subsistence for the nobility, was hanging in the air. While, Tsar Peter III granted the nobility with freedom from compulsory service (initially enacted by Peter I), the connection between land and service remained. When Catherine the Great introduced property and personal freedoms, apart from the general political implications, it restored balance: nobles were free in all respects, except to freely dispense their patrimonial property through inheritance.

It is remarkable that nobles, who confronted Peter’s initiative to introduce primogeniture in 1714 (even achieving its cancellation in 1731) asked Catherine the Great to assign their estates with the Majorat status in 1774. Catherine II did not support the idea of primogeniture and Majorats. Contrary to Peter I, she thought that “partible inheritance nonetheless served State interests more effectively ensuring adequate material means for more people including daughters and widows”. The land ascribed as Majorat could not be confiscated or sold as payment for debt and could only be indivisibly inherited by the eldest son.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, petitions became more frequent. In 1845, Majorats were observed in law, but there were limitations on which estates were ascribed as possessing Majorat status. This meant that in practical terms, the law was not often enforced. The Law of Majorats, rather than easing the transition from an estate free for disposition to a Majorat estate, instead set the acceptable criteria so specifically that only 1 percent of noble estates could actually be registered as “Majorats.” The rule was as follows: the estate should be more than 10 thousand desiatin (a land measurement used in Tsarist Russia, 1 desiatin

349 Wortman: ‘Property Rights’, p. 16.
350 PZSRI, Sobranie I, Tom 8, art. 5717 (March, 1731), Imennyi - O imenovanii pomestii i votchine nedvizhimym imeniem i o razdele onykh mezhdu detmi po Ulozheniu.
351 Wagner, Marriage, Property, and Law, p. 237.
roughly equalled 2.7 acres), provide at least 12,000 roubles of revenue, and each Majorat needed to be accepted and approved by the Tsar. Under these regulations, between 1845 and 1899 only 60 estates were assigned as Majorats. For comparison, between 1801 and 1845 only fourteen were granted Majorat status. In 1899, Nicolas II lowered in two times both the required revenue and the required size of the estate. As a result, between 1899 and 1917 30 patrimonial estates were assigned Majorat status.\(^{352}\)

The noble monopoly on land de-facto lasted only 20 years, from 1782 to 1801. In 1801, Catherine’s grandson Alexander I granted all subjects (except serfs) the right to buy land. Until the end of the Russian Empire, however, property rights legislation did not overcome its feudal and socially exclusive nature. Serfs were banned from possessing land and buildings in 1730 and later, in 1754 and 1766 they were prohibited from accepting inheritance shares. They only regained their land ownership rights over a century later in 1848.\(^{353}\)

Millions of peasants and serfs, though civilly freed by law in 1861, owed debts to landowners who were locked within rural corporations. They were bound by the joint responsibility to pay redemption payments not for their personal, but instead, their proprietary freedom. In this respect, the basic understanding of feudal-serf relations in regards to freedom was established by the Decree on Free Ploughmen in 1803 (Ustav o vol’nykh khlebopashtsakh), which was re-established in 1861. As before, a noble could free his serfs with land under the condition of payment or assured work. During the reign of Alexander I, landowners freed less than 1 percent of their serfs and their families.

Nevertheless, based on the many arrangements, actions and legal regulations between 1877 and 1905, the proportion of land owned by nobles (in comparison to the whole of private land ownership) decreased from 79.9 to 62.1 percent. At the same time, the proportion of land privately owned by peasants increased from 5.5 to 15.1 percent.\(^{354}\) While nobles held the majority of the land, peasants outnumbered other sosloviia in private landownership after the abolition of serfdom. In 1877, while a quarter of landowners were nobles, peasants comprised more than half of all landowners (23.8 and 56.7 percent respectively). By 1905 the proportion of landowning nobles decreased, while the proportion of peasant landowners increased by 10 percent.\(^{355}\)

\(^{352}\) Becker, Mif o russkom dvorianstve, p. 113.
\(^{354}\) Becker, Mif o russkom dvorianstve, p. 62, Table 9.
\(^{355}\) Becker, Mif o russkom dvorianstve, p. 62, Table 9.
The Stolypin land Reform (1906-1917) aimed to restore social justice by including, along with the privatisation of communal land owed to peasants who sought independent possession, income extraction and disposition of land in general. As with the nobility, peasant civil rights were separate from property rights. Peasants, while no longer the property of nobles, still had limited rights and opportunities to buy land. Land redistribution, however, was very slow: official data suggests that by 1915 only one third of all communal peasants who could claim personal property rights, did.\(^\text{356}\)

The opportunity to be free and prosper in Imperial society was granted to the upper end of the social ladder (aristocrats) at the cost of the lower social estates (serfs). This explains why personal property rights were not extended to the peasantry. Instead they became the subjects of property rights and were assigned object status (serfs became noble resources). The inequality of personal property rights is one common reason for high wealth inequality.

### 3.1.2. Urban Residential and Commercial Property

As explained above, in rural areas property rights were socially exclusive which should have resulted in higher levels of material inequality. Recently, however, several scholars have found that the social exclusivity of property rights in law were quite flexible and as a result the level of material inequality was higher in towns than in rural areas, and furthermore, the gap constantly and consistently increased.\(^\text{357}\) For example, in Moscow between 1684 and 1728 the Gini coefficient increased from .38 to .54. In general, for urban areas where data is available, B. I. Mironov has shown that between 1811 and 1861 the Gini coefficient increased from .073 to .77.\(^\text{358}\) While there is no comparable data for later periods, Mironov suggests that the level of inequality “apparently increased” with time.\(^\text{359}\) Though he does not provide a detailed commentary, Mironov implies that the general increase of material inequality in urban areas was because merchants lost their monopoly on trade. I suggest, however, that the increase in inequality should be ascribed to the remarkable increase in the size of the urban population, the majority of which were poor rural migrants. In 1892 peasants composed half of the Moscow urban population but their proportion in the group of property holders was moderate at 13.7

\(^{356}\) For a more subtle discussion about the status and limitations of peasants’ landownership see Ivanova, N.A., Zheltova, V.P., *Soslovno-klassovaia struktura*, p. 152.


\(^{359}\) Mironov, *Sotsialnaia istoriia Rossi*, p. 121.
percent and they received only 10 per cent of the net income from individually owned Moscow real estate (Table 3.1). In this context, it seems plausible that the overall level of material inequality would be high. However, assigned in 1863 the freedom of commercial occupations (membership in the merchant guilds) probably lowered wealth inequality because anyone was free to trade or launch enterprises.

Given this situation, I question how, if at all, did property regimes in urban areas could influence the level of material inequality? Were property rights in towns as socially exclusive and feudal as in rural areas? Similarly, were legal regulations enforced differently with regards to rural and urban private property? The answer on the last question is that, clearly, they were not. This was not because the authorities tried to be consistent and legally unbiased, but rather because Russian legislation never overcame its feudal, patrimonial character. As a result, up until 1917, legislation was intensely preoccupied with peasants and nobles, much more so than with the urban population and their proprietary interests.

During the eighteenth century, rulers were preoccupied with the idea of ordering and organizing Russian society through ascribing exclusive rights and obligations to every social group. When it came to the extraction of profit from commercial and industrial development, however, legislation was very flexible, and exclusivity was more elastic. For example, Peter the Great was known for his attempts at creating strict social order, but in 1723 allowed literally anyone to establish any kind of industrial enterprise, but they first needed approval from the Collegium of Manufacturing. Later, in 1775, Catherine the Great annulled the mandatory approval from the Collegium and restored the freedom to establish enterprises, but instead individuals were required to purchase a guild merchant (or trade) certificate. Thus, if previous limitations applied to some types of entrepreneurial activity, in 1775 the State introduced a social monopoly on trade and production. Monopolies on property rights (as was the case with the nobility) and social exclusivity in occupation were formal traits at the time. While nobles enjoyed a monopoly on land ownership from 1785 until 1824, they were banned from establishing enterprises in urban areas. They were, however, free to do so in rural areas.

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360 *Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, Sobranie I, Tom 7 (1723-1727)* (SPb, 1830), art. 4378 (December, 1723), Imennoi Reglament Manufaktur - kollegii.
361 *Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, Sobranie I, Tom 20 (1775 - 1780)* (SPb, 1830), art. 14275 (March, 1775), Manifest - O Vysochaishe darovannykh raznym sosloviiam milostiakh, po sluchaiu zakluchennago mira s Portoiu Ottomanskoiu.
362 *PSZRI, Sobranie I, Tom 39*, art. 30115, par. 92, 104 (November, 1824), Dopолнительное постановление о учреждении подобных жалуемых на устаноovлених промышленных жалуемых; *PSZRI, Sobranie I, Tom 22*, art. 16187, par. 28 (April, 1785), Gramota na prava, volnosti i preimushchestva blagorodnago Rossii kago Dvorianstva.
1842 anyone, irrespective their social origin, was free to establish any enterprise regardless of size and output.

The clear turn from social exclusivity to more flexible social boundaries in urban areas became obvious after the 1824 reform of guild merchant taxation. The disproportionately high limitations and social segregation of commercial agents established by the law were inconsistent with the economic realities in Russia. The law demonstrated that the authorities no longer understood commercial agency as a socially exclusive activity. Instead, commercial activity became legally universal. Yet, it took another three quarters of a century for the boundaries between social and economic statuses to be broken (this occurred in 1898, for a more detailed discussion of the issue see Chapter 1).

Before 1824 all citizens were free to own residential real estate of any valuation. After the 1824 introduction of the new system of merchant taxation, the authorities set the limits on the value of urban residential estates. Though guild merchant regulations were later lessened, restrictions on the value of urban real estate remained. Ordinary city dwellers could own estates valued below 15,000 paper roubles. If the value exceeded the limit allowed the owner was required to purchase a merchant patent of at least the third guild. The value of real estate owned by trading meshchane could not exceed 25,000 paper roubles and houses valued above 25,000 were only allowed to merchants in the first two guilds. Merchant widows with unmarried daughters could have a house valued above 25,000 paper roubles, but only under a merchant patent of the third guild. Before 1822, urban dwellers and merchants were prohibited from owning real estate in the rural areas. As of 1827, peasants (though not serfs) were allowed to purchase property and to build houses in cities and towns with full ownership rights. Ownership of urban real estate, however, did not free peasants from their rural obligations and taxes. Those who combined rural and urban property ownership and social statuses were also doubly taxed. Nobles were officially granted the right to build and to purchase residential urban

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363 Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, Sobranie II, Tom 15 (1840) Part 1 (SPb, 1841), art. 13551 (June, 1840), Vysochaishe utverzhdennoe mnenie Gossudarstvennago Soveta O platezhe kupecheskimi vdomami i docherni koi vladeiut v stolitsakh domami, stoishchimi bolee 25000 rublei, glideiskikh povinnosti.

364 Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, Sobranie I, Tom 38 (1822-1823) (SPb, 1830), art. 29145 (July, 1822), Senatskii Ob obiazaannostiah kuptsov i meshchan, imeiushchikh zhitelstvo v kazennykh i pomeshchichikh seleniakh.

365 Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, Sobranie II, Tom 2 (1827) (SPb, 1830), art. 1559 (November, 1827), Vysochaishe utverzhdennoe mnenie Gosudarstvennago Soveta. - O dozvolenii Udelnym i kazennym krestianam stroit i pokupat domy v gorodakh, krome stolits.
real estate in 1785.\textsuperscript{366} It was only 1827, however, that they were free to join all merchant guilds (before they were allowed to be enrolled in the first guild) and to own commercial enterprises of any size.

This short introduction to the history of urban real estate ownership demonstrates that despite the clear difference between rural and urban property, both were socially exclusive until at least the first quarter of the nineteenth century. According to Konstantin A. Nevolin, a notable Imperial legal expert, “the history of personal property rights in the Russian Empire is the history of the legislation of social statuses (sostoaniia)”\textsuperscript{367} This was the case in 1857 when he wrote his commentary on the evolution of civil and property rights. The late 1850s, however, was a time when property ownership was slowly evolving from a socially exclusive issue to the matter of material well-being and personal achievements. Yet, the contradiction between sosloviia membership as a social versus economic category remained. In other words, Russian authorities had contradictory attitudes when it came to the concepts of “personal property ownership as granted by the authorities via socially exclusive privilege” and “personal property as part of individual civil rights.” This contradiction was never resolved.

While the social limitations on property ownership in urban areas were less exclusive and long-lasting than in rural areas, by the end of the nineteenth century the disproportion in property ownership was still impacted by the social origin of the owner (Table 3.1).

\textsuperscript{366} PSZRI, Sobranie I, Tom 22, art. 16187, par. 30 (April, 1785), Gramota na prava, volnosti i preimushchestva blagorodnago Rossiikago Dvorianstva.

\textsuperscript{367} Nevolin, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, p. 1.
Table 3.1 Relations between the number of Muscovites by soslovie in 1882 and the proportions of the number of real estate owners, the number of properties in private ownership and the value of extracted net income in 1892

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soslovie</th>
<th>Proportion of soslovie members to Moscow population</th>
<th>Proportion of real estate holders</th>
<th>Proportion of the real estate</th>
<th>Proportion of net income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Merchants and honorary citizens</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>45.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.092</td>
<td>4,603</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meshchane</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.126</td>
<td>3,607</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobles</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.905</td>
<td>2,326</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peasants</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,657</td>
<td>1,942</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11,223</td>
<td>14,138</td>
<td>27,287.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


(figures listed in percent and absolute numbers)

In Moscow, the merchants and honorary citizens soslovie illustrate the disproportionate relationship between the number of soslovie members, the number of real estate owners and the value of extracted income. While merchants and honorary citizens made up only 4.2 percent of the Moscow population, this group owned a third of all real estate and extracted nearly half of the net income received by all real estate holders in Moscow (Table 3.1).368 Additionally, data on the level of material inequality between citizens who satisfied the income/property qualifications of voters in Moscow in 1883-1884,369 suggests that the wealthiest individuals composed only 2.2 percent of Muscovites. Yet, they paid 66.7 percent of taxes.370 This shows that the level of income/wealth inequality in Moscow was substantial.

368 The following approximate calculations are intended to contextualise the disproportion between the number of families (if we accept the assumption that a family rather than a single member household would purchase urban real estate) and also accept (1) that the number of Moscow households in 1897 was 111,659, (2) that the average number of family members per household in Moscow at the time of the census was 3.8 (see Valetov, T.), (3) that the number of Moscow soslovie members of both sexes in the Moskovskaiia burzuazia v nachale XX veka: predprinimatelstvo i politika 1882 were as follows (in thousand): 370,200 peasants, 181,200 meshchane, 22,900 merchants, 55,800 nobles. The average number of family members shows the number of peasant families/ households was about 93,000, merchants’ households were calculated at 6,900, meshchane households at 45,000 and noble households 14,000.

369 Property was the main qualification. Voters or candidates for the municipal government were expected to have urban real estate or be registered as a guild merchant. They also needed to be over 25 years old and male. If the candidate was accepted as a guild merchant (i.e. basing only on socio-occupational status) , he had to have lived in the city for at least 2 years.

370 Mironov, Sotsialnaia istoriia Rossii, p. 121.
The average number of Moscow merchant households at that time was around 6,000, half of which (3,092) held real estate in Moscow. In contrast, only 1.7 percent of Moscow peasants, which composed half of the Muscovite population, owned real estate the city. Only 7 percent of Moscow meshchane families owned real estate. In terms of the value of net income, per one estate the nobles topped the list at 3,224 roubles, then merchants at 2,715, followed by peasants at 875 and finally meshchane (among the main sosloviia I have discussed), at 804 roubles.\footnote{Pervaia Vseobshchaia perepis naseleniia Rossiiskoi Imperii 1897 g., vol. XXIV, book 1 (g. Moskva) (SPb, 1901), p. 4; Valetov, T. Y., ‘Households in the Russian Empire: Extended or Nuclear Families?’, ISSH-Research Paper, 44 (2005), pp. 3–17, p. 12; Rashin, Naselenie Rossii, p. 125; Petrov, Moskovskiaia burzhuaia, p. 68.}

In Moscow, the high proportion of peasants, the moderate number of original city dwellers, and high material inequality was exceptional and due to the city’s status as the second capital. For example, in the towns of the Moscow province the average proportion of meshchane in the urban areas could be as high as 60 percent. By the value and proportions of the real estate ownership, however, the provincial cities very much resembled Moscow in that real estate was predominately held by merchants.\footnote{Dolgopiatov, A. V., ‘Domovladienie meshchan gorodov Moskovskoi gubernii v poreformennyi period’, Vestnik Tomskogo Gosuvtstvennogo Universiteta. OBshchenauchnyi zhurnal, 329 (2009), pp. 90–94.}

The question which still remains is if wealth inequality in urban areas was higher due to the prevalence of acquired property and the almost unlimited freedom of ownership, or if it was a side-effect of low and slow urbanisation. Or can the answer to this question be found in looking at other issues or factors?

Elise K. Wirtschafter, an expert in social identities in the Russian Empire, suggests that until the very end of the long nineteenth century, the status of the individual was defined by land ownership.\footnote{Wirtschafter, Social identity, p. 11.} In the Russian Empire, a country with a low urbanisation rate, the elevated status of urban social estates, which was only about 15 percent of land owned,\footnote{Between 1877 and 1905 the proportion of landowners among merchants and meshchane in relation to all landowners did not change.} was questionable.\footnote{Becker, Mif o russkom dvorianstve, p. 62, Table 9.} Data on the value of personal incomes derived from land and urban real estate, however, may suggest otherwise. By the end of the nineteenth century only 13 percent of the population permanently lived in the urban areas. Yet the similarities in the number and income extracted from the land and urban real estate holders is remarkable. In 1905, a survey of high-level\footnote{The annual value of the estate.} income earners showed that there were 59,681 landed estate owners and 57,864 urban estate owners who, respectively, received 355,582.60 and 264,579.60 roubles annually.\footnote{Opyt priblizitelnogo ischisleniia narodnogo dokhoda (1906), pp. VIII, XIV.}
Real estate provided its owners with some privileges and the exceptional right to participate in local self-government. Though nobles enjoyed a monopoly on land ownership but were limited in their right to transfer it voluntary, the merchant class held different advantages. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the exclusivity of land ownership rights and professional occupation categories (which provided exceptional privileges) was diminishing. In 1801, all individuals (with the exception of serfs) could purchase land, and by 1824 any individual could purchase a merchant patent. In Russian towns, the officially proclaimed primary importance of social origins, economic and social privileges used to be rather purchased than granted or inherited.

As I explained in the previous section, Catherine the Great introduced modern understandings of private property ownership and individual freedoms, took hereditary status away from guild merchants, and introduced income and property qualifications as the basis for the selection of candidates for municipal government. The difference from the previous policy under Peter the Great was that he had divided the urban population into several strata according to occupation and status, whereas Catherine II made wealth and property ownership (and later the proportion of taxes paid into the city’s budget) the basis for participation in urban civil society. In that sense, Catherine II was quite consistent: The Charter of Cities in 1785 accepted the nobility as city residents only if they owned real estate. Nobles, along with meshchane, had to pay equal taxes but were also free from personal taxes and service. Later acts affirmed and further developed the idea of cities, as opposed to rural areas, as places where wealth and property ownership determined individual status rather than social origins. Thus, if in the 1750s through 1775 citizens were defined as members of different professional categories, by the end of the century this type of citizenship lost its exclusively professional meaning. Instead, citizenship was determined by status and wealth. The Charter provided many ways to be included in urban society (obshchestvo gradskoe), but only those with a net income over 50 roubles could be elected and could vote, while all others could only attend local civil meetings. The next urban act of 1870 firmly established the priority of real estate in gaining

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378 PSZRI, Sobranie I, Tom 22, art. 16187, par. 13 (April, 1785), Gramota na prava, volnosti i preimushchestva blagorodnago Rossiikago Dvorianstva.
379 PSZRI, Sobranie I, Tom 22, art. 16187, par. 77, 138 (April, 1785), Gramota na prava, volnosti i preimushchestva blagorodnago Rossiikago Dvorianstva.
380 PSZRI, Sobranie I, Tom 22, art. 16187, par. 49–50 (April, 1785), Gramota na prava, volnosti i preimushchestva blagorodnago Rossiikago Dvorianstva.
citizenship and participation in city government. In 1892, the last Imperial urban act elevated property and income qualifications for electoral candidates so that only the wealthiest citizens could be elected into city government.

Peter the Great officially introduced the difference between movable and immovable property which established the boundary between property which could be sold and property which could be indivisibly transferred to a single male inheritor. This law was apparently only intended for landed aristocrats and “property” was used as a synonym for land. The chance, at that time, that any other population group could possess the material well-being to significantly impact the State, was marginal. The incredibly small number of wealthy merchants (along with their inheritance and asset management strategies) were of peripheral interest to the regime. Data on the urbanisation rate provides further evidence for this assertion. Between 1700 and 1750 the number of cities in Russia with 5,000 or more residents increased from 17 to 46 and the number of urban inhabitants grew from 325,000 to 712,000 people. The urbanisation rate grew from 2.1 to 2.5 percent.

Konstantin Pobedenostsev, one of the most important legal experts of the nineteenth century, listed several reasons for the secondary status of acquired property laws. These reasons included a poor definition of the law, low economic development, and the concentration of landownership (as the most valuable personal asset in the form of patrimonial property) among the nobility. According to Pobedenostsev, “all other topics of Russian inheritance law are fragmented and distinguished by an absence or extreme paucity of definitions, without clearly communicating with the main ideas”. He also associated the poor legal definition with “an extreme simplicity and scarcity of economic life, where agriculture prevails over industry and capital grows slowly”.

Individual property (i.e. independent from kin or community ownership) rather than patrimonial ownership was more common in urban areas and legally established in 1649.

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381 Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, Sobranie II, Tom 45 (1870) (SPb, 1867), art. 48 498 (June 1870), Vysochaishe utverzhdennoe Gorodovoe Polozhenie.
382 Nevolin, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, pp. 12–13. PSZRI, Sobranie I, Tom 5, art. 2789 (March, 1714), O poriadke nasledovaniia v dvizhimykh i nedvizhimykh imushchestvakh. Clearly, other property besides the landed estate was recognised long before 1712. That being said, movable property was mainly mentioned in church records and its earliest mention dates back to 1317. Movable property was titled zhivot, tovar, or zhizn’.
384 Pobedonostsev, Kurs Grazhdanskogo prava, pp. 482–490.
385 Pobedonostsev, Kurs Grazhdanskogo prava, par. 37.
386 Pobedonostsev, Kurs Grazhdanskogo prava, par. 37.
Before 1785, however, all property relations were associated with kin. Catherine II introduced a more modern and perhaps Protestant definition: urban property could not only be passed or purchased from relatives but could also be earned through hard work and personal initiative or “decency”. With the concepts of “decent behaviour” and “hard work”, Catherine II provided the urban population a “middling status” (srednego roda ludey) which included the privilege of disposing personally acquired property voluntarily.

Nevertheless, until 1917, inherited property was automatically patrimonial and could not be freely disposed as an inheritance bequest. Once obtained under the right of full ownership, however, property could be disposed of freely. Owners may not have extensively abused the right to sell patrimonial property because they often wanted to provide their inheritors with a means of living and status. Based on the third revision (poll-tax census) of the population in the Central Russia (1761-1767), Sergei Chernikov came to the conclusion that (1) 71 percent of property was transferred through inheritance to members of the nuclear family of the testator and (2) 40 percent of nobles in the late eighteenth century were successfully able to manage patrimonial property inter and intra-generationally thanks to the acquisition of new landed property and peasants. This was because after 1714 the State fund of available land grants for nobles had been exhausted. Chernikov suggested that in previous scholarship the extent of confiscations and repressive State policies in land mobilisation has been highly overestimated.

3.1.3. Women Property Rights

The life of the average Russian woman in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was divided into three parts: prior to marriage (where a woman would live in her parental house and was obedient to her parents), marriage (in which she would live with her husband and be obedient to him), and finally as a widow (in which she would live independently or with her children, with full freedom). Even in Medieval Russia, however, there was separate property

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387 PSZRI, Sobranie I, Tom 22, art. 16187, par. 80 (April, 1785), Gramota na prava, volnosti i preimushchestva blagorodnago Rossiikago Dvorianstva.
388 PSZRI, Sobranie I, Tom 22, art. 16187, par. 88 (April, 1785), Gramota na prava, volnosti i preimushchestva blagorodnago Rossiikago Dvorianstva.
management in marriages. From at least the sixteenth century, the lives of daughters and wives were controlled by a set of household rules, the *Domostroi*. The lives of all individuals, but especially women, were dominated by submission to God, the Tsar, the Orthodox Church and to the head of the family. Women were dependant subjects who needed to display “unlimited obedience” to the male head of the family, and make his life comfortable and pleasant.\(^{390}\) *Domostroi* rules were included, almost word for word, in Volume X of the Digest of Laws of the Russian Empire published in 1834.

Outside of marriage and the parental household, Russian women ostensibly had almost the same property rights as Russian men. In the context of almost total nuptiality, high rates of female maternal mortality, and moderate life expectancy in general limited women’s chances to exercise their property rights. Also, in the seventeenth century, women who received *pomest’e* as dowry legally transferred their property rights to their future husband, even before marriage. After the transfer, the prospective bride lost all dowry property rights.\(^{391}\) Since, in the seventeenth century, the majority of land was held by the State (*pomest’ia*), dowries did not add any inherent value to women’s assets. That being said, it is remarkable that the law of 1679 prohibited husbands from selling or mortgaging their wives’ estates under his name.\(^{392}\)

The law of 1715 permitted women to draft and sign for the purchase of real estate deeds in their own name.\(^{393}\) In practice, however, neither the act of 1679 nor the act of 1715 freed women from requiring permission from the male head of the family to sell or purchase real estate and land.\(^{394}\) The 1731 law did allow women to inherit patrimonial real estate.\(^{395}\) In 1753 noblewomen gained the legal right to property received as dowry, personally purchased or inherited.\(^{396}\) In 1753 Russian women enjoyed equal right to men in purchasing and managing personal assets. Legal discussions about the real extent of women’s property rights, in addition to the small number of legal cases where wives sued husbands over the sale or mismanagement


\(^{391}\) Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, Sobranie I, Tom 2 (1676 - 1688) (SPb, 1830), art. 1008 (April, 1683), Imennyi s Boiarskim prigovorom. - O povorote posle bezdetno umershikh zhen pomestii ikh rodstvennikam, kogda ony dany byli vmensto pridanago.

\(^{392}\) PSZRI, Sobranie I, Tom 2, art. 751 (February, 1679), Boiarskii prigovor. - O zapreshchenii muzhiam prodavat i zakladvat svoim imenem vtschiny zhen svoikh, bez ikh soglasia.

\(^{393}\) PSZRI, Sobranie I, Tom 5, art. 2952 (November, 1715), Senatskii. - O pozvolenii pisat kupchiia i zakladyvati svoim imenem vtschiny, bez ikh soglasia.

\(^{394}\) Marrese, *Babe tsarstvo*, p. 76.

\(^{395}\) PSZRI, Sobranie I, Tom 8, art. 5717 (March, 1731), Imennyi. - O imenovanii i votchine nedvizhimim imeni i o razdele onykh mezhdu detmi po Ulozheniu.

\(^{396}\) Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, Sobranie I, Tom 13 (1749 - 1753) (SPb, 1830), art. 10111 (June, 1753), Senatskii. - O poriadke soversheniia krepostei ot imeni vladeltsov oboego pola na sobstvennoe imenie kazhdogo bez razlichii.
of her estate, show that Domostroi rules were upheld until 1917. Surprisingly, at the beginning of the twentieth century, single, unmarried women who were property owners had more public and legal support than wives who could presumably violate family or civil regulations. A woman’s word, even if she provided her family with the main means of living, did not make any legal difference.

Paradoxically, Domostroi and the importance of the spiritual guidance of the Orthodox Church was not the primary reason behind the duality in civil and proprietary treatment of Russian women. When, in the mid-sixteenth century, authorities divided the administration of public and private affairs (i.e. the domain of the Church and the secular authorities), family affairs involving women with children were assigned to ecclesiastical authorities. Alternatively, all other spheres of family life were assigned to secular authorities. Women’s property ownership and management were formally regulated by secular authorities, but the status of property acquired via marriage was questionable (as to who regulated the issue). Before Peter the Great’s secular reforms, both religious and secular authorities resolved these (family and proprietary) conflicts (mostly) peacefully.

In addition, the marginal amount of privately held land and underdeveloped private property legislation meant that there were very few women who could legitimately question the violation of their rights. This changed when Peter the Great tried scale back the importance of ecclesiastical authorities in the everyday practices of the population. Peter I’s secularisation of ecclesiastical authority was answered by a disproportionate increase in limitations and interdictions on women. Civil courts, however, remained tolerant when it came to women’s property rights. Ironically, it was far easier to punish a husband who mismanaged his wife’s personal property than to divorce a physically abusive husband.

Nevertheless, women were legally free to purchase and to sell real estate. Yet, daughters of marriageable age who lived with their parents, as well as married women (irrespective their social origins) were prohibited from signing promissory notes regarding property until 1914.

397 Marrese: ‘Gender and the Legal Order’.
401 Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, Sobranie II, Tom 7 (1832) (SPb, 1867), art. 5462 (July, 1832), Vysochaishe utverzhdenyyi Ustav o Vekseliakh.
Nevertheless, the 1863 reform of the guild merchanty permitted female merchants who were the heads of the family to sign promissory notes in their own name. The tone, implication and general tenor of the legal regulations and court proceedings serve to create the impression that while women in the Russian Empire were recognised as equal to men in terms of property rights, they, however, were never fully independent public and economic entities. But Galina Ulianova, Michelle L. Marreze, Nada Boshkovska, Alison Smith and other scholars suggest otherwise. Women were actually actively engaged in commerce and property management. The act of 1753 introduced gender-neutral property ownership and while it did not solve the disproportionate property ownership between men and women (and did not aim to increase the independence of Russian noble wives), it did solidify the boundaries of noble private property rights with respect to relatives and authorities. In the European context, however, this act looked far more progressive and liberal than it was intended to be. While the legal definition of property rights varied substantially from country to country, women only received real rights of full ownership after being widowed. Additionally, inheritance after the death (legitim) of the male head of the family in the majority of European countries (as in Russia) did not necessarily make women’s lives more comfortable. They were, however, technically freer from a legal and civil standpoint.

The extent to which female property rights in the Russian empire resulted in more moderate wealth inequality is an open question. It seems logical, however, that when more people are able to enjoy personal property rights, the level of material inequality should decrease. To my knowledge, there is no specific and comprehensive empirical research about material inequality between men and women in the Russian Empire. Yet there is still some indirect evidence which provides general insight. First, at the end of the nineteenth century, only 4 percent of widowed women and 23 percent of men re-married after the death of their spouse. Secondly, the proportion of women aged 50 and older was significantly higher than men over 50 (see Chapter

402 Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, Sobranie II, Tom 38 (1863) (SPb, 1863), art. 39118, par. 7 (January 1863), Vysochaishe utverzhdennoe Polozhenie o poshlinakh za pravo torgovli i drugikh promyshlev.
404 Perkin, J., Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England (London, 1989), pp. 71, 74. In nineteenth century Britain, for example, only 10 percent of married British women had independent income sources.
5). Third, in 1897 the proportion of people who had not married by age 50 was marginal (3 percent of men and 4 percent of women out of the entire Russian population, and 11 percent men and 12 percent of women in urban areas).\textsuperscript{406} Theoretically, this meant that the majority of women were married (and likely had a dowry) and that they outlived their husbands and never re-married. Therefore, after the death of her husband, a woman could receive her mandatory share of the inheritance from her spouse, including the patrimonial estate and other property (this was common among merchants, see Chapter 4 for a more in-depth discussion of this topic). Thus, it could be argued that the combination of extended female personal property rights and demographic factors had an impact on the comparatively low level of material inequality among the Russian population.

3.1.4. Social Meaning of Property

In nineteenth century Europe the concepts of social and economic meanings of property was among the issues which extended wealth inequality. While the economic meaning of property usually favoured risky investments and is simply about levels of income or savings (and is thus implicitly unstable), property endowed with social meaning is rooted in stability, continuity, investment, re-investment and transfer through inheritance. If classic economics relates to personal assets impersonally, meaning individuals are ready to buy when prices are low and sell when prices are high, in reality individuals rarely act in this manner. Instead, their behaviour is based on personal interests and ideas about money and property. Actions are primarily based on social objects and interpersonal relationships. Only after these considerations can property be conceived of as a means of exchange and profit maximalisation. Classical economists rarely bother themselves with the issue of personal values in money management. Behavioural economists and sociologists, on the contrary, try to connect objective and subjective issues of assets management. Sociologist Viviana A. Zelizer, for example, was one of the first (and still the most cited) scholars who clearly established the social dimension of money. According to Zelizer, people spend money from various sources differently and monetary behaviour varies from one social strata to another.\textsuperscript{407}

The fixation of the European petite bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century on “real”, rather than movable property was a response to the insecurity of small business ownership and the

\textsuperscript{406} Mironov, \textit{Sotsialnaia istoriia Rossii}, p. 172.
\textsuperscript{407} Zelizer, V. A., \textit{The Social Meaning of Money. Pin Money, Paychecks, Poor Relief, and other Currencies} (New Jersey, 1997).
fragility of economic networks which were a “source of continuing anxiety”. Geoffrey Crossic suggests that reliance on male inheritors was the best possible strategy to secure small businesses because “the core relationship of business was not a married couple but rather a farther and son”. Financial insecurity and the fear of losing social status forced small shopkeepers and artisans to exaggerate the social meaning of property through securing it at any price. Patrimonial ideas about business security and succession likely affected the ways personal assets were divided among inheritors, the place of a wife in inheritance transfers, and probably influenced wealth inequality in urban areas. Financial insecurity and the fear of losing social status forced small shopkeepers and artisans to exaggerate the social meaning of property through securing it at any price.

The lives of Russian small shopkeepers also revolved around the social meaning of property. They treasured everything which provided or could provide them with feelings of stability and security. Though membership in the meshchane soslovie was hereditary and merchants were free to have urban real estate, the endless struggle with peasants and merchants over trade and production, combined with low urbanisation and a limited internal market, made them as anxious as their European peers.

The nobility, with their personal and property rights, were at the other end of the wealth and material well-being spectrum. I suggest that, based on devotion to the social value of property, their behaviour very much resembled that of the meshchane. Scholar’s opinions on this issue, however, remain divided. Ekaterina Pravilova, for example, suggests that the context and terms of land ownership suppressed the perception of property as the main means of social relationships. Specifically, she comments that “the concept of property was interpreted with great emphasis on individualism and far less on property’s social meaning”. This idea was challenged by Elena S. Korchmina. Korchmina based her empirical research on the personal accounting records of Central Russian nobles and suggested the nobles endowed their property with a high portion of social value. Contrary to Pravilova, Korchmina demonstrates that nobles were keenly aware of their sources of income and connected these sources of income with

409 Dolgopiatov: ‘Domovладение meshchan’.
410 Pravilova, Public Empire, p. 10.
certain types of spending habits. For example, a tailor’s invoice could not be payed from some sources of income but could with others.⁴¹¹

While land ownership was a certain means of status for nobles, less than half of noble families were successful in sustaining it through individual land purchases.⁴¹² Importantly, however, the low survival rate of noble families over successive generations was not only due to extended difficulties in money and property management, but also because the nature of State-noble land relationships changed in 1714. As Sergei V. Chernikov has shown, Peter the Great’s introduction of the single-male inheritance system is usually explained as an attempt to save noble estates from fragmentation. The main impetus for this law, however, was the exhaustion of free land available to grant to the nobility. The tradition of partible inheritance transmission among Russian nobles only survived so long as authorities could continue granting land. When, in 1831, the law of single-male inheritance was abolished, the pre-1714 land granting system was not restored. During the reign of Catherine II, however, the State’s regulations on land grants were extended.

Contrary to small shopkeepers who invested social meanings in property by keeping it indivisible through generations, nobles, whose status depended on land ownership, divided estates equally even when they could dispose of property voluntary. To keep social status and ensure income from the land, some successors found that the optimal way to balance the economic and social meaning of landed property was managing an inherited estate together: every successor held a share.⁴¹³ While I know of no direct data on the number of probated inheritances and the number of property divisions, there is still some indirect evidence available. In 1889, in the internal provinces of the Russian Empire, where about 12,000 inheritances were probated, the number of divisions did not exceed 1,000 (60 percent of which were in rural areas).⁴¹⁴

The mechanisms which shaped the social meaning of property for Russian merchants will be extensively examined in my chapter on inheritance strategies. It is worth noting here, however, that uninheritable soslovie membership and the risky nature of commercial agency endowed merchants’ property with different types of social meaning. Property was accumulated and managed not as a means of kin reproduction or the reproduction of social

⁴¹² Chernikov: ‘Chernikov 2016’.
⁴¹³ Prikhodno-raskhodnye knigi naslednikov D. S. Karneeva ((1879-1880)).
⁴¹⁴ Wagner, Marriage, Property, and Law, pp. 251-252, Table 6.5-6.6.
status, but rather as a guarantee of successors survival depending on their economic potential and hard work.

3.2. Property Transfer Without Consideration

Wealth, according to economists, in general, is derived from two sources: inherited wealth (transferred from previous generations) and current income (i.e. wealth accumulated by savings).\footnote{Wedgwood, J., \textit{The Economics of Inheritance.} Kennikat Press scholarly reprints. Series on economic thought, history and challenge (Port Washington N.Y., 1971), p. 213.} The prevailing proportion or change in proportion of each source of wealth is mitigated by the role of the State, legal regulations, and social stratification. Changes in sources of wealth and income also affect the level of material inequality and show how global events such as economic crises, war and economic booms influenced personal living standards and material inequality in a given country or region.

Laws regarding property transfer without consideration (here I mean inheritance and gifts inter vivos) is a very subtle area of legislation because legal experts seek to find a compromise between the moral responsibility of property owners (parents), family relationships and the State interests of social stability and economic development. While legal experts and economists agree that inheritance, by its very nature, is meant to secure the future of descendants and provide means of living for dependants, they focus on different aspects of the property transmission process. Legal experts primarily pay attention to the nature, customs and family structure of a society, or the pre-conditions of property and other inheritable benefits transmission. Economists, however, are mainly concerned with the outcomes of property transmission, inheritance strategies, different factors which shape testator’s choices, and to what extent the past shapes the future. Economists also consider the timing of inheritance bequests (in this case life expectancy, gifts inter vivos) in wealth accumulation.

In this section I seek to provide a new perspective on the legal context of the testamentary process in the Russian Empire. I consider why, though Russia and Britain enjoyed similar testation freedoms and fees, this nevertheless did not result in comparable levels of wealth and income inequality. Similarly, despite different inheritance legislation, France and Britain shared close levels of wealth inequality.\footnote{Morrisson, C. and Snyder, W., \textit{The Income Inequality of France in Historical Perspective}, European Review of Economic History, 4, 1 (2000), pp. 59–83, p. 76; Nafziger and Lindert, \textit{Russian Inequality}, appendix. In 1837 Britain adopted the law of testamentary freedom. In Russia, from 1875 (de-facto) and

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expectations draw inequality in opposite directions? Does this mean that inheritance plays (or played) a marginal role in wealth reproduction and did not significantly influence material inequality? Or do other factors, such as the general appreciation of property rights, individual freedoms, the level of urbanisation, industrialisation etc. play a more important and dominant role than intergenerational wealth transfers? Finally, when, or at what stage of State cultural and economic development, do property transfers without consideration start to influence the shape of the social and economic status of an individual, family and nation?

Scholars rarely mention that after 1775 all fees on last wills were cancelled in the Russian Empire. Similarly, between 1808 and 1882 fees on property transfers to close relatives without consideration were not charged. From 1831 the evaluation of property, apart from land, was officially free of administrative control and in charge of the inheritors. Unfortunately, this was not the manifestation of proprietary freedom and the way to boost family material well-being. On the contrary, it was more an act to free the overworked bureaucrats from extra duties and the state from extra spending on additional servants and on their education. Authorities and legal experts, both progressives to conservatives, did not trust property owners and questioned the devotion of parents who could save property for the next generation. As a result, property owners were treated as capricious children who could not be left alone and, consequently, could not successfully manage personal property on their own.417

Ironically, Russia and Britain in the mid-nineteenth century, two countries situated on opposite ends of the material well-being and industrial evolution spectrums, were remarkably similar in the way property was transferred and taxed. Despite these similarities, the material inequality in the two countries was quite dissimilar. If Russian legal experts refused to acknowledge that inheritors could be trusted as rational adults, in Britain, the Wills Act of 1837 officially acknowledged testator’s rights on freedom of transfers. The freedom of testation, according to Rosalind F. Croucher, however, was neither abstract nor unlimited. To ensure that testators would not ignore their moral responsibility to provide a means of living for their closest relatives, the authorities introduced progressive taxation based on the degree of kinship.418 While the testator was free to transfer property to any individual or organisation,

1832 de-jure, property acquired outside patrimonial means was free for inheritance transfers. In France, from 1804, the proportion of property free for testation was defined proportionally to the number of linear successors. Nevertheless, the Gini coefficients in and Britain (1867) and France (1899-1901) were closer (.49 and .48 respectively) than in Russia which, in 1904, was .36
417 For a more extended discussion see Wagner, Marriage, Property, and Law, pp. 254–291.
Alastair Owens suggested they often did not. This was because of strong cultural expectations (social control) which made it almost impossible for respectable married men to leave their families in poverty. Similarly, progressive taxation on property transfers without consideration meant that a substantial part of transferred wealth would be seized in State fees.419

Beginning in 1882, Russian regulations on property transfers without consideration introduced progressive taxation based on the relationship of the testator to the inheritor. This was also the case in Britain. Yet, in Britain, wealth was far more unequally distributed than in Russia. In his latest research on the middle class in Britain, Neil Cummins surprisingly concluded that “the median English person died [between 1892 and 2016] with almost nothing”. This meant that the existence of a middle class was rather questionable.420 The nature of inequality in his research is startling: in 1892, the top 1 percent held 74 percent of wealth and between 1892 and 2016 the median English person did not become wealthier and the nature of inequality did not change.421

In Russia in 1904, wealth inequality did not appear as striking: the top 1 percent of the wealthiest population held 13.5 percent of wealth. Similarly, data for the following years suggest a further decrease in wealth inequality.422 It might be coincidence, but the annual data on the number of cases submitted to local courts for confirmation of inheritance in the Russian Empire, compared to the annual number of deceased adults, also support lowering inequality. Between 1885 and 1908 the proportion of Russian adults who left inheritors assets of any value grew from 13 to 22.6 percent, and consequently the probate rate increased from .130 to .142.423 The counter-argument is that the increase in the relative and absolute number of adults who left inheritances was due to the general decease in mortality. This, however, is invalid, since the substantial decrease in mortality in the Russian Empire was only registered at the beginning of the twentieth century and was due to a decrease in infant, not adult, mortality. The decrease in adult mortality was first registered in the 1910s (see Chapter 5 on social and familial demography).

421 Cummins: ‘Where is the Middle Class’, p. 20.
423 More detailed discussion of the method of calculations see in Chapter 5
3.2.1. Russian Legal Regulations of Property Transfer through Inheritance, and Gifts Inter Vivos.

The first part of the 10th volume of the Law Digest of Civil Laws of the Russian Empire, which was valid from 1835, defined four general ways to acquire personal property rights: (1) through property transfer without consideration and donation (inheritance bequests from parents to children or between individuals not connected by blood or family relations, as well as gifts, inter vivos, grants and last wills), (2) inheritance, (3) mutual agreement (exchange and purchase) and (4) contracts and obligations. The law of property transfer distinguished between these four main types of property: movable, immovable, acquired and patrimonial property. The extent of testamentary freedom varied from total restriction to total freedom of disposal.

All movable property (which was defined in articles 401-405) could be disposed of freely (through actions and inheritance) without official proceedings or any written acts. This included oral agreement (article 711). Therefore, all movable property (even inherited) was acquired property. Immovable property was defined as either patrimonial or acquired. Patrimonial immovable property (under article 399) could not be disposed of through inheritance bequests (according to article 1,068) and was transferrable only through fixed shares as defined in articles 1070, 1121-1183. Patrimonial immovable property could be transferred as gifts inter vivos, but only to linear successors (under article 967). Individually acquired immovable property was free for voluntary transmission through gifts and inheritance bequests according to article 397. If the property owner died intestate, acquired property would be transferred to the inheritors (under article 1110) and divided into fixed shares.

By law, inheritance division (or transfer) of patrimonial or acquired property left without a testamentary disposition (intestate) had to be transferred to successors (linear kin, a descending system of inheritance transfer) in the following shares: daughters would receive one fourteenth

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425 SZRI, Vol. X. part 1, art. 398, p. 797.
426 SZRI, Vol. X. part 1, art. 384-400, pp. 795-798.
427 SZRI, Vol. X. part 1, art. 399, p. 797.
428 SZRI, Vol. X. part 1, art. 1068, p. 864.
430 SZRI, Vol. X. part 1, art. 967, p. 851.
431 SZRI, Vol. X. part 1, art. 397, p. 796.
432 SZRI, Vol. X. part 1, art. 1110, p. 868.
of immovable and one seventh of movable inheritance (under article 1130).  

Sons divided inheritance equally (according to article 1128).  

If the sons’ shares, after the extraction of spousal allotments and daughters’ shares, amounted to less than the shares received by daughters, the entire estate (apart from the spousal allotment) would be divided equally between all male and female children under article 1131.  

If there were no sons, daughters would divide all property equally according to article 1132. 

A surviving wife and husband equally inherited a quarter of movable and one seventh of immovable property. Alternatively, they could inherit all patrimonial property under the right of life tenancy on the property through a testamentary arrangement. If the spouse of the deceased survived and accepted life tenancy as his or her right, the inheritance allotment would be cancelled under articles 533 and 1148. Grandchildren were allowed inheritance only if their parents (the linear successor) were no longer alive (articles 1127-1129).  

Non-linear successors could become inheritors only if all linear successors were deceased or would not accept the inheritance. Parents, if living, could be bypassed in the line of inheritance in favour of their children. Yet, this restriction was applicable only for patrimonial property or property left without a will. Parents, however, could freely inherit the acquired and movable property of their children via a will or as a gift inter vivos. 

In-life property transfer through allotment was a voluntary act of parents or ascendant relatives. Children could not force parents or ascendant relatives to provide them with a share of their property according to articles 994-995. Parents or ascendant relatives could decide to allot acquired property to their children freely, and the share of said allotment in acquired property was disposed voluntary. Allotments in patrimonial property could not be included in these shares of inheritance, which was fixed in law under article 996. Children who were legally considered as “separated” could not claim inheritance share unless the extra share was indicated in the will. The linear successor could not rely on shares of acquired property

433 SZRI, Vol. X. part 1, art. 1130, p. 870.
434 SZRI, Vol. X. part 1, art. 1128, p. 870.
435 SZRI, Vol. X. part 1, art. 1131, p. 870.
436 SZRI, Vol. X. part 1, art. 1132, p. 870.
437 SZRI, Vol. X. part 1, art. 1152, p. 873.
438 SZRI, Vol. X. part 1, art. 533, pp. 822-824 and art. 1148, pp. 872-873.
440 SZRI, Vol. X. part 1, art. 1134-1140, p. 871.
441 SZRI, Vol. X. part 1, art. 1141, p. 872.
442 SZRI, Vol. X. part 1, art. 1142, p. 872.
444 SZRI, Vol. X. part 1, art. 996, p. 854.
inheritance, but they were entitled to expect it (and may have expected to receive it under articles 997-998). The same regulations were applied to dowries, which parents were required to provide for their daughters before marriage. Yet, parents were legally in charge of their daughters’ marriage and for assigning their sons an occupation or service (article 174). If a daughter did not receive a dowry and did not sign a separation act with her parents, she was still eligible to receive a share of the inheritance (articles 1002-1004). Parents had little recourse for disinheriting their children at least when it came to patrimonial property. The exception was if a child violated parental restrictions on marriage, in which case, they could be denied their inheritance. Gifts inter vivos and donations were free and voluntary for all types of acquired and movable property. Yet, patrimonial property could only be gifted to one’s closest relatives (article 967).

3.2.2. How Free was Free? State Control and Moral Responsibility of the Testators.

As shown above, the law divided property and property owners into several groups and granted owners of acquired and movable property with unlimited testamentary freedom. But how free was free? In this section I will discuss the moral and legal limitations of the free disposition of acquired property in the Russian Empire. Scholars generally agree that testamentary freedom was limited by State control through fees on property transfer without consideration and legal regulations over property rights and property in general. Similarly, inheritance transmission was limited by the strong cultural expectations in Russian society (and authorities) to abide by parental moral obligations and provide a means of living for their dependants.

The law of March 14th, 1676 (art. 634) ascribed all inherited (immovable) property with patrimonial status. Later, in 1835, legislation reconfirmed the patrimonial status of inherited property (under article 1011, Vol X part I, PSZRI). Once inherited, however, patrimonial property (except Majorats) was free for disposition within the lifetime of the owner. Yet, with some manipulation, testamentary freedom over inherited property could be restored. For example, an individual could skirt the law by selling patrimonial property before death or by

448 Svod Zakonov Rossiskoi Imperii, Sobranie I, Tom 2 (1676-1675) (SPb, 1830), art. 634 (March, 1676), O Votchinakh... .
making testamentary arrangements to monetarize an inheritance before transmitting it to successors.

Nevertheless, it is striking how persistent the State was in the protection of patrimonial property. I use the term “persistent”, because the State, while restricting inheritance freedoms after death, provided property owners with the liberty to dispose of all types of property in life. Only Majorats were excluded. But the decision to transfer property titles from patrimonial or acquired property was voluntary and nevertheless supported the patrimonial family. The publication of the Digest of Laws in 1835 left the feudal law of 1676 intact. As in 1676 and in 1835, laws in 1882 and 1912 established that inherited immovable property was no longer free for intergenerational transfers and all transfers without consideration.449

Another set of question which arises here is: Did forced property sales or monetisation influence wealth inequality? Did the forced monetisation of inheritance provide successors with a better likelihood of success in life or did it negatively influence the fragile balance of material well-being? The answer to these questions is both yes and no. Inheritance mostly composed of liquid assets provided testators with the freedom to divide their inheritance more flexibly and equally between successors. Frequently, however, this option was used by individuals who possessed property of moderate or low value. In these circumstances, families usually rapidly fragmented and successors were rarely lucky enough to successfully build upon their inheritance. Typically, they spent their lives working to restore their parent’s fragmented wealth. Yet, it is incorrect to believe that rich families applied completely different strategies than less wealthy families when it came to the transmission of wealth. Equity, equality and moral responsibility were equally important for both rich and poor families. The main difference, however, can be seen in the scale of wealth and different types of assets. Rich testators had a better chance of providing all successors with a secure future even if some received better shares.450 Also, wealthy testators could use assumed inheritance as a means of governing their family, whereas poorer testators had less control over their successors and fewer diverse assets to better divide it.451

While the internal market appeared to be animated with a constant supply of individuals and businesses, historians have shown that the Russian mercantile and entrepreneurial community

449 In 1882 and 1912 legislative commissions were convened to discuss property and succession legislation reforms.
450 Rubinstein, Men of Property, p. 156.
451 Darrow, Revolution, p. 16.
was highly unstable in the context of social and economic development.\textsuperscript{452} This can hardly be accepted as a positive trend. Uninheritable social and economic status, as well as legal restrictions on the freedom to voluntarily dispose of business assets, including factories and shops, meant that Russian guild merchants were left with elevated feelings of asset insecurity and were not necessarily motivated to save business.\textsuperscript{453} Basing on numerous scholarships which investigated the testamentary behaviour of European entrepreneurs I suggest that the way Russian merchants behaved was not exceptional. In the nineteenth century, successful British businessmen, for example, also sold and divided their business assets. Often the \textit{pater familias} was not flexible or prepared to transfer their business in a way that kept the business and family united.\textsuperscript{454} According to Alastair Owens, inheritance transmission was an instrument rather than an object of inherent value as the business usually did not reproduce/survive changes in family values.\textsuperscript{455} Historians still debate if Alfred Chandler’s idea that family firms, with their “personalised capitalism”, gentrification and inflexibility, severely damaged Britain’s economic dynamism during the Victorian era.\textsuperscript{456} Examples of widely (internationally) shared monetising or property fracturing testamentary behaviour suggest that the legal limitations experienced by Russian merchants added to wealth inequality and intergenerational social mobility, though were not necessarily the root cause.

N. Kozlova’s published collection of last wills and testamentary arrangements of nobles and town residents in the eighteenth century, and my own research into wills drafted by merchants, town residents, honorary citizens and other individuals during the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, provide multiple examples of testators who actively sold their property or asked the executors of their wills to do so (monetising testamentary behaviour). Merchant and noble feelings of equal moral obligation to dependants was as important in the eighteenth century as it was at the beginning of the twentieth century. Both aristocrats and

\begin{footnotes}
\item\textsuperscript{452} Osmanov, \textit{Petreburgskoe kupechestvo}, p. 218; Kliueva V.P., \textit{Gorodskie sosloviia TObolskoi}, p. 11; Iakovtsevskii, \textit{Kupecheskiy kapital}, pp. 133–136.
\item\textsuperscript{453} In article 392 and in the law of 1762 (article 11511), factories and small shops (lavka) were confirmed as indivisible and immovable property which could be transferred or sold only with all equipment. Gold mines, small land allotments, railway lines and some other specific types of property were also immovable and indivisible.
\end{footnotes}
entrepreneurs in other countries and contexts had enough assets to buy freedom to think and to act. In Russia, however, the concept of property ownership was not always supplemented or based on personal freedom and freedom of disposition since owners were literally forced to sell and divide their property in order to apply more favourable inheritance strategies. Did this enrich their families and improve State well-being? Probably not. Paradoxically, however, this process probably levelled material inequality. In liquidation, monetisation and fragmentation, this type of wealth dispensation allowed more stability for more individuals. At the same time, it left individuals with fewer opportunities to save and accumulate wealth: every generation was forced to start at almost the same level of material well-being as the previous generation. Wealth was accumulated very slowly.

Wealth accumulation increased slowly both among merchants and nobles. While this soslovia were treated differently by authorities and each enjoyed different property rights regulations, both the nobility and merchants had one thing in common: their rights on personal assets were limited and these limitations were specific. The source of social reproduction of the nobility was the stability of kin relations and blood. Yet the State was not primarily interested in the personal (by blood or kin) reproduction of the merchant class. In limiting the divisibility of factories and shops, the State did not limit the direction of inheritance transfer. Thus, in preserving patrimonial succession, authorities were interested in securing the property, well-being of kin and the body politic in general. Legislation was mainly concerned with the kin of noble families. The law, however, did not directly specify that it was only noble immovable property that was patrimonial. Yet, at the time this legislation was passed the nobility were the main group of property owners. Merchants, in this situation, were doubly disadvantaged. While their property, once passed on to relatives, would become patrimonial (i.e. limited in disposition for the next generation), the business (factories, shops, etc.), as immovable property, was also not free for testamentary disposition by the primary owners.

Thus, State control of property transmission through inheritance and gift inter vivos substantially limited the testation freedom of acquired property. Similarly, there were several less obvious limitations on property transmission and its reception based on the social and occupational background of the testator and inheritor.

Russian legal expert Gabriel F. Shershenevich who was convinced that inheritance laws were free from social (soslovie) limitations. The law did not make any distinction between

457 Immovable property including factories, shops and land/landed estates.
458 Shershenevich, Uchebnik prava, p. 714.
the social origins of patrimonial property. The first part of the article 1105, which Shershenevich refers to, states that if individuals shared the same bloodline, their social origins could not limit their inheritance rights. The second part of the same article, however, included an important detail: non-nobles could inherit noble patrimonial property only in some exceptional cases. As the general rule, noble patrimonial property could only be inherited by noble family members connected by the same bloodline. This detail clearly debunks Shershenevich’s interpretation.

Inheritance taxation is widely regarded as a means to reduce wealth inequality and to control the testamentary behaviour of individuals.\textsuperscript{459} The State employed different taxation regimes to control wealth transmission, value, and distribution. Also, inheritance taxation is an instrument to control the creation and reproduction of hereditary elite. The current worldwide trend towards the abolition of inheritance taxation shows that the negative outcomes of inheritance taxation heavily outweigh positive aspects in controlling wealth redistribution.\textsuperscript{460} An especially negative effect of inheritance taxation is obvious in the transfer of family businesses because business assets (liquidity) were withdrawn from commerce and redistributed to pay inheritance tax which literarily forces the business to be one-generation affair. In addition, since the act of inheritance transmission is a deeply personal issue and when the state control it, count and finally reduce the value of inheritance bequest, public tend to hate the state.\textsuperscript{461} In many cases testators and inheritors manage to avoid taxation. Similarly, compliance costs usually are higher than the revenue from taxation.

Currently, authorities increasingly doubt that inheritance taxation decreases inequality levels. In the eighteenth century however, authorities, legal experts and philosophers thought differently.\textsuperscript{462} One of the main outcomes of the French Revolution (1789-1799) was rigorous regulations on inheritance transmission which meant to reduce or even abolish wealth inequality. I suggest that high registry duties made no difference in the taxation of movable and immovable property and additional surtaxes were introduced only to cover high compliance costs.\textsuperscript{463}

\begin{flushright}


461 C.W., Why “death taxes” have fallen out of favour (2017).


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According to Margaret H. Darrow, in supporting the law of inheritance transmission (1793), the French government brought political revolution into the private sphere: the law forbade parents from favouring one child over others, daughters’ rights on shares of inheritance were acknowledged as equal to sons’ shares, and freedom of testation was limited to a small *portion disponible* which, according to the Napoleonic Code of 1804, could be left to anyone.

In France, the revolutionary politicians and legal experts who discussed the new inheritance transmission law were divided: some favoured equal inheritance, equity and individual liberty (natural rights) while others thought of families as hierarchical units where the head of the family should be endowed with freedom of testation. The first camp, headed by Mirabeau and Robespierre, won the debate. Mirabeau, the mastermind behind the law of equal inheritance, strongly believed that the fundamental governing power of inheritance legislation was able to influence changes in social order. He argued that social structures replicated family structures formed by inheritance regimes which, in turn, were defined by the law of inheritance. In short, inheritance legislation was the best way to change or to enforce social order and is important in the regeneration of the *body politic*. While scholars usually argue that equal inheritance laws were motivated by enforcing the patriarchal family, Margaret H. Darrow connects them with more fundamental political motives. The general tenor of legal discussions during the French Revolution show that family inheritance strategies were viewed not as independent units but rather part of national policy and legislation (*body politic*). Succession by bloodline, thus, provided the stability desired by authorities.\(^464\) The understanding that inheritance law was fundamental to national stability was one of the main reasons why the law of inheritance introduced in eighteenth century France remained virtually unchanged for nearly 200 years.

Scholars of the French inheritance system still question if equal inheritance distribution, limitations on the freedom of testation, and inheritance taxation by kin relations, resulted in slow and painful industrialisation.\(^465\) Some argue that peasants who expected plots of land were not motivated to leave the countryside for unstable work at a factory. Additionally, parents who sought to provide children with bigger inheritance shares were forced to have fewer children. Nevertheless, even if the negative effects seem clear, there is no empirical research that proves this assertion, comments Darrow.

Russian inheritance taxation, along with the inheritance law and legal discussions, viewed the legal regulation of inheritance transfers in the same manner as the French (after the

Revolution). While in Russia only sons had the right to equal shares of patrimonial inheritance (daughters were limited to fewer shares) the authorities in both countries were essentially convinced that in order to regenerate the body politic and national stability, inheritance transmission needed regulation. Without reading between the lines of legal discussions, however, the reinforcement of the patrimonial family based on moral obligations and responsibilities were the main motivation for limiting testamentary freedom.

Russian legal experts in the late 1860s and 1870s fiercely debated the inflexibility of Russian legislation on inheritance transfers, which failed to evolve along with other legal and economic transformations in the era of the Russian Great Reforms.466 A commission established in 1882 passionately deliberated the need to adapt inheritance laws to new economic and social realities, especially in relation to the succession of patrimonial property. The abolition of serfdom in 1861, the cancellation of mandatory noble military service in 1762, the shift from clans to nuclear families, the aggregate disadvantages of the equal division of real estate, and most importantly, the idea that “the current law conflicted with the independence of an individual” (of women first of all), were considered crucial reasons to update the law.467 Unfortunately, the outcomes of these debates were negligible. The law of 3 June 1912 did not abolish patrimonial property. Female heirs, however, did receive the right to equal shares of urban estates (both movable and real), although rural real estate division still favoured male heirs.468 Inheritance in landed patrimonial property remained unchanged for the same reasons as it did in France: authorities employed inheritance laws to secure the social order of the body politic rather than to make laws more socially and gender equally.469

The difference between the unequal shares of inheritance expected by male and female relatives in Russia, as opposed to the equal shares for sons and daughters in France, is only illusory. In both countries, legal discussions centred on limiting testamentary freedom and favoured linear successors (to secure the patrimonial family) whose shares were fixed (equal or unequal shares were of secondary concern). The legal discussions in both countries were led

468 Polnyi Svod Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, vol. X (SPb, 1900), art. 1128.
469 For an extended discussion see Wagner, Marriage, Property, and Law, pp. 254–291; Marrese, Babe tsarstvo, pp. 39, 329.
by the landed elite, which assumed that inheritance practices of landowning aristocrats were shared by the peasantry and did not consider the needs of merchants and shopkeepers who also had property and inheritance strategies. 470 Similarly, in both countries the chance that inheritances would improve the living standards of the inheritors were minor. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the majority of the French population died without or with very moderate inheritances which, when equally divided, did not make successors richer. 471 In Russia, I also suggest the role of inheritance was moderate to low (see Chapter 5).

The systems of inheritance taxation in France, Russia and Britain were based on keeping inherited wealth within families. The only difference was in the proportion of taxes: in France, beginning in 1793 (retroactively enforced from 1789), fees progressed from 1 to 9 percent based on the hereditary distance of the inheritors. In Russia, for the majority of the nineteenth century, inheritance transmitted to linear successors was tax-free. In 1882, progressive fees on property transmission without consideration were restored, but the patrimonial nature of the tax regime by tax classes of successors remained. It varied from 1 to 8 percent depending on the closeness of blood relations (article 972, par. 3). Personalty, or personal property, was not valued or taxed. Inheritances valued below 1,000 roubles were dispersed tax-free. Capital in all forms was taxed equally to immovable inheritance property. The same tax regime was applied to gifts inter vivos. Legal experts who opposed these inheritance regulations were unable to change the course of the debate. Expert A. Gedda claimed that testamentary freedom was a mandatory prerequisite for the best economic effects of property transmission because the testator knows how to allocate and transfer their wealth most successfully. Fixed shares served the State, not individual well-being. The new legal act of 1905 increased the proportion of inheritance fees but did not change the general system of inheritance transmission. 472

In Britain, the evolution of inheritance taxation before 1837 followed the same path and logic as in France and Russia. An 1837 law introduced testation freedom. According to legal experts, the family was a hierarchical unit in which elders (the testator and the property owner), knew how best to manage their property. The general idea behind this act was that children’s expectations of fixed inheritance shares negatively affected their motivation to start careers based on their own achievements and independence. 473 The fees, however, were dictated by the tax class of relatives and sought to keep inheritances within the family. Until 1853, immovable

470 Darrow, Revolution, p. 17.
471 Darrow, Revolution, p. 16.
property inheritance transmission was tax free. Between 1853 and 1895, inheritance taxation was partial and inheritors were required to pay three kind of duties: (1) probate duties (a fixed fee from intestate inheritances), (2) legacy duty (a fee calculated based on the value of the transmitted movable property), and (3) last succession duty which was based on the class of the inheritors. It was calculated not from the total value of the immovable property (or the transmitted shares) but instead on the estimated income the inheritor was expected to receive during their lifetime.

The law of 1895 combined legacy and succession duties under the title “Group B”, leaving the value and gradation of duties unchanged. The probate duties were titled “estate duties” (or Group A) and were still collected from intestate inheritances but based on the tax class of the inheritors. The estate duty was calculated by the value of the transmitted inheritance, in respect to the tax class of the inheritors and their age.\textsuperscript{474}

The inheritance taxation reform in Britain in 1895 was not inspired by ideas of social justice as it was in France (1793) and latently in Russia (1882). In Britain, the introduction of doubly progressive taxation was clearly motivated by a budget deficit.\textsuperscript{475}

In Russia, on the contrary, the introduction of inheritance taxation in 1882 was camouflaged by ideas about social justice, but it was clear that Nicolai Bunge was actually motivated by fiscal needs.\textsuperscript{476} The abolition of serfdom and other fundamental reforms in the second half of the nineteenth century, and the cancellation of the poll tax especially (which in 1877 composed 10 percent of State revenue), meant that the State was desperately searching for new sources of taxation. The budget deficit was reduced primarily thanks to substantial increases in indirect taxation, particularly excise duties. Taxes on property transfer without consideration played a marginal role in State revenue, composing 0.5 and 0.4 percent (or 3.8 and 5.4 million roubles) of the total collected taxes in 1887 and 1897, respectively.\textsuperscript{477}

Comparing inheritance legislation and taxation in France, Britain and the Russian Empire from the late eighteenth to the end of the long nineteenth century, gives the impression that inheritance transmission was largely viewed as a means of controlling political stability and social order rather than an instrument of social justice. The marginal number of people who had assets for intergenerational transmission in all three countries, however, shows the

\textsuperscript{474} Ianzhul, \textit{Osnovnye nachala finansovoi nauki}, pp. 533–534.
\textsuperscript{475} Ianzhul, \textit{Osnovnye nachala finansovoi nauki}, p. 535.
\textsuperscript{476} Zakharov, Petrov and Shatsillo, \textit{Istoriia nalogov}, p. 195.
\textsuperscript{477} Zakharov, Petrov and Shatsillo, \textit{Istoriia nalogov}, pp. 225–226.
negligible role of inheritance transmission in controlling social and material inequality in ways that substantially influenced the wealth of the nation.
Conclusion

There is common agreement among scholars that the institute of private property could develop effectively only when based on a legally established institute of personal rights. A paradox arises when we look at the Russian Empire: there was private property and property owners but the combination of private and property rights when individual freedoms provide the base for property rights was never established in Russia.

There were two main questions posed in this chapter as to how the institute of private property developed in the country where it was not supplemented by civil rights? Also, by comparing the way [of inheritance transmission] the state legally treated different social estates, residents of urban and rural areas, men and women, different family members in Russia and other European countries I was wondering how, if at all, the law of succession influenced wealth, gender and social inequality in Russia and other countries?

My research shows that by the middle of the nineteenth century the Russian sovereigns abandoned active attempts to nationalize and patrimonialize (Peter I), to privatize (Catherine II) and to make private property rights the means of social, occupational or gender exclusion. While private property legislation in Russia continued to be focused on landed property, urbanisation and industrialisation balanced the number of wealthy property owners in rural and urban areas by the beginning of the twentieth century. I suggest that the lack of state attention to legal regulations of transmission of acquired property, substantially invested in more effective strategies of inheritance transmission among urban, and primarily, mercantile population, however, the prohibition against separated inheritance transfer of business establishments (factories), probably negatively influenced business succession and reproduction. Also, female property and personal rights were nevertheless administrated by different authorities (Church and Civil), Russian women were able to accumulate and manage property inside and outside of marriage. My calculations in Chapter 4 show that the proportion of female testators in late Imperial Moscow was around 40 percent from the total number of testators in my sample. In general, while some scholars dwell on exceptionally extended women property rights in Russia in comparison with their European peers, I suggest that the domination of patriarchal ideology was international, but widows and spinsters were almost equally free to manage property in Russia, Prussia or in Britain.

The state’s motivation to keep property within the kin was not unique in Russia, however, the ways by which it was being achieved differed from other countries. Usually, the state
introduced progressive taxation on inheritance transmissions outside the kin (France, Russia, Britain) or even partially or totally excluded freedom of transfer from the ways of property management. In France, for example, depending on the number of children, testators were entitled to a certain proportion of their wealth for free and unlimited disposition. In Russia, while patrimonial property was not available for transfer, acquired property, on the contrary, was almost disposable.

Another issue that narrows the distance between Russia, where the connection between civil and property rights was underdeveloped, and Western countries, where it was well established, is the social meaning of property and cultural expectations over inheritance transmission. My investigation shows that values of family affection and an intention to provide dependents with feelings of stability and security brought inheritance strategies of testators in countries with different property regimes close.

My research also suggests that unequal property rights and limited freedom of testation negatively influenced wealth accumulation on an individual level. The increased value of taxes collected from inheritance and gifts transfer in Russia, and the increased proportion of deceased adults who left assets of any type and value according to my calculations (see Chapter 4), suggests that by the end of the long nineteenth century there were positive trends in the evolution of the material well-being of the Russian population. Similarly, this may even point to shrinking wealth inequality.
Chapter 4: The Wealth of the Dead and the Wealth of the Living

Until recently, we have known surprisingly little about the value of privately held wealth, the number of holders and how equally these parameters were distributed across the Russian provinces and along legal social estates. Neither official statistics nor modern scholars have thoroughly investigated how wealthy Russians were during rapid industrialisation. Similarly, little is known how patterns of private wealth management differed in rural and urban areas or the composition of private wealth of different soslovia members. Investigations of these issues usually suffer from severe data constrains. While the historical valuations of the wealth of the living people is still a challenging area of study, I suggest that the wealth of the dead is not the less representative option to see the dynamic of personal wealth accumulation. The wealth of the deceased in the Russian Empire can be investigated through the number of inheritance transmission requests submitted to the Ministry of Justice (which were published from 1884 onwards). The value of transmitted inheritances, however, is still problematic. Nevertheless, I was able to find the values of transmitted inheritances for all the Russian provinces (separately) for two chronological periods. To make this data more representative, I have added the value of transmitted gifts inter vivos. The proportion of gifts inter vivos to the total value of transmitted wealth is a very subtle parameter which is highly sensitive to changes in parental life expectancy, the family and household structure and larger political, social and economic changes.

The aim of this chapter is to investigate how many wealth holders there were, how rich they were and how equally they were spread across the Russian provinces and legal social estates between 1885 and 1917. To balance the macro data on personal wealth in the Russian Empire, which I provide in the first three sections, in the last section I show the average value and composition of private wealth which I have calculated on the base of my sample of Moscow guild merchants.

4.1. The Number of Wealth Holders in the Russian Empire (1885-1908)

Extreme inequality of wealth distribution was, for many years, regarded as the basic cause of the Russian Revolutions in 1917.\footnote{Mironov: ‘Kakaia doroga vedet k revoliutsii’, p. 100.} Using official data for income distribution, which was collected by Imperial officials from 1901-1904 and 1909-1910, Boris Mironov surprisingly discovered that the deep inequality of income distribution in the Russian Empire could not be empirically proven. While one percent of the wealthiest ten percent of the Russian population were truly rich, the wealth of the rest of the population was distributed without “extreme disproportion”.\footnote{Mironov: ‘Kakaia doroga vedet k revoliutsii’, p. 103.} Nafziger and Lindert came to the same conclusion based on a wider range of data.\footnote{Nafziger and Lindert: ‘Russian Inequality’.} Still, on average Russians were still poorer than their European counterparts.

A government commission (1904) on the introduction of income tax, which collected information on the level of potential income from different sources, estimated that only 404,700 people (or 2.2 percent of households) out of the entire population of 181,537,800\footnote{Excluding Finland; Rashin, Naselenie Rossii, p. 21.} could be considered potential taxpayers (with an income above 1,000 roubles).\footnote{Opyt priblizitelnogo ischisleniia narodnogo dokhoda (1906), Tab. XXXVI.} The Ministry of Finance was not able to collect direct and full data on the value of personal income: instead the data collected was indirect and based on general sources of income. This means the data cannot reveal possible combinations of income and, consequently, it only schematically suggests the possible lowest limit of annual Russian incomes above 1,000 roubles. In reality, the number of individuals with an income above 1,000 roubles was likely higher.

The published annual reports of the Ministry of Justice, contrary to the occasional (not published) reports of the Ministry of Finance, contain the numbers of all submitted and probated inheritances. They do not, however, provide the value of transferred or requested inheritances.\footnote{The differences between the data of the two Ministries arises from the initial aims of the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Finance. If the first wished to confirm and register all property transfers (except personalty), the second, registered and consequently taxed (from 1882) only inheritances which were valued over 1,000 roubles.} The data suggests that annually, between 1885-1908, the median number of inheritance requests submitted in the Russian Empire was around 140,000, but the number probated was only around 13,000.
Table 4.1 The ratio of deceased individuals over the age of 20 to the number of submitted confirmation requests for inheritance, inner provinces, 1885-1908

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of deceased people over age 20</th>
<th>Number of requests for confirmation of inheritances</th>
<th>Number of deaths per single inheritance</th>
<th>Ratio of deceased people over 20 with wealth for transmission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>940,592</td>
<td>122,118</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>103,9491</td>
<td>138,636</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>988,182</td>
<td>140,088</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>1,045,782</td>
<td>186,958</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>1,058,856</td>
<td>238,805</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Rashin, A. G., *Naselenie Rossi za 100 let (1811-1913)* (Moscow, 1956), p. 203; *Sbornik statisticheskii svedenii Ministerstva Iustitsii za 1884 i 1885 gody. Svedeniia o lichnom sostave i deiatelnosti sudebnyk ustanovlenii obrazovannikh po ustavam imperatora Aleksandra II*, vol. 1-2 (SPb, 1887); *Sbornik statisticheskii svedenii Ministerstva Iustitsii za 1889, vol. 5 (SPb, 1890); Sbornik statisticheskii svedenii Ministerstva Iustitsii za 1897, vol. 13 (SPb, 1899); Sbornik statisticheskikh svedenii Ministerstva Iustitsii za 1905, vol. 21 (SPb, 1906); Sbornik statisticheskikh svedenii Ministerstva Iustitsii. Svedeniia o lichnom sostave i o deiatelnosti sudebnyk ustanovlenii Evropeiskoi Rossi za 1908*, vol. 24, part 1 (SPb, 1910).

Basing on the annual number of people who died between 1885 and 1908, and Rashin’s suggestion that the proportion of people who died before age 20 was around 67 percent, I accept that the proportion of individuals with wealth of any level, and who were eligible to transfer this wealth, was around 33 percent in any particular year.486

My calculations suggest that in the first years of rapid economic growth, the proportion of deceased individuals over the age of 20 who left inheritances, of any level, almost doubled (from 12.9 to 22.6 percent, *Table 4.1*). Nevertheless, the proportion of deceased adults who left an inheritance in Russia was behind, for example, Britain during the same chronological period. But the numbers were close to the proportions calculated during the Industrial Revolution. Mokyr suggests that during the Industrial Revolution only 14 percent of male adults who passed away in Britain had enough property to transfer. Rubinstein suggests that by 1913-14, at least 41 percent of adult males left estates and 20 percent of all estate inheritances were transmitted by women.487


Table 4. 2 Will-making practices by socio-occupational groups and the gender of testators in Moscow, 1885-1917

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-occupational groups*</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucrats</td>
<td>10 (5.2)</td>
<td>8 (4.2)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy</td>
<td>2 (1)</td>
<td>1 (0.5)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honorary citizens</td>
<td>10 (5.2)</td>
<td>9 (4.7)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchants</td>
<td>7 (3.7)</td>
<td>11 (5.7)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td>1 (0.5)</td>
<td>5 (2.6)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobles</td>
<td>5 (2.6)</td>
<td>10 (5.2)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peasants</td>
<td>10 (5.2)</td>
<td>33 (17.3)</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>6 (3.1)</td>
<td>14 (7.3)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban dwellers**</td>
<td>21 (11)</td>
<td>28 (14.6)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Total</td>
<td>72 (37.7)</td>
<td>119 (62.3)</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: my sample of last wills

The percentage of the total is listed in parentheses.

* In some cases, women’s statuses were identified as those of their husbands. For example: “Moscow merchant widow” or “collegiate assessor's daughter”. In all cases the woman’s status was ascribed to the category of “merchants” or “bureaucrats”.

** Here I refer to a group of urban dwellers beyond meshchane categorisation, namely meshchane, artisans, other urban populations, or individuals who did not specify their social origins.

*** While my entire sample is composed of 262 cases, here I use only archival information about wills irrespective of the gender of testator. For example, notary registers of wills. The collection of separately probated wills, which compose the rest of my sample, could influence the results. Estimations show, however, that in both cases (with and without separate probation cases) the ratio of women’s wills was almost the same – 38.5 percent.

Unfortunately, neither the Ministry of Finance nor the Ministry of Justice reports contain information about the distribution of deceased wealth holders by gender or social origins. The notarial records of drafted wills in late Imperial Moscow do. This allows me to suggest that in Moscow the proportion of women to the total number of wealth holders (here, testators) was around 40 percent (Table 4.2). It should be noted that the calculated proportion is based on a small sample of people who drafted wills in two notarial offices and not the proportion of individuals who died and had wealth of any amount. Yet, this data still shows that women actively exercised their property rights.

The data also suggests that, socially and occupationally, women were distributed almost equally between given groups (Table 4.2). The exception is that for the group of urban dwellers the proportion of women was significantly higher than the proportion of women in other social groups. Male testators composed 62 percent of all will-makers in all given groups. The internal composition of the social groups, however, shows more disproportional ratios in comparison
to women. Men were concentrated in two groups, peasants and urban dwellers, making up 32 percent of the overall sample. Male professionals, nobles and merchants shared almost the same ratio (each around 5 to 7 percent) to the total number of testators.

The more populated group of male peasants and urban dwellers clearly reflects the rural-urban migration pattern of Russian peasants, which was influenced by the specific characteristics of emancipation. Male peasants migrated seasonally, leaving families in villages, which skewed the gender balance. Additionally, it was young male peasants who were sent to towns to learn professions and earn money to send to their families in the village (or were simply sent away because they were an extra mouth to feed). The great majority of that young male population never moved back to the village and became urban dwellers. This explanation is supported by the statistics of the native Moscow population specified by gender. In three Moscow censuses (1882, 1902, 1912) women born in Moscow made up 33 percent of the entire population, but the proportion of men was lower at around 20 to 25 percent (by 1912 migration had slowed).488

The skewed ratio of male to female peasant testators also reflects the effect of the emancipation process and migration patterns on peasants who (permanently or temporarily) lived in Moscow. Data from the first Russian census (1897) shows that per 1,000 male peasants living in Moscow there were 708 women. The data on peasant testators suggests that of 33 male testators, a further 10 women. Thus, while the small size of my sample could be problematic for generalisations, the unbalanced ratio of peasants living in Moscow supports my data on the skewed number of peasant testators by gender. The lower proportion of female peasant testators was not [only] the result of disproportional opportunities of wealth accumulation but also mitigated by labour migration patterns. In addition, the ratio (10 to 7 and 10 to 3) shows that while women were able to move to towns, they had a smaller chance than male peasants to earn sufficient money to transfer through inheritance.489

488 Rashin, Naselenie Rossii, Table 101, page 138.
489 For a detailed discussion see Engel, Between the Fields, p. 4.
4.2. Social and Geographical Distribution of Private Wealth

4.2.1. Inheritance

Statistics on the number of transmitted inheritances suggests that at the beginning of the twentieth century, almost half (44.6 percent) of transmitted inheritances were between one and five thousand roubles (Table 4.3). At the same time, the ratio of people who had incomes of the same range was 84.4 percent, compared to the number of potential taxpayers (Table 4.4).

Table 4.3 The average value and number of transmitted inheritances in the Russian Empire, 1900-1905

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value transmitted inheritances (in thousands)</th>
<th>Average value of inheritances above 1 000 roubles</th>
<th>Per cent from column 2</th>
<th>Average number of inheritances a year</th>
<th>Per cent from column 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 5</td>
<td>9,997,528</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3,825</td>
<td>44.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 10</td>
<td>12,097,301</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>1,686</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 20</td>
<td>17,481,602</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>1,228</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 40</td>
<td>23,506,091</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>832</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 70</td>
<td>20,948,463</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 - 100</td>
<td>16,000,021</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 - 250</td>
<td>40,357,013</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250 - 500</td>
<td>30,032,697</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 - 1 000</td>
<td>25,339,728</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 000 - 5 000</td>
<td>48,759,272</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 000 - 10 000</td>
<td>14,811,363</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>above 10 000</td>
<td>5,698,601</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>average total</td>
<td>265,029,680</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>8,575</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 Ratio of potential Income taxpayers, 1900-1904

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of income (in thousands)</th>
<th>Number of people with income above 1 000 (in thousands)</th>
<th>Per cent from the total number of potential taxpayers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 2</td>
<td>220.5</td>
<td>54.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 5</td>
<td>120.9</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 10</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 20</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 50</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>above 50</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>404.7</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Oppt pribizitelnogo ischisleniia narodnogo dokhoda po raznym ego istochnikam i po razmeram v Rossii. materiały po proektu Polozhenia o gosudarstvennom podokhdom naloge (SPb, 1906), XXXVIII.

As seen above (Table 4.1), between 1885 and 1908 the proportion of deceased individuals, who had some wealth to transfer, doubled. At the same time the value of transmitted inheritances above 1,000 roubles did not increase substantially. The Department of Assessed Taxes calculated that on average, annually, between 1888 and 1890, the total value of transferred wealth above 1,000 roubles in the Russian Empire490 was 265,029,680 roubles. In the first six years of the twentieth century, the annual value grew by 12.7 percent or 18.1 adding gifts inter vivos. That is, between 1900 and 1905, the total value of transferred inheritances was 1,792,583,619 roubles or 298,763,935.50 roubles annually (307,633,482 with charitable transfers and gifts inter vivos or 335,803,935 roubles by my additional estimations which reconstruct the value of dowries and gifts in a form of liquid assets ignored by official statistics, see section on gifts).491

490 Excluding Finland and Poland. The value of inter vivos gifts and charitable transfers for earlier periods is not available.
Table 4.5 The annual average value and number of transmitted inheritances (above 1,000 roubles) by regions of the Russian Empire, 1888-1890

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Value of transmitted inheritances</th>
<th>Number of transmitted inheritances</th>
<th>Average value per one inheritance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Capital provinces</td>
<td>112,457,717</td>
<td>1769</td>
<td>63,571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Petersburg province</td>
<td>64,493,021</td>
<td>982</td>
<td>65,675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moscow province</td>
<td>47,964,696</td>
<td>786</td>
<td>61,023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Forest provinces</td>
<td>7,097,814</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>23,119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Middle Non-black Earth provinces</td>
<td>20,621,559</td>
<td>981</td>
<td>21,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. East-Steppe provinces</td>
<td>7,700,090</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>16,666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. South-Steppe provinces</td>
<td>20,787,746</td>
<td>934</td>
<td>22,256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Middle-Black Earth provinces</td>
<td>36,870,119</td>
<td>1876</td>
<td>19,653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. West provinces</td>
<td>21,565,382</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>23,961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Baltic provinces</td>
<td>13,017,448</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>39,327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Caucasian provinces</td>
<td>6,032,095</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>16,347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Siberian and Middle-Asian provinces</td>
<td>2,435,061</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>25,904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Polish provinces</td>
<td>16,444,649</td>
<td>549</td>
<td>29,953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>265,029,680</td>
<td>8572</td>
<td>30,918</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The report of the Ministry of Finance for 1888-1890 provides data on the value of transmitted wealth but also the average number of transmissions per province. The report demonstrates that, on average, one inheritance transmitted in this period was valued at 30,918 roubles. At the same time, Moscow and Saint Petersburg attracted 42.4 percent of the value of transmitted inheritances and 20.6 percent of the number of inheritances (*Table 4.5*). The second highest value and number of high value inheritances transmitted (above 1,000 roubles) were in the eleven Middle-Black Earth provinces. Contrary to the highly concentrated high value inheritances in the Capital provinces, wealth in the Middle-Black Earth provinces was more equally distributed. They were, however, lower in value per inheritance. In comparison to Moscow and Saint Petersburg, where the average wealth was above 60,000 roubles, in the Middle-Black Earth region the average wealth was around 20,000 roubles. In all three Baltic provinces, however, the value per inheritance was lower than in the Capitals but was still the highest among the rest of the Imperial provinces (around 40,000 roubles).
Subtracting the two Capital provinces from the total value of transmitted inheritances decreases the average value of wealth by about a quarter (from 30,907 to 22,413 roubles). At the same time, the average value of inheritances transmitted in Moscow was 61,023 roubles and in Saint Petersburg it was 65,675 roubles. This means that the average inheritance in the Capitals was two times higher than the average value of transmitted wealth in the Russian Empire. It was also three times higher with respect to the average wealth of individuals in the Russian Empire.

4.2.2. Wardships and Soslovie

The data on average wealth levels in different provinces and regions of the Russian Empire shows that around half of all wealth was concentrated in the two Capital provinces. The rest of personal wealth was mostly equally distributed between the other 65 provinces. Unfortunately, this data does not show the social origins of wealth holders and how equally or unequally wealth was distributed between members of the legal social estates. Lindert and Nafziger demonstrate in their research that the inequality of income distribution in late Imperial Russia suggests that “… legally distinct social estates (soslovia) … tended to correspond to income levels, with modification for urban/rural residence and occupation”.492 Practically, this meant that, on average, nobles were wealthier than meshchane.

To examine if the level of wealth of the Russian soslovia corresponded, I collected samples of wardship valuations launched in Moscow in 1892 (Table 4.6).493 The data supports Lindert and Nafziger’s suggestions over the value and social character of incomes. The values of wealth of the legal social estates also corresponded. Comparing the average level of wealth (wardship valuation) for all wardships494 to the average value of inheritances in Moscow, we see that it was about three times lower (16,180 roubles) than the calculated value of average inheritances (61,023 roubles). At the same time, the average wealth of Moscow merchants (64,566 roubles) seems to correspond to the average value of inheritances transmitted in the Moscow province (61,023 roubles). Two social groups, honorary citizens and guild merchants, who in 1882 composed 4.2 percent of the Moscow population and 19 percent in the sample of Moscow wardships (1892), held 90 percent of the wealth in my sample of wardships. The wealth gap

493 The Moscow ward court was established only for members of urban social estates. Separate establishments were created for nobles, clergy and peasants.
494 There was no limit on the value of wealth to launch a wardship.
between the average Moscow artisan and the average Moscow guild merchant was huge. Merchants in my sample were 100 times wealthier than artisans.

Table 4. 6 The distribution of wards by type and value of personal assets in the social estates in Moscow, 1892

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social groups</th>
<th>Number of wards</th>
<th>Value of real estate (business and residential)</th>
<th>Value of personal possessions (capital and movable property)</th>
<th>Total value</th>
<th>Average value of wealth per wardship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Merchants</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>312,094.91 (8)</td>
<td>3,174,482.91 (91)</td>
<td>3,486,577.82 (56)**</td>
<td>64,566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honorary citizens</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>280,034 (14)</td>
<td>1,652,622.39 (86)</td>
<td>1,932,656.39 (31)**</td>
<td>96,632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petty bourgeois (Meshchane)</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>186,345 (41)</td>
<td>264,172.85 (59)</td>
<td>450,517.85 (8)**</td>
<td>3023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisans</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4010 (24)</td>
<td>12,597.95 (76)</td>
<td>16,607.95 (0.3)**</td>
<td>638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People of various ranks</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>74,955 (23)</td>
<td>251,887.81 (77)</td>
<td>326,842.81 (5)**</td>
<td>2421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>857,438.91 (14)</td>
<td>5,355,763.91 (86)</td>
<td>6,213,202.82 (100)**</td>
<td>16,180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In brackets is the percentage of the total value of personal assets by social group. The data is incomplete: the archival documents only contain data for one out of four sections of the Fourth Department of the Moscow Court of Wards. ** The percentage of the total value of all personal assets of all social groups.

The deep wealth disproportions, both by geographic and social-occupational lines, are apparent. Yet, I would still suggest that wealth inequality in the Russian Empire, in general, was not enormous. The Moscow example is indeed unique because, as one of the Capitals, it attracted wealth and people in disproportionate numbers. In the rest of the Russian Empire, the concentration and distribution of wealth was more balanced. But still, if income inequality was
moderate (according to Lindert and Nafziger), I suggest that wealth inequality was less balanced.

4.2.3. Gifts Inter Vivos

Gifts inter vivos are valuable donations or transfers made during the life of the donor in the form of real estate, land, money or movable objects. The omission of the value of gifts compared to the value of wealth transmitted at the time of death (inheritance) seriously compromises the valuations of personally accumulated wealth. For example, in France during the majority of the nineteenth century the proportion of gifts inter vivos accounted for 30 to 40 percent of the value of transmitted inheritances. In the early twentieth century (1910) the proportion of gifts dropped to 23 percent.\textsuperscript{495} At the same time, the proportion of gifts inter vivos compared to the value of transmitted inheritances in other European countries was lower (16 percent in Germany and 19 percent in Britain).\textsuperscript{496} The extremely high proportion of gifts compared to the value of inheritances in France was likely due to the exceptionally (mandatory) detailed registration of all kinds of asset transfers. For example, dowry, which was usually composed of movable objects and money in Russia, was not valuated, taxed or even registered. In France, under the Napoleonic code, it was valued and registered. The French data suggests that between 1872 and 1927, dowries made up 50 percent of gifts inter vivos in France and 75 percent only in Paris.\textsuperscript{497}

The dowry, in Russian law, was considered anticipated inheritance and the personal property of a wife. Her husband, however, was allowed to use it to maintain the household or invest in his business. After the husband’s death, the dowry was returned to the widow or her successors (by his will or in law). If the widow was childless, it had to be returned to her parents or her family. While dowry and allotments were legally considered to be anticipated inheritance, in practice, when a case was brought to court, both were considered as gifts since they were made

\textsuperscript{496} Piketty, \textit{Capital}, p. 539.
during the lifetime of the donor.\textsuperscript{498} If the donor died before the marriage of their daughter, the dowry was registered as her legal share of the inheritance i.e. registered and valued.\textsuperscript{499}

The registration of the full value and number of charitable donations substantially improves estimations of private wealth in the Russian Empire. Yet, the omission of gifts inter vivos (apart from charitable donations) in cash and movable objects obscures parents’ investment in the material well-being of their children. Additionally, it influences how to interpret if and how the parental generation responded to the changes of the Great Reforms, urbanisation, industrialisation and increasing life expectancy.

Generations of parents in Europe (and particularly in Britain) in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, responded to socioeconomic changes by substantially increasing the value and number of gifts to their children. These were usually made in the form of real estate investments. Thomas Piketty states that “today, as in the nineteenth century … we are again living in a golden age of gift giving”. In addition, he suggests that, on average, gifts are transmitted ten years before the death of the donor.\textsuperscript{500} The increased rate of parental gift giving balances their increased life expectancy. This left the time elapsed between inheritance transfers (in part in the form of gifts and dowries) unchanged at around 30 to 35 years (for the middle and end of the twentieth century).\textsuperscript{501} At the beginning of the twentieth century, the longevity of a generation was shorter, at around 28 years. Consequently, I can assume that inheritances in Late Imperial Russia were passed to successors every 28 years.\textsuperscript{502}

It is clear that that parents balanced increased life expectancy with a higher proportion of gifts. But was this the only or the main issue explaining my findings? In this respect, it is relevant to question the effects of the increased age of first marriages on the material well-being of successors. If, for example, in the mid-nineteenth century, the difference between the age of marriage and full inheritance reception was a couple of years, and people married comparatively early, dowries and allotments were used to fill the financial gap between marriage and inheritance was it the case for a later period or not?

In the Russian Empire between 1888 and 1905, according to my calculations, the proportion of registered gifts inter vivos to the value of transmitted inheritances increased from 4.5 to 7.7

\textsuperscript{499} ‘Vedomost o deloproizvodstve notarialnykh arkhivov. Svedeniia o lichnom sostave i o deiatelnosti sudebnikh ustanovlenii’, in \textit{Sbornik statisticheskikh svedenii Ministerstva Iustitsii za 1899}, vol. 15, part 1, SPb, 1901.
\textsuperscript{500} Piketty, \textit{Capital}, p. 495.
\textsuperscript{501} Piketty, \textit{Capital}, p. 496.
\textsuperscript{502} Wedgwood, \textit{Economics of Inheritance}, pp. 130–131.
percent (or according to my reconstruction, see below, from 7.2 to 12.4 percent).\textsuperscript{503} Importantly, these are rough calculations because the value of inheritance available for taxation above 1,000 roubles, were registered and taxed based on the type of asset transmitted and not on their value. Gifts in the form of movable objects and cash were, by law, free for transmission. Gifts in the form of land and immovable property, however, were valued and taxed.\textsuperscript{504}

I suggest that it is possible to reconstruct the value of gifts in the form of movable objects and capital and their proportion to inheritances. The available archival data on the general composition of transmitted inheritances suggests that, on average, 60 percent of all inheritances (in value) were composed of personality and capital.\textsuperscript{505} If we accept that gifts were likewise composed of the same value and type as inheritances, it would imply that official data on the value of transmitted gifts was underestimated by 60 percent. The 60 percent proportion of transmitted gifts between 1888-1890 and 1900-1905 would be 7,170,000 and 13,890,000 roubles, respectively. Thus, annually, between 1888 and 1890 the reconstructed value of transmitted gifts inter vivos was 19,120,000 roubles and between 1900 and 1905 it rose to 37,040,000 roubles. Further, if we add the reconstructed value of gifts to the actual value of transmitted inheritances (above 1,000 roubles) the value of annually transmitted wealth (through gifts and inheritances) was 284,149,680 roubles between 1888 and 1890 and 335,803,935 annually between 1900 and 1905. Between these two chronological periods, the average annual transmissions increased by 18.2 percent.

Thus, while the specific character of taxation and registration makes a more detailed calculation of the value of dowries and allotments (transmitted in the lifetime of the future testator) problematic, official statistics provide dynamic data on the value and number of gifts inter vivos in rural and urban areas separately. In an overwhelmingly agricultural country, this data is extremely important because it shows how unequally wealth was distributed between rural and urban areas, and how this inequality evolved.

\textsuperscript{503} My method of calculation without additional reconstruction was as follows: the average annual transmitted inheritance between 1888 and 1890 was 265,029,680 roubles (for inheritances valued above 1,000 roubles). The average value of annually transmitted gifts was 11,950,000 (in real estate and land). Gifts and inheritances totalled 276,979,680 roubles. Between 1900 and 1905 the value of transmitted inheritances was 298,763,935 roubles and gifts 23,150,000 roubles. Gifts and inheritances totalled 321,913,935 roubles. Thus, the value of gifts to the inheritances increased from 4.5 to 7.7 percent.

\textsuperscript{504} For more detail see Chapter 3.

Table 4.7 The value and number of gifts inter vivos confirmed by senior notaries in 1884-1914, in European Russia, excluding Warsaw (in millions of roubles)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>964</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>1138</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>1820</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>1013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>2685</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>1270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>2196</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>1192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>3038</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>1470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>3777</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>1458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>7728</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>1710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>7892</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>1674</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sbornik statisticheskikh svedenii Ministerstva Yustitsii za 1884-1914

The data on the number and value of gifts inter vivos suggests that in rural areas, where about 80 percent of the Russian population was concentrated, half of all transferred gifts by number and value occurred (Table 4.7). In urban areas, the increase of the number and value of gifts between 1884 and 1914 was stable and proportional. In the rural areas, it was perhaps less stable and was disproportional. That is to say, in rural areas between 1894 and 1914, the number of transferred gifts increased by 7 times while the value only increased by 3 times. In urban areas, the value and number of gifts inter vivos increased by 2.5 and 3.8 respectively. If, in rural areas, the number of pre-mortem household divisions skyrocketed, the value per single gift dropped from 7,945 roubles in 1884 to 2,141 in 1914 (Table 4.8). In urban areas, the number of registered gifts increased proportionally, and the value also increased. In 1889, for example, the average gift in urban areas was valued at 6,046 roubles. By 1914 this value moderately increased to 7,885 roubles. The number of gifts, however, increased by 2.5 times overall (from 444 in 1884 to 1,674 in 1914). I suggest that in rural areas the statistics of gifts inter vivos, on the contrary, includes pre-mortem gifts and households divisions, since the post-mortem divisions were likely covered by the statistics of divisions of inheritances between successors.506 In the urban areas, however, gifts inter vivos were likely dowries in the form of

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506 For an extended discussion about the evolution of pre-mortem and post-mortem household divisions in Russian proto-industrial communities, see Kolle, Social change, Chaper 6, Table 6.3, p. 311.
real estate and marriage allotments for sons. Thus, the value, number and internal composition of gifts differed.

Table 4. 8 The average value per single gift in European Russia, excluding Warsaw, 1884-1914 (in roubles)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>7,945</td>
<td>13,063</td>
<td>9,881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>6,120</td>
<td>6,046</td>
<td>6,091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>5,360</td>
<td>4,993</td>
<td>5,223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>5,769</td>
<td>6,515</td>
<td>6,036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>6,034</td>
<td>5,512</td>
<td>5,866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>7,104</td>
<td>6,292</td>
<td>6,818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>3,390</td>
<td>8,027</td>
<td>4,902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>3,415</td>
<td>3,978</td>
<td>3,572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>2,355</td>
<td>7,135</td>
<td>3,221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>2,141</td>
<td>7,885</td>
<td>3,147</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sbornik statisticheskikh svedenii Ministerstva Yustitsii za 1884-1914

The fraction of two capital cities Moscow and Saint Petersburg, in the total value of transmitted gifts in European Russia appeared to be lower than the fraction of two capitals in the value of transmitted inheritances (above 1,000 roubles). Forty-two percent of the average value and 21 percent to the total number of transmitted inheritances (on average between 1888-1890, Table 4.5) were concentrated in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Their proportion of gifts, however, was 22 percent by value and 4.2 by number (on average between 1884-1898, Table 4.9).
Table 4. The fraction of gifts inter vivos transmitted in Moscow and Saint Petersburg* to the total value of gifts transmitted in European Russia, excluding Warsaw

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% from total in European Russia</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>% from total in European Russia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moscow and Saint Petersburg</td>
<td>European Russia, excluding Warsaw</td>
<td>Moscow and Saint Petersburg</td>
<td>European Russia, excluding Warsaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1,174</td>
<td>1,123,188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>1,295</td>
<td>3,873,691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1,359</td>
<td>2,570,537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>1,308</td>
<td>1,769,793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>1,476</td>
<td>1,065,439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>1,576</td>
<td>1,823,719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>1,569</td>
<td>3,022,131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>1,705</td>
<td>1,798,335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1,908</td>
<td>2,023,217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>1,824</td>
<td>5,039,319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>1,819</td>
<td>1,515,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2,570</td>
<td>3,797,555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2,733</td>
<td>5,481,212</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sbornik statisticheskikh svedenii Ministerstva Yustitsii za 1884-1898

The more equal distribution of reported gifts in the Russian Empire, in contrast to the substantially unequal distribution of inheritances (even if we consider all limitations of official statistics), was perhaps due to the ongoing tradition to dispose of wealth at the time of death. The under-registration of transmitted dowries, which were traditionally either cash or household movable objects, probably substantially affected the value of transmitted gifts, especially among the urban population. For the rural population, on the contrary, pre-mortem household divisions, especially in the proto–industrial and industrial regions, became more frequent.507

To provide further context about the reconstructed value of transmitted wealth with respect to more general figures of economic development, I suggest estimating the proportion of transmitted wealth to the GNP in late Imperial Russia. According to P. Gregory, the Russian GNP in current prices in 1890 was 6,800,000,000 roubles and was 12,503,000,000 roubles in 1905.508 According to my estimations, the annual value of transmitted gifts and inheritances between 1888 and 1890 was 284,149,680 roubles or 4.2 percent of the value of the GNP in 1890. Between 1900 and 1905, 335,803,935 roubles were transmitted or 2.7 percent of the

508 Gregory, P. R., Russian National Income, 1885-1913 (Cambridge, New York, 1982), pp. 58, 56.
GNP in 1905. The decrease in the proportion but not the value of transmitted private wealth compared to the value of the GNP could likely be explained by the extremely high rate of economic growth in late imperial Russia, as private wealth certainly did not grow at such an accelerated rate.

4.3. The Composition and Evaluation of Moscow Guild Merchants’ Personal Assets

In this section, I will discuss the value and composition of property possessed by the Russian population, focusing on Moscow guild merchants in the second half of the nineteenth century. My empirical analysis of property inventories emphasises the proportion of different groups of assets that composed individual wealth. I use this information to evaluate the amount and value of real estate, movable property, business assets, capital and debts of the property holder. Is it possible that the way personal assets were accumulated and managed was affected by uncertainty about future of family well-being, present uncertainty the from high risks of small enterprise administration (a universal concern of all small shop keepers around the globe)? Or was the proportion of real estate and capital mitigated by other subjective and objective factors?

In the case of merchants, for instance, the internal composition of their assets, especially the correlation between the value and the type of real estate and capital (in bills of exchange, stocks, bonds, etc.) reveals one of the most important features of the middle class: the inclination to take risk. The risk management of assets, however, also could be influenced by the modus of assets administration which was traditional among some social groups. For instance, for peasants who attempted to move up the social ladder through changing their place of residence, occupation or social estate, there was a high probability, at least in the first generation, that they would not revise their economic behaviour. They were more likely to invest extra income in real estate, large tracts of land, or gold coins than in securities.

In his book “Men, Women and property in England 1780-1870” R. J. Morris recognised that a merchant’s loss of confidence was an important factor in declining business. Under the influence of uncertainty, a merchant was likely to reorient their tactic from the profitable risk management of their business towards “safe but limited family income”. Britain during the 1850s through the 1870s was marked by a so-called “failure” of the English middle class. Among the main reasons for this “failure” was “reduced rates of economic growth and a growing overdependence on the state.” This loss of confidence was provoked by a reduction

of rates of economic growth, which was largely based on a reorientation of state investments from internal industry to overseas affairs.\textsuperscript{510} A general decrease in economic motivation among the second or third generation of middle-class families could be cited as another reason for decline.\textsuperscript{511}

The decline in motivation to succeed business, in addition to the general loss of confidence by the middle class, was based on the exceptional opportunity of successors to “retire on investment incomes” which were acquired by the first entrepreneurial, risk taking and confident members of the middle class. The opportunity was tempting and destructive at the same time. This so-called “easy money” limited motivation to commit to the hard work of maintaining the enterprise. In my opinion, “easy money” (surprisingly) could have a positive impact on the future: the second-generation family members who “destructively” retired on “investment incomes” often invested in the education of their offspring (i.e. the third generation) who formed the “new middle class” or “educated middle class” (or, in German, Bildungsbürgertum).\textsuperscript{512}

4.3.1. General Characteristics

In this sub-section I will narrow my focus to personal assets administration of Moscow guild merchants leaving aside more general aspects money management of the Russian population. Moreover, I will discuss several stages of the individual “property cycle” and consider factors that affected personal choice and decision-making in general. To see the difference in property management between representatives of different sosloviia more clearly, I will compare the property profiles of merchants, the meshchane (petty bourgeois) and a noble woman.

My sample contains 52 cases of property evaluation for both men and women in several social estates including merchants, meshchane (or small shop keepers), peasants and a noblewoman, through the second half of the nineteenth century in Moscow. Unfortunately, the property inventories in my sample are unequal in the level of personal assets centralisation although the presence and evaluation of real estate, debts and different payments are relatively complete.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{510} Morris, Men, Women, and Property, p. 59.
\end{itemize}
The composition and evaluation of personal assets possessed by Muscovites in the second half of the XIX century by type of property (in roubles) *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Personal Assets</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Sum</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Real Estate (Acquired and Patrimonial)</td>
<td>30,576.2 (44)</td>
<td>2,661,149 (42)</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Personal Movable Property (Cloth, Luxury Items, Icons, etc.)</td>
<td>152.5 (0.2)</td>
<td>8,475.33 (0.1)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Household Movable Property</td>
<td>85 (0.1)</td>
<td>1,371.65 (0.02)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Capital (Cash, Bonds, Stocks, Bills of Exchange)</td>
<td>18,340.5 (26)</td>
<td>1,527,482 (24)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Business Premises (Goods, Furniture, Decorations, Technical Equipment, Instruments)</td>
<td>3,310.3 (4.7)</td>
<td>145,854.8 (23)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Payments and Donations (To Relatives, To the Church, Dowries, Charity, Inter Vivos Payments)</td>
<td>12,713.2 (18)</td>
<td>425,028.3 (6.7)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Undetailed Valuation of Movable Property (Commercial and Personal)</td>
<td>4,082.2 (6)</td>
<td>265,014 (4.2)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Total (Without Testators’ Debts and Owes Consideration)</td>
<td>70,000 (100)</td>
<td>6,347,068 (100)</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Testator’s Debts</td>
<td>21,203.7</td>
<td>1,033,791 (16.3)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Owes to the Testator</td>
<td>22,719.4</td>
<td>1,181,992 (18.6)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Total Minus Testators’ Debts, Plus Owes to the Testator</td>
<td>62,393.7</td>
<td>6,495,269</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*median: the median value of property by type for one inventory; sum: the sum of all assessed property by type; count: the number of inventories where the type of assets was evaluated; in brackets: the median percentage of the type of personal assets to the total value of median wealth or total value of all personal assets from all inventories.

The composition of personal wealth in my sample of last wills suggests that the average Moscow merchant in the second half of the nineteenth century kept almost half of their wealth in real estate (44 percent), which represented a safe and reliable source of income in case their business failed (Table 4.10). Investment in capital (in the general sense) was pursued by a half of the members of my sample and composed over a quarter of an average middling Muscovite’s wealth. Proportions of debts owed and capital both in the number of holders and average value were almost equal. Contrary to the high value of investments in capital, the values of personal and household movable property were low (0.2 and 0.1 percent).
4.3.2. Real Estate

Within the total sample of 52 cases, seven property inventories assessments of the real estate were present. Real estate before 1882 was not evaluated when all the testator’s property was transferred to one downward linear successor (i.e. to the testator’s children). In this case, the death-duties were not imposed on the successor which made the assessment of real estate unnecessary. The total value of wealth in the entire sample was valued at 6.5 million roubles (without considering the debts and owed to the testator) or 7.5 million, including money the testators gave as loans. The proportion of real estate (both acquired and patrimonial) falls above the 40 percent of evaluated assets and the 44 percent in the average wealth of a Moscow merchant and better-off urban dweller. In ten cases, the testator had both patrimonial and acquired real estate, but only eight of the estates were evaluated. This means that in my sample one out of five individuals had patrimonial (ancestral) real estate. The median values of both kinds of estates were close: 24,695 roubles for acquired and 25,595 roubles for patrimonial assets.

As far as the absolute majority of cases in my sample represent Moscow guild merchant soslovie, the median value of real estate is the value of merchants’ commercial and residential estates together. To observe the difference in value of real estate between merchants (from average to well-off) and small shopkeepers (meshchane) I have estimated the median value of real estate for merchants and meshchane separately. Thus, the median value of merchant real estate (for both men and women, acquired and patrimonial) for 39 cases was 32,200 roubles. For meshchane, the median value was 2,462 roubles (8 cases). One should consider the sensitive difference in value not only in the clear difference in the social well-being of both social estates, but also that the value of merchants’ real estate was elevated by combining commercial and residential estate in one valuation, The valuation of meshchane real estate represented only residential estate (the small shop was usually a part of the house or alternatively, the value of the shop was low). Moreover, the skewness coefficient for the distribution of the value of real estate among merchants was lower (1.8) than among the meshchane (2.7). This means that it is likely Moscow merchants shared a closer pattern of real estate in composition and value than Moscow meshchane. In other words, there was more difference in the value of real estate between meshchane than between merchants. This is probably related to the status and occupational characteristics of the property holders. The distribution of personal wealth, however, represents a high instance of inequality among testators, even if they belonged to one occupational and social group.
4.3.3. Debts and Credits

In his recently published book on the culture of debt in Moscow in the age of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, Sergey Antonov argues that while the banking system was expanding through the second half of the nineteenth century, yet until the beginning of the twentieth century Muscovites widely relied on personal credit networks.\(^{513}\) One of the most important outcomes of Antonov’s research is that people of different social status borrowed money from one another which means that the boundaries of the official social hierarchy did not prevent them from establishing economic relations. In other words, mixed debt portfolios suggest that “personal and informal debt connections, in addition to reinforcing traditional Russian hierarchies of legal estate and state service, also simultaneously undermined them”.\(^{514}\) An examination of personal credit networks through the inventories of bills of exchange in my current research confirmed Antonov’s conclusion that people of different sexes and social statuses were engaged in debt relations. Continuing Antonov’s research of debt culture in the middle of the nineteenth century, in this section I analyse the proportion of debts and loans in testators’ wealth at the end of the nineteenth century. I am particularly interested in the impact of industrialisation and the accelerated development of official credit networks and how these developments impacted the way middle class Muscovites borrowed and lent money.

Returning to my discussion of the role of business failures in the reproduction and sustainability of business, my research confirms that inheritors who were engaged in credit relations, entrepreneurs and retailers (of different social classes) used credit relations cautiously by avoiding fatal investments. Thus, the total amount of debts estimated in all considered inheritances (52 cases) barely exceeded 1 million roubles or 16 percent of all transmitted wealth. At the same time, the average proportion of debts to the median wealth was 30 percent. In general, the distribution of debts was skewed to the right (coef. = 2.8), which means that among all debts, those of high value were most prevalent. The calculations show that, the amount of debts was distributed unequally and varied from 265,716 roubles to 1,336 roubles with the median debt of 21,203 roubles. Importantly, debts were indicated in only 23 cases, which means that less than half of all testators in my sample were in debt. Thus, merchants were generally cautious about borrowing because it made their business vulnerable.\(^{515}\)

\(^{513}\) Antonov, Bankrupts and Usurers.
\(^{514}\) Antonov, Culture of Debt, pp. 39–40.
\(^{515}\) I refer to merchants because they compose the majority of my sample.
On the opposite side of this relationship was the money lender, a person with excess of cash who chose to provide credit rather than investing money in business or real estate. In my sample, 18 testators lent a total value of 1,181,992 roubles. The median value per single inheritance was estimated at 22,719 roubles, which is close to the medial sum of borrowed money (21,203 roubles) both in value and consequently in percentage of the individual’s entire wealth.

Hypothetically there are four combinations of money borrowing/lending relationships:
- Borrowing and lending
- Borrowing, but not lending
- Not borrowing, but lending
- Neither to borrow nor lend

In the entire sample of personal assets inventories, slightly less than half (24 cases or 47 percent) preferred not to be involved in credit relationships as a borrower or lender. Considering the gender profile of people in this group, it appears that women represent almost half of this group (12). Thus, of the 18 women in my entire sample, this group was overwhelmingly female. Another group of individuals who tended to abstain from credit relationships in my sample were peasants. Almost a half of individuals (13 of 28) were involved in credit relationships that involved both borrowing and lending activity. In eleven cases, individuals had no extra money to lend, but were involved in borrowing. Only four people (or 14 percent) were solely creditors, which means that they had extra money to lend, but had no need to borrow any money. Interestingly, none of them were professional usurers.

Only half of randomly chosen testators were involved in credit relationships as a lender, a borrower or a combination of both roles. Of particular note is that an average person in this group successfully managed their credit profile by having debts and loans in almost the same proportion, keeping them financially solvent. This result could be upset by two factors: unofficial credit relations (which made the value of debts invisible) and the tradition of paying off or even remitting all debts before death. The first alternative demonstrates the importance of reputations among merchants and the personal character of credit networks which was widespread in the pre-industrial period, especially in small towns. The tradition of remitting debts was related to the religious belief that it absolved sins.

In his memoires, Tyumen merchant Chukmaldin shared his impression of Moscow credit relationships compared to Siberian debt culture: “In Tyumen if one person needs money for one or two weeks, he could freely rely on his good friends and relatives – they will surly lend
him money on his word alone. In Moscow, I found that self-interest comes first, damping personal sympathy and kindness, interest and promissory notes are of the utmost importance. Maybe this kind of relationships is unavoidable in big cities, but in the beginning, it appeared to be unkind and egoistic”. 516 Nevertheless, we should not underestimate the importance of unofficial credit networks which represented the main source of credit in the Russian Empire. This was especially the case prior to the 1850s, “before the age of large banks and other formal credit-related institutions”. 517 The process of economic development per se, however, provoked an increase in the importance of legally regulated credit transactions (based on legal certificates of indebtedness) instead of traditional forms of money lending. Yet, unofficial credit networks existed until the beginning of the twentieth century.

Chukmaldin’s disappointment was likely grounded in truth. But he was an outsider in the Moscow credit network and an insider in Siberian merchants’ circles. It took time to infiltrate personal credit networks because he had to prove his reputation to be considered a reliable borrower who could be trusted at his word. As Henning Hillmann and Brandy L. Aven argued in their article “Fragmented Networks and Entrepreneurship in Late Imperial Russia”, there were two important aspects to lending: “the first aspect considers reputation as an individual-level signal that potential partners and investors rely on to assess an entrepreneur’s abilities and qualities. The second aspect points to collective reputation mechanisms that a community of merchants relies on to monitor and sanction opportunistic behaviour”. 518 The direct evidence of unofficial credit relationships and the importance of paying off debts for maintaining (or recovering) family reputations can be seen in the draft of Ustin’ia Basharina’s last will. Ustin’ia Basharina belonged to (at least) a third generation Moscow merchant family that specialised in blacksmithing. In 1853 Ustin’ia Basharina inherited half of her father’s (Kozmi Markov Dehterev) blacksmith business and real estate. The half was inherited by her stepmother Ekaterina Dehtereva. As indicated in a court case (and Ustinia’s own last will and testament, she died in 1858), at the time of her father’s death he was heavily burdened with debts, both official and unofficial. “Since my husband knows how much and to whom my deceased father indebted without acts of indebtedness, I oblige my husband to pay all debts of my father”. 519

Letters of attorney, which illiterate merchants gave to their representatives to conduct business, present further evidence about Moscow merchants’ cautious attitude towards credit

relationships, especially in small scale retail. In total, of 66 analysed letters of attorney, half of
grantors refused, under any condition, to allow their representatives to sell or buy goods on
credit. Forty-five-year-old Moscow second guild merchant Krylov Dmitrii Ivanovich entrusted
his wife Pelageia Egorova with managing his dressmaking and tailoring establishment along
with his shop of ready-made women’s clothes in the Rogozhskaya district of Moscow. Pelageia ran both the shop and the establishment as cash only enterprises: credit transactions were strictly prohibited.

Letters of attorney usually contained a list of conditions (based on the wishes of the entity
who issued the power of attorney) about the management of the business. Among the various
conditions, whether credit was allowed, or if goods could be sold and purchased with cash only
was of primary importance. In addition, some letters contained an annual transaction limit. For
instance, fifty-eight-year-old Nastas’ia Gavrilova Polianinova was a female second guild
merchant in Moscow. Initially she purchased a merchant certificate in 1865 to run a vegetable
and wine trade enterprise in the Sretenskaya district. Nastas’ia did not own any residential
estate. She was a widow and had six sons (from 19 to 37 years old in 1856). In the letter of
attorney she entrusted two of her sons, Mikhail and Vasilii Arhipovych, to conduct her business
under two conditions. First, the total annual trade transactions should not exceed the sum of
1,000 silver roubles. Second, she prohibited cashless transactions (both for buying and
selling). Another female second guild merchant in Moscow, Anna Rodionova Uljanova (39
years old in 1862), allowed her elder son Sergei (21 years old at the time) to sell on credit and
cash, but cashless transactions required him to take and give debts warrants.

As shown above (and also discussed in Antonov’s book), the majority of Moscow merchants
tended not to acquire debts above what they could pay without challenging their business and
family material well-being before or after their death. According to the Imperial Succession
Law, if the successors accepted an inheritance, they inherited both the wealth and responsibilities (obligations) of the original property holder. Among the most important
obligations was the testator’s debts, which the successor was required to pay. Notably, if the
value of debts was higher than the sum of the inherited wealth, the successor was obliged to

520 Spravochnaia kniga o litsakh, poluchivshikh kupecheskie i promyslovye svidetelstva po g. Moskve na 1871
(Moskva, 1871), p. 170.
521 Delo po obiavlenniium negramotnykh lits kupecheskogo sostaviia s predostaleniiami im doverennostei (10
522 Spravochnaia kniga o litsakh poluchivshikh kupecheskie svidetelstva po Moskve na 1871, p. 227.
pay debts from their own funds.\textsuperscript{525} The sense of loyalty and the importance of supporting family reputations, by accepting both registered and unregistered obligations, was sometimes fatal to family businesses. The rejection of inheritances heavily burdened by debt could tear family relationships apart. The aforementioned case of Ustin’ia Basharina deserves attention not only because her testimony contained the only evidence of unofficial credit relationships in my sample of last wills, but also because the case illustrates deep commitment to family values and reputation. When her father’s inheritance was “peacefully divided” between Ustin’ia and her stepmother Ekaterina in 1854, the terms of separation indicated that Ustin’ia accepted real estate (both houses) and her father’s debts.\textsuperscript{526} The same year, Ustin’ia officially borrowed a substantial amount of money (9,300 roubles)\textsuperscript{527} from her husband, Moscow mechnshin Aleksandr Basharin.\textsuperscript{528}

Unfortunately, neither the property assessment nor the archival material contain an evaluation of Ustin’ia’s father’s debts. But that Ustin’ia was unable to pay off all debts in the five years following his death testifies the outstanding amount of his debts. By the time of Ustin’ia’s death in 1858, the amount of all debts was evaluated at 12,000 roubles. The value of the patrimonial real estate and movable property was valued at 11,178 roubles.

Ustin’ia Basharina, was not afraid to accept the inheritance even though the amount of debts exceeded the value of personal assets. On contrary, for the next five years she fought for her family business. As a result, in the first two years she was unable to buy a merchant certificate to increase her income and pay off the debts. In 1856 and until her death, however, Ustin’ia appeared as the member of the third (and lowest) guild of Moscow merchants.

Surprisingly, despite owning two houses in Moscow, Ustin’ia never took out mortgages though it was the fastest way to restore the family business. The most likely reason she did not mortgage the property could be that she thought that she would be unable to pay credit interest and save the business at the same time.\textsuperscript{529} Similarly, the credit history of her family included in

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{525} \textit{SZRI, Vol. X. part 1}, art.1259, p. 889.
\item \textsuperscript{526} Both houses were in Moscow. The first house (in the Jauzskaya district) was bought by Ustini’ia’s grandfather, Moscow merchant Mark Evdokimov Dehterev, from his second wife in 1816 (she bought it in 1804 from Moscow merchant). The second house (in the Rogozhskaya district) was purchased by Ustin’ia’s father in 1838 from two craftsmen (they inherited the house from their parents).
\item \textsuperscript{527} This amount likely covered her father’s unofficial debts.
\item \textsuperscript{528} The fact that an ordinary town dweller possessed this amount of money and, moreover, could loan it, is exceptional. For example, at that time a plot of land (without buildings) cost 800 roubles in Moscow. The two-story house and blacksmith’s shop which Ustin’ia inherited from her father was evaluated at 7,148 roubles.
\item \textsuperscript{529} For instance, the average profitability of a blacksmith shop in 1906 in the Moscow region was estimated at 15%.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
the file of probation suggests that her father did not use mortgaging as a means of paying debts, and thus Ustin’ia’s behaviour was part of the family’s assets management strategy.

Of the twenty-three debtors in my sample, ten used bills of exchange or other credit notes solely for interest-bearing and non-interest-bearing orders to loan money. Only two people in this group had no real estate to borrow against or mortgage. Nine inheritors, however, chose to accept loans using real estate as collateral. Four individuals diversified their credit portfolios by both mortgaging real estate and acquiring debts from bills of exchange or other notes. Thus, while Muscovites in general tried to avoid indebtedness, in case that they had to borrow money, they had no clear preference (i.e. mortgaging real estate or not).

In the days before her death, Ustin’ia drafted her last will, appointing her “beloved husband” Aleksandr as the only heir (presumably the couple was childless). Her husband refused to accept the inheritance likely because over 80 percent of Ustin’ia’s debt was to her husband from the loan he gave her in 1854. It is likely that he knew through declining the inheritance the loan would be paid by Ustin’ia’s relatives, three peasants, who were officially called to inherit patrimonial property. Ultimately, Ustin’ia’s last will was declared invalid. Nevertheless, Ustin’ia’s relatives did not accept her inheritance which was heavily burdened with debts owed primarily to her husband.

In the next four years, nobody accepted Ustin’ia’s inheritance and nobody paid her debts which, by 1864, reached 16,337 roubles. That same year Ustin'ia was posthumously declared bankrupt, which lead to the introduction of an administrative receivership on her personal assets. Her husband (who was registered as Moscow merchant), finally accepted his financial loss and he released the entire debt saying: “As a husband who deeply loved his wife and still respects her tender feelings and kindness, I release her debt to me.” Practically this meant that the three other legitimate heirs (her peasant family members) could not pay the remaining debt without selling the inherited real estate which her husband tried to avoid. The case was finally dismissed in 1875, more than ten years later, when the legitimate heirs paid all remaining debts and divided the real estate amongst themselves.

Based on the genealogical research of Moscow merchant families published by Aksenov, I discovered that the Dehterev merchant family probably moved to Moscow from Romanov-Borisoglebsk (a town in the Yaroslavl region) in 1786. I am inclined to believe that it was the same Dehterev that was Ustin’ia’s grandfather for two reasons. First, because Mark married his wife Marfa in Moscow. Second, because Aksenov noted that the Dehterev family (in his research) ended in the nineteenth century which coincides with my case because Ustin’ia was her father’s only child (or at least the one inheritor other than his second wife) and she was
presumably childless. Moreover, that Mark’s wife Marfa (unfortunately there is no information on her social origin or economic status) bought a house with a “stone storeroom” in 1804 with her own money, which she sold to her second husband, Mark Dehterev, in 1816. This provides evidence that the newcomer (Mark) used the marriage as the way to “fortify his position” in a new town by marrying a well-off woman from his social class.

Thus, successful upward social and economic mobility (and that the family survived Napoleon’s invasion and the Moscow fire in 1812), gave them grounds to be proud of their family. With feelings of family pride came a feeling of self-consciousness. The best way to memorialise their predecessors was to commission portraits. I assume the basis of the small portrait gallery of the proud family.

This assumption, to some extent, contradicts the widespread idea that merchant’s portraits represented an attempt “to erase the traces and memories of the past” by mimicking the behaviours of the nobility and forget their low (peasant) origin. I inclined to think that the most common way to improve social status is and was to provide children with a prestigious education and to change the pattern of consumption: i.e. to surround oneself and one’s family with household objects similar to those of the nobility. In this respect, Ustin’ia’s movable property was far from luxurious. Her possessions were evaluated at 12 roubles, and contained two copper candle holders, two towels, one calico and one wool dress, a wooden casket without decoration, an old bed, and other items of the same quality and value. Moreover, Ustin’ia was illiterate and her will was signed on her behalf by the Moscow merchant Fedor Vasil’ev El’manov.

The active presence of women in the history of personal assets management illustrates a striking paradox of Russian legislation: Russian women were almost rightless as individuals. Yet, in 1753 Russian women enjoyed equal rights to men in purchasing and managing personal assets. As an individual in familial, ecclesiastical and succession law, however, women ranked lower than men. Both married and unmarried women had to obey their male relatives’ decisions in all cases except those concerning her personal property management. Family law in the Russian Empire stipulated that marriage did not lead to the merging of spouses’

534 PSZRI, Sobranie I, Tom 13, art. 10111, p. 852.
individual property, they could still buy and sell, lend and borrow money separately without asking for the permission of their spouse.\textsuperscript{535} In this regard Russian legislation was more progressive than European legal codes while, all other general aspects, women’s rights in Europe and Russia were virtually the same.\textsuperscript{536} The disproportional relationship between women’s individual and economic rights were hotly debated among Russian legal authorities in discussions regarding whether women truly enjoyed the rights of personal property management or if “in practice, married men made no distinction between their own and their wives’ property”.\textsuperscript{537} As Michelle L. Marrese showed in her research, “noblewomen’s control of their estates was an active concept rather than a mere legal convention in many families … Married women engaged in business in their own names, were present in property transactions and assumed responsibility for managing the family estate”.\textsuperscript{538} Galina Ulianova, in focusing on business management rather than personal assets control by female Moscow entrepreneurs, came to the same conclusions as Michelle L. Marrese.\textsuperscript{539}

In 1850, “feeling old and sick” illiterate Moscow meshchanka Irina Andreeva drafted her last will and testament. Her will bypassed her only son Alexander and left all her personal assets to her niece an unmarried Moscow mechshanka named Aksinia Dmitrieva Skachkova. The niece inherited two houses and Irina’s meal trade.\textsuperscript{540} Moreover, in Irina’s will Aksinia was free to keep the retail business or sell it at any time.\textsuperscript{541} Archival research shows that three years before the will was drafted (in 1847) after “a siege of illness,” without leaving a will, Irina’s husband (Moscow meshchanin Nikolai Dmitrievich Rahmanov) died. His wealth, in comparison to his wife’s, was modest. He owned a substantial amount of land in Moscow, which he purchased in 1819 for 800 roubles, a house (a simple single-floor wooden house without a foundation), a stable, a well and a wooden shed. The entire personal estate was evaluated at 1,142 roubles.\textsuperscript{542} Nikolai’s personal belongings were timeworn and simple and were estimated at under 8 roubles in total.

Notably, as far as I can tell, all his personal assets were purchased with money (2,100 roubles) borrowed from his illiterate wife Irina Andreeva. This demonstrates that it was not

\textsuperscript{535} \textit{SZRI}, Vol. X. part 1, art. 109, p. 769.
\textsuperscript{536} Marrese: ‘Gender and the Legal Order’, p. 328.
\textsuperscript{537} Marrese: ‘Gender and the Legal Order’, p. 332.
\textsuperscript{538} Marrese: ‘Gender and the Legal Order’, p. 329.
\textsuperscript{539} Ulianova, \textit{Female Entrepreneurs}.
\textsuperscript{540} One originally belonged to Irina and the other to her deceased husband. After his death, his house went to Irina to cover a loan he did not repay to her.
only noblewomen (as in Marrese’s book) and well-off female merchants (in Ulianova’s research) who were actively engaged in personal assets management through providing loans, purchasing real estate, establishing trade enterprises and defending those assets in the court, but for petty retailers as well. Thus, besides lending a substantial amount of money to her husband, Irina could buy real estate and run a flour (meal) trade as a small shopkeeper. Nikolai appears to have borrowed money from his wife to buy a land, to build a house, and maybe to invest in his own business.

Unfortunately, Nikolai was unable to pay off his debt, which exceeded his wealth. In the 28 years between when Nikolai borrowed money (1819) when he died (1847), Irina did not sue him for not paying his debt. It appears, however, that she expected that their son Aleksandr would take care of his father’s debts. In 1850, when the last hope that Aleksandr would accept his father’s inheritance disappeared, Irina drafted her own last will which excluded her son. There is no direct evidence if this situation strained their relationship, but it seems convincing that considering Aleksandr’s refusal to pay his fathers’ debts, and Irina’s unwillingness to waive the debt, led to the deterioration of their relationship.

The stories of these two families show how inheritance debt could destroy the relationship between a mother and her son or alternatively, be disastrous for businesses and family assets.

4.3.4. Capital

In this section I will comment on the development of a security market in the Russian Empire providing statistics on the distribution of investments and savings among the population (in general) and in my sample (in detail). Additionally, I will provide several examples of capital management by merchants and members of their families.

The second director of the State Bank of the Russian Empire, Evgenii Ivanovich Lamanskii, characterised the period after the emancipation of the serfs as a time when literally everybody was involved in the stock exchange market. He underlined that “even an illiterate person” has learned the meaning of “the exchange (house), stocks, bonds, state inner loans, etc.” It was the time of the so-called “joint boom” (akcionernyi bum). At the same time Hrulev Sergey Stepanovich’s 1909 work Essays on Russian Finance narrowed the circle of “literally everybody” to the urban population and especially to nobles, merchants, clergy and bureaucrats.

who, at best comprised 20 percent of the Russian population (26,000,000 people). In total, by the beginning of the twentieth century, these groups held various types of stocks valued at 5,510,000,000 roubles. The rural population was not involved in the security market: “they did not know what it meant to invest money in securities”.

Factory workers with predominately rural backgrounds were another large group of the population beyond the reach of the security market. If we look at the statistics of personal savings in banks or the average workers’ wages and the ratio of spending based on wages, the enormous number of individuals Lamanskii described as involved in this process is obviously exaggerated (Table 4.1).

A better way to evaluate how wages corresponded to reality is to show the ratio of wages to average expenditures and to compare it with the lowest value of a stock. Strumilin estimated that the average monthly wage of a Saint Petersburg worker in 1914 was 26.75 roubles. Workers would spend almost the half of those wages, 11.75 roubles, on food. The remaining 15 roubles was spent on the following items: 20 percent on housing, 12.5 percent on clothes and footwear and 5 percent on culture and entertainment. The remaining 2.6 percent of worker’s wages were sent to their parents to help support them, pay rural taxes or was spent on other payments. Thus, an average worker had almost no expendable income at the end of the month and was living literally from pay check to pay check.

Were factory workers able to earn extra income apart from their factory wages? Unfortunately, the answer to this question for the majority of factory workers, who on average comprised 30 percent of the urban population in 1897, was no. The working conditions and the cost of living in urban areas did not provide the possibility of any extraneous sources of income. They could, however, save money in their bank account.

Further evidence to demonstrate that only a small portion of the population was involved in the securities market was that the lowest value of one stock in the majority of companies (of the 543 companies offering stock) in 1912 was 250 roubles. Only 9 companies offered stocks for 50 roubles per stock. It is obvious that even the lowest priced stocks were absolutely

546 Dikhtiar, G.A., Vnutrenniaia torgovlia v Dorevoliutsionnoi Rossi (Moskva, 1960), Table 10, 49.
547 Rashin, Naselenie Rossii, Table 268, p. 322.
unaffordable for the great majority of the Russian population. For comparison, shortly before the First World War, the London Stock Exchange made an incredible offer by introducing the so-called “1 pound sterling shares”.

The high price of stocks in the Russian Empire was, to a large extent, regulated by the State. The State was entitled to regulate the minimal value of the registered capital for companies. This meant that if the minimal registered capital was X roubles, consequently the minimal value of stock was Y. Through this regulation the State aimed to prevent the illiterate population from risking their capital (both in general and in this field in particular). It would appear that the poverty of the population, in this case, perhaps accomplished this task more effectively.

Nevertheless, the question remains how many people could afford the risk management of their assets if they happened to have some extra money? Unfortunately, in the case of the Russian Empire, there are no official statistics on the exact number of individual investors or information about average income by social status and occupation. This data could shed light on investors’ level of trust in the State and the level of an individual’s well-being. To a certain extent, the gap in official statistics could be filled by two sources. The first are the statistics of personal savings in banks in the second half of the nineteenth century (Table 4.11). The second source is the data on the number of people making a living from rent and savings/capitals. The statistics on rentiers and investors was gathered for the Russian Imperial Census of 1897.

Certainly, one may speculate, but this topic is beyond the scope of this study. Moshenskii, Rynok tsennykh bumag, p. 234.

In 1913 one pound was equal to 9.46 roubles. Bogolepov, M.I., Russkie birzhevye tsennosti (1914-1915) (Pg., 1915).

Moshenskii, Rynok tsennykh bumag, p. 236.

Moshenskii, Rynok tsennykh bumag, p. 236.

Moshenskii, Rynok tsennykh bumag, p. 230. Estimations made by the introduction to the State Commission on Income Tax show the number of people with an annual income above 1,000 roubles, but only included general distribution by occupations.

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Table 4. Distribution of bank deposits by depositor’s occupation and value of deposits in the Russian Empire, in 1913

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number of bank books*</th>
<th>Value of deposits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landowning</td>
<td>39,639</td>
<td>926,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming</td>
<td>2,546,643</td>
<td>480,248,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban craftsmen</td>
<td>1,121,539</td>
<td>179,527,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabric workers</td>
<td>456,611</td>
<td>72,592,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>712,741</td>
<td>113,147,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>680,493</td>
<td>149,527,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal service</td>
<td>1,299,828</td>
<td>246,637,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1,751,188</td>
<td>298,893,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>8,608,682</td>
<td>1,549,835,700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*the upper value of a non-corporate customer’s bank book was 1,000 roubles.

In 1910 the Russian Empire controlled 5 percent of the total amount of outstanding wealth in the world in contrast to 24 controlled by British investors and 18 percent by the French.\(^{555}\) In 1904 the Russian Empire registered 4,854,335 savings bank passbooks with the total deposit amount slightly above one billion roubles (1,025,000,000) or 207 roubles per book. In contrast, in 1903 in Germany 9,773,103 savings books were registered with total deposits of 3,349,000,000 roubles (343 roubles per book). France registered 11,669,961 savings books valued at 1,622,000,000 roubles (139 roubles per book).\(^{556}\) The substantial difference in the value of bank savings between France and Germany could be attributed not to the total value of personal wealth but rather to a discrepancy in investment preferences: French petty investors used their money to buy securities as soon as they had enough money to do so. Germans preferred to keep money in bank accounts regardless its amount.\(^{557}\) Whereas the value of savings in Russian banks grew continuously, its proportion to the total population both in the value and the number of depositors was low, which testifies to the lack of considerable improvement in well-being.\(^{558}\) As Khrulev noted, “if the Russian population was as rich as the Germans, we would have eight instead of one billion in savings in banks”.\(^{559}\) Savings were distributed unequally between cities, regions and people of different occupations (*Table 4.11*).

Unfortunately, these estimations cannot be supported or improved by data on the number of people living from rent and savings/capital gathered for the First Russian Census in 1897. It

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557 Khrulev, *Finansy Rossii*, p. 156.
558 In 1909 there were 6,550,757 bank books whose value totalled 1,207,556,785; in 1914 – 8,991,571 bank books accounted for 1,685,370,506 roubles in deposits. *Ezhegodnik ministerstva finansov*, vol. 1915 (SPb, 1915), pp. 196–197.
559 Khrulev, *Finansy Rossii*, p. 156.
should be bared in mind that the aforementioned data represents only indirect evidence of the number of investors and rentiers. On its own, the mixture of investors and rentiers grouped together negatively affects the quality of data. Moreover, some investors who had savings and stocks did not consider themselves to be living off of investments because they had other, sometimes more profitable, sources of income. Rentiers often had combined income: from rent and stocks simultaneously.⁵⁶⁰

The Central Statistic Committee (CSK) estimated that the proportion of investors and rentiers to the total population of the Empire was equal to 0.26 percent or 328,513 people. Geographically, the rentiers and investors (as indicated by the CSK) were distributed in following manner: Saint Petersburg, the administrative and financial centre of the Empire and most populous city in 1897 (1,264,900 residents) gathered the biggest number of investors and rentiers – 45,303 people or 3.6 percent of the population.⁵⁶¹ In Moscow the proportion of rentiers and investors to the total population of 1,038,600 was 0.3 percent or 26,148 people.⁵⁶²

The way people manage their extra money, or even more importantly, the presence of the will or opportunity to earn extra income, is one of the fundamental characteristics indicating the level of well-being of the society and the State. As discussed in the introduction to Chapter 1, merchants had low levels of trust in the State because they were not protected from bureaucratic abuses and corruption. Moreover, the mandatory annual renewal of merchant patents, as the result of the non-hereditary status, made their position extremely vulnerable. This also probably pushed them to run their business without much transparency and not to avoid speculation, which lowered risk and the value of the business through abstaining from relying on official credit.

The inventories of capital in probations provide the unique opportunity to see the actual economic behaviour of people. This source eliminates the limitations of both official statistics and approximate estimations of the number of investors made by securities trade markets or banks. Inventories provide complete information over investors’ mannerisms (for example, if they invested in low or high-risk stocks), and also show if the person, rather than investing or depositing money in banks, preferred to keep their assets in cash or in gold or silver coins. Moreover, the inventory of debts and what was owed reveals whether the testator preferred to

⁵⁶⁰ Moshenskii, Rynok tsennykh bumag, p. 231.
⁵⁶² Pervaia Vseobshchaia perepis naseleniia Rossiiskoi Imperii 1897 g., vol. XXIV (Moskovskaia guberniia) (SPb, 1905), p. 185.
lend money inside of their own credit network (to people whom they trusted) rather than to buy stocks.

Certainly, even by eliminating the problem of the actual amounts and the composition of individual investments in securities, there is still the issue of unofficial lending i.e. without debt documents which made these relations invisible (both in value and the number of people who were involved). For the second part of the nineteenth century, however, these kinds of credit relations can be deemed less significant than it was a century earlier. Another way to investigate investment preferences is to enquire whether the testator was more prone to invest money in real estate or stocks. “It was high society that was playing the stock market. The nobles and bureaucrats. While serfdom was abolished, the need [to maintain a certain life styles which before] fulfilled by serfdom [for nobles] is still in place. In stocks, they [nobles and bureaucrats] see a new kind of a quitrent. Merchants prefer other sources of income…”

Nevertheless, it was not only nobles but also wealthy peasants, mechshane and military men who invested money in stocks.

In my random sample of personal assets inventories, the capital (from money in cash to high/low risk stocks) was indicated in 23 out of 52 cases (or 42.6 percent). Three people from the 23 cases had capital in cash which they kept at home. One person in that group, a former peasant-landowner (krest'janin sobstvennik) had become a Moscow merchant of the second guild by the time of his death. This merchant, Filip Mihailovich Varakin (1826-1873) kept all his excess capital, 653 roubles, in gold (625) and silver (28) coins. As Khrulev observed, the majority of peasants who had savings preferred to keep it in gold and silver coins (as Filip did), while a small number of wealthy peasants invested money in rent.

In contrast to Filip Varakin, his third wife, Praskov'ia Petrovna (who moved with him to Moscow at the end of the 1860s), seemed to be more experienced in the profitable opportunities of bank savings and interest. By his last will, she inherited the house and the factory, however, he left the materials and production to his three sons from his second marriage. In his lifetime Filip mortgaged the house to a credit organisation and had, at the time of his death, debts estimated at 16,000 roubles. By 1877, four years after Filip’s death, his successors had still not paid off the debt. It forced the creditor to insist on the introduction of a guardianship to get the...

563 Doroshevich, V.M., Sobranie sochinenii v 3 t., in Sobranie sochinenii v 3 t., vol. 2, Moskva, 1905.
565 He had a factory (and trade) for production of half-woollen and cotton textile
567 Khrulev, Finansy Rossii, p. 154.
money back. The poor condition of the house and the steadily decreasing income from it (expected at 5,000 but Praskov'ia Petrovna only received 1,000 net profit), forced Praskov'ia Petrovna to offer to the Court of Wards to sell the house to the Partnership of Prohorovskoj Trehgornoi Manufactory for 60,000 roubles. The partnership intended to make the house a residence for workers. Praskov'ia Petrovna explained her offer to the Court as the simple and best solution for both parties. Because the house was mortgaged and unprofitable (and she had almost no money to support herself and her two underage daughters, María and Nadezhda), the sale of the house offered the opportunity to deposit money in the bank at a 5 percent interest rate, providing a stable income. “From the 2,000 of roubles of an annual deposit income I and my two daughters can live comfortably, and I can provide them a decent education. Moreover, after my death they will inherit a net capital, not a ruined house which cannot provide any income”.

From this example, we can see how husbands and wives could have different understandings of money management. That is, Filip Varakin used his real estate as collateral for State credit. He also lent 40 percent of his wealth under the bills of exchange to borrowers he knew personally, but did not trust securities. Even if we do not know the total amount of credit he borrowed from the State Credit Society, he was only 16,000 roubles in debt when he died, so it is likely he borrowed only a part of the value of his house (from the total value at 60,000) or he borrowed on the whole value of his house, made a rapid and profitable deal and, as a result, could pay back the majority of his debt quickly. Either way it presents him as a prudent merchant who was unwilling to take risks. That he preferred to loan money to familiar borrowers explains his lack of interest in the relatively new investment opportunities (new and therefore untrustworthy) in contrast to his personal networks which were based on reputation.

Nevertheless, despite the discrepancy in money management between Varakin and his wife it is clear they had something in common: though in different ways, they both chose not to pursue risky investments if an alternative option was available. Varakin chose to accumulate money in real estate, gold coins and lending money through his personal trust network. His wife chose to retire on the low risk deposit interest in the State Bank of the Russian Empire, which was a safe way to save money with the added opportunity of getting low but stable returns.

569 He bought the house in 1871 after living in Moscow for three years and obtaining membership in the merchant guild.
In my case study, depositing funds in the State bank (as the only way to invest or save money chosen by members of my sample) was practiced by only four merchants, three of which were first guild merchants. Interestingly, the amount of the deposits proportionally corresponded to total levels of wealth: wealthier merchants saved a smaller proportion of their money in banks. At the same time, a wealthier person would likely rather lend money under bills of exchange than deposit it. For example, the total wealth (without debts subtracted) of Vasili Popov was evaluated at 1.5 million roubles. He deposited 4 percent of his wealth (66,049 roubles) in a bank. The proportion of his debts were insignificant (2.6 percent), However, the ratio of money he lent, however, made up 23 percent of his total wealth. In contrast, the proportion of wealth which less wealthy merchant Ksenofont Bubnov’s deposited money was 44 percent (67,565 roubles) of his total wealth. His debts and lent money made up almost the same proportion of his wealth: 5 and 5.5 percent respectively.

On the whole, the group of individuals who had capital was divided almost equally between those who combined investments and money lending (13 cases) and those who had only capital and did not lend it (10 cases). It is obvious that individual economic behaviour was strongly influenced by age, their past and professional experience (here I am referring to the number of years they spent in the guild). On average, individuals who combined investments and money lending were younger (49 years old) but more experienced in trade (14 years of guild membership on average) than individuals who had only capital and were aged (64 years old, 10 years in guild). On average, however the second group of investors (those who did not lend) was slightly wealthier than the first, with the average wealth estimated at 162,343 roubles and the value of median investment at 39,556 roubles. The median wealth of the group who combined investments with money lending made 147,483 roubles, although they invested on average only 6,588 roubles and lent 26,976 roubles. Thus, it is clear that even if younger and slightly more experienced merchants divided their wealth between investments and lending, the proportion of the division was not in favour of securities.

The main object of investment for members of my sample was real estate. Twenty out of twenty-two merchants in my sample purchased a house before buying securities or saving

572 In all cases I use the median value.
money. Merchants usually purchased a home after 8.5 years of membership in the guild. Some, for example, like three merchants in my sample who were formerly affluent peasants were able to purchase real estate years (from 4 to 9) before their official entrance to the merchant soslovie.

In general, the median value of capital (for 23 individuals) was estimated at 18,340 roubles. The mean, however, is 66,412 roubles, which shows that the distribution of capital was highly unequal. Percentage wise, the proportion of capital to the total amount of wealth in the entire sample (without debts subtracted) is 11.6 percent (the median), with a smaller range of dispersion from the mean. The internal composition of investments reveals that 20 percent of the money from the total amount of capital (1,157,482) was held in cash, however one merchant accounts for 20 percent of this amount (320,000), and thus strongly skews the data. For this reason, and to produce a more normal distribution, I excluded this amount and concluded that the final proportion of money in cash was 2.3 percent.

Around 80 percent of all capital was invested in stocks, shares and mortgage bonds. In this case I also excluded the capital of the noblewoman (288,862) which skewed the data by 20 percent. Finally, 16 percent of capital owned by the members of my sample (under 5 percent of interest) was deposited in banks.

In all, despite that 80 percent of capital which was invested in stocks, shares and bonds I still cannot characterise the investment behaviour of merchants as “risky”. Moreover, the absolute amount of investments compared to the total amount of wealth was modest. The majority of investments were made in low-risk State obligations. Furthermore, the median value of investments at 11 percent to the total amount of wealth) demonstrates that in the second half of the nineteenth century, these investments were individually chosen and did not cover the outstanding proportion of Russian population. Impersonal investments, based on market conditions, could be characterised as high-risk. For comparison, the median proportion of invested capital was 11 percent, while the median proportion of lent money was 25 percent. Nevertheless, I should stress that merchants (of different guilds and origins), who traditionally

573 I excluded one merchant because the capital in cash that remained after his death was money he had to put aside as the deposit to be registered as a temporary merchant (in this case he was a member of two different social classes at the same time: both a peasant and a merchant).
574 This was estimated based on 12 available cases.
575 This issue was discussed by Aksenov in Aksenov, Genealogiia moskovskogo kupechestva.
576 N. P. Vishnjakov, in his memoirs, mentioned that some merchants kept large amounts of money in cash so they could make profitable deals more quickly than their competitors who kept money in banks. If there was an opportunity to sell goods immediately in cash but at lower price as opposed to waiting for the buyer to transfer money from their bank account (for buying goods at higher price), merchants usually chose cash or bills of exchange. In this case, time was the essential factor.
avoided any risky deals, began to invest in banks and stocks. This is a key sign of economic development and an indicator of trust between the State and society.
Conclusion

The question that continues to puzzle scholars is whether the fascinating economic growth of the Russian Empire in the last quarter of the nineteenth century positively influenced not only the value of National Product, but also the value of personal wealth. And if so, how unequally personal wealth was distributed socially and geographically? By applying data on the value of transferred inheritances and gifts inter-vivos in the Late Imperial Russia and also by adding some reconstructed [by me] data lacking from official records, I established that the value of intergenerational wealth transfers between 1888 and 1905 increased by 18 percent, the value of gifts to the value of inheritances for these two dates also increased by 7.2 to 12.4 percent, according to my additional calculations. People, certainly, accumulate wealth on a slower pace than does the state (GNP). Thus, if the wealth of the dead increased by 18 percent, the value of GNP doubled, which explains the decrease of the proportion of transferred inheritances to GNP from 4.2 to 2.7 percent.

My calculations also show that two Russian capital cities (in 1888-1890) concentrated 42 percent in value and 20 percent in number of all transferred inheritances over 1,000 roubles in the Russian Empire. The average value of transferred wealth in Moscow and Saint Petersburg (above 60,000 roubles) was two times higher compared to national average (30,907 roubles). The inequality of wealth distribution in the Russian Empire was obvious both along geographical and social lines. Thus, my data on the value of wardships (for urban dwellers, except nobles and peasants) in Moscow in 1892 show that the richest social estate was the honorary citizens who were 150 times richer than the artisans who were at the end of the list (average value of wealth 96,632 and 638 roubles).

The internal composition of personal wealth mostly based on guild merchant’s inheritance probations, showed that while around 40 percent of personal assets merchants used to keep in real estate, the rest was almost equally distributed among capital, debts, loans and business premises. The data in my sample showed that while merchants were still actively engaged in personal credits, they kept loans and debts in balance. The excess of capital they preferred to keep in stocks.
Chapter 5: Inheritance and Inequality in the Past

This chapter is about last wills, and in particular, what they can tell us about the role of intergenerational transfers in the reproduction of social and economic inequality in the Russian Empire. In this chapter I question how the bequeathing patterns of the urban population (merchants and entrepreneurs in particular) could have influenced wealth inequality, the development of the Russian middle class, as well as social and occupational mobility in Moscow between the eighteenth century and 1917. The initial hypothesis of this chapter is that the patterns of wealth transmission among merchants changed between the eighteenth and the end of the long nineteenth century from less gender equal and focused on members of nuclear family to more inequality-generating strategies i.e. more egalitarian. This, together with a general increase in the number of wealth holders between the eighteenth and late nineteenth centuries, substantially increased material inequality among Muscovites because approximately half of personal wealth in Moscow was owned by merchants.

5.1. Material Inequality: Causes, Effects and the Role of Inheritance

Current scholarship about material inequality has already produced many publications which address the nature, evolution and effects of wealth and income inequality on the evolution of nations, states and cities. These studies range chronologically from the ancient world to predictive simulations of future developments. The role of historical data appears to be crucial in the reconstruction and prediction of the waves and curves of inequality. The causes and effects of material inequality are usually studied through the distribution of income and wealth patterns within the group of individuals in a given study.

To study income inequality scholars use several kinds of sources: (1) household surveys, (2) health related data (anthropometric measures from mortality data), (3) social tables (tables where salient economic classes were listed with their estimated incomes and population size), (4) professional censuses and (5) tax censuses. Yet, in comparison with the abundance of contemporary sources on income inequality, scholars who study wealth inequality from the historical perspective are less fortunate. Will probations and property inventories be the main sources used to explore wealth inequality over centuries.

In general, there are two approaches to studying the outcomes of intergenerational transfers: (1) through investigating the relationship between inheritance and income (Thomas Piketty, Anthony Atkinson and others), and (2) through comparing inherited wealth with self-made wealth while taking in account the stock of the total amount of private wealth (L. Kotlikoff, L. Summers, F. Modigliani). Both approaches rely heavily on the “life cycle hypothesis” which assumes that in different age groups the ability to generate and accumulate income differs and is usually sex-specific. For example, the successful accumulation of wealth between the ages of 30 and 60, would reverse in old age which, however, could be neutralised by retirement payments.

Across the globe, material equality is uneven, and similarly some countries are better at preserving accurate historical data than others. For example, there are comparatively complete collections of social, demographic and economic statistics in some European countries (France, the Netherlands, Britain, and Italy among others) which allow scholars to trace the origins and development of material inequality from the pre-industrial period (and in some cases even earlier) to the present. Unlike these European countries, in the Russian Empire “no representative income or wealth surveys were undertaken across different sectors at any point of time”. The field of material inequality in the Russian Empire is limited to three main studies by Steven Nafziger, his co-author Peter H. Lindert, Boris Mironov and Albert Vainshtein. Neither of these works tackle the issue of wealth inequality. Lindert and Nafziger estimated income inequality in a limited chronological period (1904) but extended their study to include geographical, social and occupational characteristics. B. Mironov studied the more general issue of the evolution of standards of living throughout the Imperial period, relying

mainly on anthropometrical data.\textsuperscript{582} Albert Vainshtein focused on value and composition of National Income.\textsuperscript{583}

In general, scholars agree that material inequality has always accompanied human development. Under the influence of different factors, however, it could increase or decrease, sometimes even asynchronously in countries similar in other socio-economic characteristics. Yet, Milanovich underlines that there is more variance in inequality in individual countries over time than between countries.\textsuperscript{584} According to Van Zanden, there are three theories (hypotheses) which single out different events as the driving moments for the upward or downward movement of inequality.\textsuperscript{585} The first (non-chronologically) theory was developed by Simon Kuznets\textsuperscript{586} who believed that the increase of inequality was predominantly connected to the beginning of Modern Economic Growth (MEG). MEG is the period which was characterised by the shifting of labour from low income and productivity sectors (here, agriculture) to high income (wage and salary) and high productivity (industry) areas. Kuznets stated that inequality increases until at least half of the labour force left the agricultural sector. When more than half of the population moves to urban areas and works in industry, the coefficient of inequality will start to decline (the “\∩-shape of inequality curve”).

Looking at the changes in the relative importance and the degree of power of different social groups such as the nobility, entrepreneurs and the working class, Smith, Ricardo and Marx explained the change in terms of the degree of income and wealth inequality (this is the second hypothesis). Processes such as proletarianization, the decline in the level of real wages, and the accumulation and concentration of capital in the hands of the urban population (and especially in the centres of international trade), prompted the increase of inequality.

The third hypothesis suggests that proletarianization and industrialisation not only generated changes in the functional distribution of capital and power (as Marx, Ricardo and Smith assumed), but also the stratification of earnings between high and low skilled workers. According to Jeffrey G. Williamson, the permanently growing demand for highly skilled workers and stable relations between low and high wages during the first stage of Modern Economic Growth (MEG) explains the upswing of Kuznets’ curve. In his hypothesis, skilled

\textsuperscript{582} Mironov, Standard of Living,
\textsuperscript{583} Vainshtein, A.L., Naronyi dokhod v Rossii i SSSR. istoriia, metodologiiia ischisleniia, dinamika (Moskva, 1969).
\textsuperscript{584} Milanovic, Lindert and Williamson: ‘Pre-Industrial Inequality’, p. 268.
\textsuperscript{585} van Zanden: ‘Tracing the Beginning of the Kuznets Curve’, pp. 655–658.
workers with high wages were the factor that brought a certain degree of equilibrium to the British economy which had been thrown into disarray by the industrial revolution.\footnote{Williamson, J. G., \textit{Did British Capitalism Breed Inequality?} (London, 2014).}

In relying on coefficients of material inequality, scholars try to explain not only past wars and revolutions, but also predict economic crises and political upheavals. Every new article on material inequality tries to identify ultimate factors or true laws which drive inequality, but every time a “new law” is put forth, it confronts limitations and becomes cluttered with exceptions. For example, in France the comparatively high material inequality in the last quarter of the eighteenth century (Gini coefficient - .59) led to the French Revolution. Yet, almost the same coefficient existed in Britain in 1759 (.52) and it did not lead to any political upheavals.\footnote{Morrisson, C. and Snyder, W., 'The Income Inequality of France in Historical Perspective', \textit{European Review of Economic History}, 4, 1 (2000), pp. 59–83, pp.69,76.} The history of Late Imperial Russia also provides an example of conflicting factors that determined inequality. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Russia was beginning to enjoy the first fruits of MEG (from 1882 according to P. Gregory). The proportion of the urban population (and the population in general) was growing. The Tsarist economy grew at annual rate of 3.25 (1885-1913) which was very high at that time.\footnote{Gregory, \textit{Russian National Income}, pp. 146–149.} Despite elevated economic and population growth, both of which drive material inequality,\footnote{Milanovic, Lindert and Williamson: 'Pre-Industrial Inequality', p. 256.} the Gini coefficient was moderate (.36)\footnote{Nafziger and Lindert: ‘Russian Inequality’, p. 790.} by the standards of the time. Also, despite the moderate coefficient of inequality, living standards, at least among the rural population (which accounted for two thirds of the Russian population even at the eve of the 1917 Revolutions) seem to have improved over the previous 30 years of the Russian Empire’s existence.\footnote{Nafziger and Lindert: ‘Russian Inequality’, pp. 793–794.} Thus, if there are so many exceptions and coefficients of inequality that do not provide a means of unbiased comparison, the question is: should we care about inequality and if “yes” than how? In the Russian case, it seems that the coefficient of inequality cannot explain the political upheavals of the first quarter of the twentieth century.\footnote{The Soviet historiographical tradition explained that revolution was the result of high material inequality between starving workers and peasants and the gluttonous rich Russian capitalists. Empirical scholarship cannot confirm such ill relations. Gregory, \textit{Russian National Income}, p. 149; Nafziger and Lindert: ‘Russian Inequality’, p. 794; Markevich, A. and Harrison, M., \textit{Great War, Civil War, and Recovery: Russia’s National Income, 1913 to 1928} (2011).} The question is whether wealth and income inequality matter. Equally should we care about inequality if it fails to explain the most important historical events? My research shows that we should care, but only if we understand the issue of inequality not as a coefficients-computing-procedure or use it to narrow the gap
between the 1 percent of rich and 99 percent of poor (or 20 and 80 percent). Instead, I suggest we focus on the more flexible issue of fairness of distribution and try to understand which strategies of inheritance transmission generate unequal opportunities. The one-dimensional conception that high income/wealth inequality is especially harmful to economic growth, and low inequality automatically leads to prosperity and high economic growth, cannot be proven as Russian history indicates. As such, it is a futile task to perceive inequality as income disparity. It is a similarly futile task to attempt to answer why some countries develop more quickly than others, or why individuals in a given country are richer than others.

The minimal interpretative potential of bold coefficients and historical data has long been acknowledged. For example, Philip T. Hoffman has suggested that nominal income inequality fails to explain real inequality in the long term. The introduction of real income inequality, however, when taking into account the price effect on consumption, shows why the rich become richer and the poor become poorer. By definition, the poorer the household, the greater the proportion it spends on staple foodstuffs, and the smaller the percentage it spends on services and luxury goods. When the prices of staple foods increase and the prices of luxury goods decrease, the inequality gap widens which, according to Hoffman and his colleagues, was the case in Britain between 1500 and 1800.594

The same effect, however, influenced late Imperial Russian authorities who were preoccupied by indirect taxation. In 1913 the indirect taxes brought the State Treasury two times more money (33.5 percent) than socially more equitable and direct taxes on urban real estate, property transmission and entrepreneurial activity (promyslovyi nalog). By 1916 the proportion of indirect taxes increased by 139 percent (compared to 1913), accounting for slightly less than half of all collected taxes.595 Proportionally, the total value of direct taxation collected in 1911 in Russia was 13.7 percent. In Britain,596 the proportion was 31.5 percent, in France it was 19.5 percent and in Germany it was 28.3 percent.597 In 1913, the average Russian spent 13.5 percent of income on taxes (both direct and indirect), while the average German spent 9.4, Frenchmen spent 11.7, and Englishmen spent 10.5.598 This example shows that the

595 Zakharov, Petrov and Shatsillo, Istoriia nalogov, pp. 237, 267.
596 J. Mokyr finds that the comparatively low proportion of indirect taxes on staples provided social stability even though the level of income inequality was comparatively high. Mokyr, Enlightened Economy, p. 431.
597 Zakharov, Petrov and Shatsillo, Istoriia nalogov, p. 236.
598 Vainshtein, A. L., Oblozhenie i platezhi krestianstva v dovoennoe i revoliutsionnoe vremia (Moskva, 1924), p. 127.
real causes of political and social instability were probably not in nominal, but rather based in real income inequality and disproportional indirect taxation.

Institutions, as opposed to events (the industrial revolution, the Black Death, changes in labour wages, urbanisation, and others), are at the centre of another approach to studying inequality. Among inequality-generating institutions the most important are: land ownership, private property rights, colonial extractive institutions, and inheritance systems all play a role (in addition to other factors). Some scholars suggest that wealth inequality is determined by the intergenerational transmission of assets. Yet the effect of inheritance on the level of wealth inequality and the proportion of inherited and self-made wealth varies across countries and chronological periods.

The wealth of the deceased, rather than the wealth of the living (income accumulation), seems to exhibit more pronounced inequality effects in the long run. In this regard, scholarships which based on samples of wills, their probations and the valuations of gifts transferred inter vivos appear to be very important to the comparative study of material inequality and living standards in the past. Cases of intergenerational transmissions, supplemented by the value,
size and composition of bequests (especially observed in a large sample of wills and probations), can provide us with additional answers about the causes of big political, technological, social and economic events. For example, gender inequality was, for a long time, reproduced by the institutions of inheritance. Both in rural and other social estates based on landed property ownership (the gentry, aristocracy), daughters usually received a dowry in the form of liquid assets. This was usually lower than the shares allocated to sons (or a son). In some provinces of Spain testators used to transfer all wealth to only one successor. Other family members had a choice: either move from the casa (sp. - house) penniless or stay and help to maintain it.\textsuperscript{601} Such extreme instances of primogeniture, however, were rare in other countries.

In the Russian Empire, as shown in Michelle L. Marrese’s research, landed aristocrats perpetuated higher overall levels of wealth inequality by providing daughters with a share of inheritance equal to that of the son’s, but in liquid form. It is important that in the last wills and in separation notes testators stressed that the dowry (which consisted of liquid assets) be used to purchase landed estates or villages. Poorer noble families, however, were more likely to bequeath a small plot of land, a serf or a modest share of movable assets (personalty).\textsuperscript{602} Poor testators left land, while rich testators left income. Thomas Piketty is one of the most influential modern proponents of the view that inheritance flow\textsuperscript{603} is a universal tool which can be useful in determining the depth of income/wealth inequality. It can be used to predict whether material inequality will increase or decrease. For example, according to his calculations, in 2050 French citizens will (again) live in a “golden age of inheritance” because the inheritance flow will be again 20–25 percent of national income (the last time inheritance flow reached this value was between 1820 and 1910, whereas in 1950 it decreased to 5 percent).\textsuperscript{604} His data suggest that between 1850 and 1910 the share of inherited wealth was above 85 percent of the total wealth in France.\textsuperscript{605} Piketty comments that Paris, at the time, was a city of “rentiers” rather than a city

Davies: ‘Relative Impact of Inheritance’; Kotlikoff and Summers: ‘Role of Intergenerational Transfers’; 


\textsuperscript{602} Marrese, \textit{Babe tsarstvo}, pp. 185–186.

\textsuperscript{603} Inheritance flow is the total market value of all assets transmitted after death (gifts inter vivos included).

\textsuperscript{604} Piketty: ‘On the Long-Run Evolution’, p. 1071.

\textsuperscript{605} Piketty, \textit{Capital}, p. 507.
of “opportunities”. In Paris alone between 1872-1937, 10 percent of inheritors held 70 percent of wealth.606 At the same time between 1790 and 1870 only 8-10 percent of each age cohort received an inheritance equal to lifetime labour income (by 1910 this dropped to 2 percent).607

In reality, the role of inheritance actively determines whether inheritors are free from the need to earn a living and indicates negative equality outcomes. The basic law is that the more significant the role inheritance plays in a society, the higher the coefficient on material inequality would be. Thus, in general, the high proportion of inherited wealth and its primary importance for those who wanted to achieve top social positions and comfort, means that the society is not meritocratic. In a non-meritocratic society human capital (skill) accounts for less and the role of labour income is lower. Societies with equal opportunities, however, are not societies of equal incomes. In a meritocratic society (“a society of superstars/supermanagers”), “the peak of the income hierarchy is dominated by very high incomes from labour rather [than] by inherited wealth”, but high inequality remains.608

In his book Capital in the Twenty-First Century, Thomas Piketty provides a fascinating picture of the changing role of intergenerational wealth transmission but focuses on the effects rather than the causes of inequality. In his account, the decline of the role of inheritance, which became pronounced at the turn of the twentieth century, is attributed to (1) the introduction of the progressive estate and income taxation in 1901 (which absorbed the wealth of the rentier society) and (2) to both World Wars. Thus, when rentier society was denied low taxes on income and personal assets (inheritance), the high returns which perpetuated its very existence faded. The level of material inequality decreased, and the role of labour income increased.609

James B. Davies and Peter J. Kuhn’s empirical research also acknowledges the importance of inheritance in perpetuating material inequality “through sharing of luck across the generations of a family”. The elevated role of inheritance is usually accompanied by low taxes: this not only perpetuates family fortunes but also motivates people to work harder in order to increase savings which, in turn, increases overall wealth inequality.610 Raising taxes on wealth in a society where the rich are unable to evade taxes substantially decreases inequality. The first visible results, however, usually only appear after three generations.

607 Piketty, Capital, p. 533.
608 Piketty, Capital, p. 331.
The progressively high taxation of personal wealth and estates in France, without a doubt, influenced the proportion of inheritors and inherited wealth. Normally partible inheritance (especially when enforced) was accompanied by low in-life asset accumulation and led to rapid asset fragmentation and the depletion of wealth equality. The outcomes of Piketty’s research point in the opposite direction. By the beginning of the twentieth century, 65 percent of adult descendants filed estate tax returns which means that more than the half of deceased individuals had real estate.\footnote{Piketty: ‘On the Long-Run Evolution’, p. 1097.} The question is whether gender-neutral partible inheritance could also perpetuate higher wealth inequality. What kind of society generally, with what characteristics, would result if wealth were bequeathed roughly equally based on altruistic motives? I suggest that the historical example of the evolution of the middle class will provide some answers.

Individuals with large fortunes and poor people without savings usually form the visible boundaries of society, although it is the proportion of the middle class which is representative of the real level of material inequality. Societies where the proportion of the middle class covers around 30 percent usually display high material inequality. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, in their classic work on the origins of the English middle class, suggest that by the middle of the nineteenth century the middle stratum, which was previously comprised of many disparate elements, “had been welded together into a powerful unified culture”\footnote{Davidoff, L. and Hall, C., \textit{Family Fortunes. Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850} (London, 2002), p. 23.}. Without diminishing the value of the industrial revolution (and other social and political changes of the era), the authors found that the true engine of new social and economic structures was the result of the increased affection between family members, the changing role of women within the family and partible inheritance transmission. While there was a sexual division of labour within families, (the so-called “separate spheres”) and the concept of public versus private was a distinctive feature during that period, Davidoff and Hall find that “both were ideological constructs of the time”.\footnote{Davidoff and Hall, \textit{Family Fortunes}, p. 33.} The truly distinctive feature of the middle class family was the increased role of the wife as a business labour force in addition to her role as a companion. Davidoff and Hall underline that while “economic institutions of this period had evolved from traditional privilege of men (manhood), nevertheless, gentlemenly capitalism was an option only when recourses were well above subsistence ... only a tiny elite could afford to dispense with women’s productive labour”.\footnote{Davidoff and Hall, \textit{Family Fortunes}, p. 195.} While wives and daughters were still invisible in the public sphere, they started to appear in the pages of last wills drafted by the paterfamilias. The
appearance of wives and daughters among recipients was not only the result of increased affections and the desire to legitimate the new social role of manhood through their (middle class) ability to provide for dependants. It was also the result of the important value of domestic moderation which separated the middle class from the demonstrative consumption of aristocrats and the gentry. New inheritance strategies, together with the change in social and business appearance influenced the basic types of property acquired and how business was managed. The liquid assets (rather than real or landed property) of the middle class required active manipulations which, on the one hand, made its ownership more flexible but, on the other hand, riskier and more unstable. Without the stable support of a wife and family, many middle-class enterprises would never have launched.

The life of middle-class men remained, in the words of the Queen of Hearts from Alice in Wonderland, if you want to stay in place you have to run as fast as you can, but to go anywhere you have to run twice as fast. To keep on running, middle class men needed to rely on a stable and caring family. Similarly, the middle-class family (here kin also) was a multi-functional organism which provided not only care and affection but also a safety net for newly established business. Before profits would allow, the wife and children were the first and the only staff. Later, if a firm was successful, the wife would retire to the home, though sons would remain involved in the business. They were the most reliable business partners for middle class entrepreneurs.

Some scholars find Alfred Chandler’s ideas of “personalised capitalism” especially convincing. Chandler’s work blamed family firms for industrial decline and even the “decline of industrial spirit” in Britain. Small businesses were inspired by the dream of a comfortable life rather than enormous profit which was “the brake upon Britain’s entrepreneurial capitalism”.615 The “cold-blooded pursuit of profit”, which fuelled the “industrial spirit”, was an exception among respected members of the middle class. The “active seeking of income”, however, was a structuring element of their behaviour. More destructive to the industrial spirit and economic development was the relative fluidity of many middle-class businesses.616 Davidoff and Hall assumed that middle class entrepreneurs did not provide their businesses with a strong identity. Instead, business was an instrument to provide them and their dependants

with a simple but comfortable life. Bankruptcy or the decision to sell the business were not a matter of life and death.617

The actual death of a businessmen was another challenge to the survival of business enterprises and social reproduction of a family. The eighteenth century was the era of landed property and primogeniture was the best possible instrument of social reproduction for the families of landed legal estates (i.e. peasantry, nobility for example). The nineteenth century brought liquid assets and urban real estate which were usually partibly transmitted since the survival of individual became more important than reproduction of social group or clan. For the middle class, land “was more an investment or asset to produce income for business enlargement”, rather than a status indicator.618 F.M.L. Thompson rightly noted, however, that the purchase and maintenance of a country estate could only be afforded by very wealthy entrepreneurs who usually purchased estates shortly before ending their business career (though this was not necessarily the rule).619

The roughly equal partition of inheritance between children and sometimes “turning over the initial control of the whole to the wife” was a typical middle-class habit.620 “Roughly equal”, however, did not mean that women (usually daughters) would receive a part of the parental business or real estate. Sons and daughters seemed to inherit property equal in value but not in assets, as Davidoff and Hall suggest.621 Scholars estimate that partible inheritance was almost equally employed by testators from the upper and the lower strata of the middle class in Birmingham between 1780 and 1850. In at least 30 percent of the wills in Davidoff and Hall’s sample (622 in total), the deceased suggested selling the business if it were too small to provide adequate shares for all children.622

Contrary to my initial assumption that partible inheritance division would decrease the level of wealth inequality by providing more people (here inheritors) with a roughly equal share of inheritance, I have found otherwise. Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson put it as follows: “the greater the amount of wealth [and the number of recipients] that can be inherited across

617 Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, pp. 16, 207.
618 Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 20.
generations, the greater we expect wealth inequality.” Partible inheritance transmission may also positively influence economic growth. The liquidation of businesses, (which is usually seen as damaging for economic development), nonetheless could have had a positive outcome. When more inheritors receive a share of parental wealth, even in cases where the shares would not free inheritors from work, it still likely that it would motivate them to search for additional income to maintain a certain life-style. Alternatively, they would put the money in a bank, in which case the interest would benefit the national economy and the development of the sphere of credit.

These classical arguments were challenged in a new article by Neil Cummins, who, by computing 60 million English death and probate records (1892-2016), suggests that in a society where half of the population died with nothing, all discussions about the level and existence of a middle class are questionable. Cummins’ data and argument appear to be representative, except for one detail: the middle class family was a family with an annual income (not wealth) around 200-300 pounds (during the mid-nineteenth century). It is well-established that a more equal distribution of income, rather than wealth, suggests an individual (who in-life could be the member of the middle class with an annual income of 200 pounds) would likely have nothing to pass on or had wealth below the taxable limit of inheritance (50 pounds).

5.2. Motives and Patterns of Bequeathing in Moscow

In in the European context, last wills and probate inventories appear more and more frequently as sources for studying inequality. In Russian academic research, wills and probations are still a source of qualitative research about morale, charity and interfamilial relationships. Yurii A. Petrov, in his book on the Moscow bourgeoisie at the beginning of

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624 Cummins: ‘Where is the Middle Class’.
625 Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, p. 23.
the twentieth century, noticed that the lack of official statistics on the value and composition of private wealth seriously affect the quality of scholarship and motivation to engage in research about different aspects of Russian economic and social history. Historians who address questions about the origins and nature of the Russian bourgeoisie (and the impact of rapid industrialisation on private wealth and social reproduction) usually rely on random sources to estimate privately held wealth which show only a small part of the picture. Importantly, Petrov has drawn attention to the potential of last wills and probations in researching the financial and economic history of the Russian Empire. His call, however, has remained unheard by the scholars of the Russian Empire. Petrov, while underlining the research potential of probations, unfortunately narrowed his focus to the simple tabulation of the composition and value of transferred wealth of the wealthiest merchants, entrepreneurs and managers.

As was discussed in previous chapters, data constrains and the poor preservation of wills and probations, along with the Imperial administration’s general lack of interest in the production and systematisation of materials related to wealth transmission, are the central reasons why scholarly interest in the subject is so low. Unfortunately, historians of the Russian Empire do not have the kind of “probate register calendars” which were introduced in Britain from around 1858 and are available in centralised, printed and national forms (now digitised), or the kind of notarial registers French historians have at their disposal. To the best of my knowledge, however, there are two solid publications about eighteenth century last wills and

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627 Petrov, Moskovskaiia burzhuaziia, p. 60.


629 Petrov, Moskovskaiia burzhuaziia, p. 66.
other sources about intergenerational property transmission. The first investigates the urban population while the second examines the nobility. Both publications, in total, contain information about approximately 1,200 sources on property transmission. Both collections were published by Natalia V. Kozlova but were not quantified to study, for example, bequeathing patterns over centuries or variance between social groups.630

Unlike the previous chapter based on will probations where I have produced descriptive statistics on the level and composition of wealth, the primary aim of this chapter is to produce data on the patterns of bequests among the urban population. This is based on the text of last wills and is connected to a general discussion of the complex issue of wealth inequality. Archival research revealed that texts of last wills collected in the notaries registry journals were better preserved in comparison to probations.

The research sample in this chapter is compiled from 419 last wills either drafted or probated. The sample covers the period from 1702 to 1917. In order to show a more comprehensive picture of the evolution of bequeathing patterns both socially and chronologically, I have included wills of: (1) two chronological periods (the eighteenth and long nineteenth centuries), (2) wills drafted by individuals of different social origins (but all testators lived permanently in Moscow) and (3) individuals of different wealth levels from very moderate (below 1,000 roubles) to the wealthiest merchants and entrepreneurs (above 100,000 roubles).

The extension of the chronological framework to the eighteenth century was stipulated by two factors. First, I am generally interested in tracing how and when the urban population changed bequeathing patterns. In other words, if rapid economic growth and the expansion of urbanisation influenced bequeathing patterns and. If so, were these changes distributed equally over all social groups of the urban population in Moscow or not? The same question is equally applicable to the origins of the Russian middle class. If my calculations reveal changes in bequeathing patterns from simple universal to partible strategies of inheritance division, this would be a new quantitative argument in favour of the existence of a Russian population with particular economic and social behaviours (i.e. the middle class). My second reason for extending the chronological boundaries of my research is more technical. As mentioned above, in 2002 Natalia V. Kozlova published a collection of eighteenth-century last wills of the

Moscow urban population. The format and quality of the publication allowed me to extract essential information for my analysis of bequeathing patterns. Since Moscow merchants are the focus of my research, I have limited the selection of last wills from Kozlova’s publication: I only analyse last wills drafted by Moscow merchants (or individuals who actively participated in trade and production) and their wives, daughters and sons. In total, the sample of eighteenth-century last wills is composed of 113 documents.

The second section of last wills is composed of 244 wills drafted by Muscovites between the second half of the nineteenth century and 1917. This collection of wills is chronologically skewed: last wills drafted between 1910 and 1917 make up around 80 percent of the sample. This disproportionate sample is due to the uneven preservation of wills in the Moscow historical archive. Over 180 wills were drafted between 1915 and 1917 and they were located in two files of prominent Moscow notaries: S.F. Plevako and E. Y. Shidlovskogo. Unfortunately, the archival files of other Moscow notaries did not reveal any substantial collection of last wills that were applicable to this research. In contrast to my uniform-social sample of eighteenth-century last wills, the sample of the nineteenth century wills deliberately straddles various social groups. Rather than simply sampling the last wills drafted by Moscow merchants (and their family members), I have also included the last wills of military servants (2.9 percent), honorary citizens (7.4 percent), nobles (8.2 percent), clerks and members of the educated elite or intelligentsia (16 percent), peasants (16.8 percent), guild merchants (23 percent) and town dwellers (25.8 percent). The social status of female testators was usually indicated in the title of last wills and traditionally it replicated the social status or social estate of their husbands or fathers. In the few cases where women as well as men did not provide any social title, they were registered as “town dwellers”.

The third part of the sample (62 wills) is made up of wills (with probations) drafted by the wealthiest Moscow merchants and entrepreneurs (and their family members) who died between 1878 and 1917. Yuri Petrov set the minimal limit of wealth needed to be included among the top wealthiest testators at 100,000 roubles (before debts). I have borrowed this sample of last wills extractions from the appendix of Petrov’s 1992 paper. Petrov admits that the shortage of archival files which should contain wills and probations is a serious problem for researchers. This led Petrov to search for probations not among the files of the Circuit Court, but from banks, credit establishments, private enterprises, the Treasury Chamber and other archival

631 Kozlova, Gorodskaiia semia.
632 Petrov: ‘Dokumenty o lichnykh sostoianiiakh’.
sources. In contrast to the sample of 244 wills I viewed in the archives, the wills in Petrov’s appendix were likely collected with a more focused view on wealth. Yet, the research benefits of these wills in disposition outweigh their disadvantages. Since I analyse all three groups separately (but on the basis of the same parameters) I believe that my method minimises potential biases in the results.

Since my aim is to produce descriptive statistics on the patterns of bequeathing (rather than to engage in complex statistical calculations), I have transferred the textual information from all 419 wills into an Excel file, then coded and analysed the data. The general characteristics I included were name, social estate, sex, marital/familial status (spouse, daughter, son, other), business ownership, real estate ownership (land included), personalty and liquid assets ownership and charity bequests (to civil and religious establishments). The complex relationship between social estate and the opportunity to engage in business (of any type and size) in the Russian Empire meant that my analysis is based on property and business ownership rather than on soslovie membership. I view this as the primary characteristic of an individual and his/her inheritance behaviour for the purposes of this study. For example, if an individual indicated merchant estate membership but did not specify an actual business among their bequests (or wealth), I automatically coded them as “without a business”. A meshchanin with a printing shop, however, was coded as a “businessman”. To avoid biases in the interpretation of the results, I analysed each category separately.

Is my sample appropriately sized for an analysis of bequeathing patterns of the Moscow urban population and its influence on the level of wealth inequality? I think that the randomly collected sample of last wills for this chapter is representative and the best practically achievable number of observations to answer the questions I pose. Also, since the main aim of this chapter is to produce descriptive statistics on the patterns of bequests, rather than to calculate statistical correlations and other coefficients, I believe that the patterns displayed by the sample of 419 testators and 1,500 inheritors can provide at least a rough understanding of the main direction and shape of the issues described above.

Russian legislation provided two possibilities for wealth transfer between generations: by law and through wills. Patrimonial property could only be transmitted by law, whereas acquired property could be transmitted by will unless the owner died intestate. In this case, it could only be transferred by law. Russian official statistics did not provide detailed information on the number of inheritances transferred by law versus by will. Instead, it shows only that instances of property transmission which happened at the event of death. Any reliable data on the proportions of patrimonial and acquired wealth (or at least land) does not exist nor was it
produced by Russian officials. There is also no formal discussion of whether transmissions by law outnumbered transmissions by will, either in number or value. For the purposes of this research, which is to interpret whether bequeathing patterns in wills influenced material inequality, I suggest the transmission of wealth by will (at least in urban areas) from the second half of the nineteenth century was more common than inheritance by law in cases where individual had a choice. While there is any substantial discussion on the proportion of wealth transmissions by law or by will, I was able to identify several speculative patterns.

Prince P. Trubetskoi, in a discussion of inheritance law reform, mentioned that “at least 80 percent of all inheritance transmissions should be accounted for made by law”. While he claims a disproportionately large number, I suppose these figures were dramatised to make his own argument more compelling. Prince Trubetskoi asserted that a range of causes such as bad roads, uneducated witnesses, testators of low legal literacy, death superstitions and the high court’s sensitivity to the external formatting of the will led to a low proportion of inheritances transferred by will. Since he claimed that the abolition of obligatory inheritance shares by law fragmented noble estates, it seems plausible that the real behaviour and levels of legal literacy were of secondary importance to him. Similarly, William G. Wagner, based on discussions of Russian legal experts N. N. Tovstoles, K. P. Zmirlov and K. P. Pobedonostsev, suggests that “at least until the mid-nineteenth century, the will was considered more a supplement than an alternative to inheritance by law”.

The secondary role of property transmission by will was challenged by Yurii Petrov. He suggests that merchants and entrepreneurs rarely left their wealth and businesses to the mercy of the courts. While Petrov bases this assertion on intuition, the idea that business owners (and parents in general) would freely agree to limit their power over personally acquired assets, and leave legal officials to decide which dependants and family members would receive what part of the inheritance, seems rather unlikely.

The sampled wills are credible. All nineteenth century wills in the sample were either drafted by a notary office or probated and the eighteenth-century sample is composed of probations not drafts. This means that it is unlikely that the bequest would be illegal or inauthentic.

633 Svod zamechanii na proekt knigi chetvertoi Grazhdanskogo ulozheniia o nasledstvennom prave (S.-Peterburg, 1904), p. 17.
634 Svod zamechanii na proekt o nasledstvennom prave, p. 16.
636 Petrov, Moskovskaia burzhuazia, p. 60.
5.2.1. Exchange Motives of Bequests

What motivates individuals to save/accumulate money and to disinherit potential successors? What motivates individuals to draft a will and how can different motives influence inheritance shares? How do shares impact the income opportunities of inheritors? How did different motives at the individual level influence the level of wealth and income inequality nationwide? These are the questions addressed in this section.

Economists divide testators into two camps: (1) those who care about their children’s well-being (the altruistic model) and (2) those who do not (the exchange or strategic model). Between the strategic and altruistic models is the so-called “selfless testators” or “givers” who make bequests as gifts because the very act of giving makes the donors happy (“joy of giving”). Irrespective of motive, the final destination of the transfers is the same, which makes them relevant to this research.

Last wills usually do not contain any direct reference about what motivated testators to divide inheritances in particular ways or why, for example, female inheritors received more or less than the male inheritors. Similarly, they do not reveal why the donor preferred to draft a will rather than rely on inheritance transmission by law. Several wills, however, did provide a direct explanation of why the will was drafted. Testators stated they were motivated to avoid: (1) future quarrels between inheritors, (2) demands on the share of inheritance from other relatives and (3) the insecure future of their children. In this section I understand “motives” not as something directly stated in the text of the last will (as to what motivated the testator to draft the will) but rather the conditions the testators set to avoid mismanagement of wealth and the uncertain future of inheritors.

The last will is an official document, supervised by a notary, unlike private letters or memoirs. By their very nature, however, last wills stand between the private and public since they are an “apparently private act of bequeathing... [but] there is a public interest in who

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637 Contrary to gifts inter vivos and strategic bequests (both with altruistic and/or exchange motives), “selfless” donors do not intend to share risks with the recipient’s household or to decrease lifetime income uncertainty. For a more detailed discussion see Nishiyama, S., ‘Bequests, Inter Vivos Transfers, and Wealth Distribution’. Technical Paper Series Congressional Budget Office, 2000-8 (2000), p. 4.

actually gets ownership of land... business and money especially if the value... is significant... also public interest in the position of members of the testators family who do not receive bequests, since they will have to find their economic means of survival in some other way”.

This means that bequest motives, whether the shares will be equal or unequal in cash or in non-liquid assets (made for immediate transmission or after some conditions were be met), seriously influenced both the income opportunities of the recipients and the proportion of wealth accumulated by a given generation (from the perspective of the whole economy).

The role of bequeathing motives in modern government budget planning motivated several generations of economists to produce a substantial body of work. Through applying simulations and aggregate longitude approaches, they have calculated the effects of strategic and altruistic bequests on the modern economy. Scholars, in order to devise a clearer picture of bequest causes and effects, usually agree which potential motives are central to a given model.

Since reality is more complicated than any model, usually one donor has combined different motives in their will. Donors in my sample appeared to be caring parents who were deeply motivated to provide equal income opportunities to their more and less able dependants. Cases of complete and direct disinherance in wills appeared rarely. Only a handful of testators chose this option if the inheritors did not meet the donor’s conditions. Taking into account the intentional and random nature of my sample, this suggests a high level of loyalty and trust between parents and children. Yet, in several last wills donors used the bequests as a means to control the behaviour of their inheritors. Testators in my sample of the long nineteenth century wills based the dispensing of their inheritance shares on: (1) the provision of care for a living spouse or other people, (2) the mindfulness of inheritors about the familial reputation and monetary experience (3) education and (4) family loyalty (not to remarry). While less than a quarter of donors provided any conditions for inheritance, the absolute majority of them provided some. This was meant to motivate recipients to increase their human capital which would generate additional income apart from their inheritance. In this way, I question the strategic and exchange rationale. I do not see any contradiction between caring altruistic motives and the strategic planning of bequests. As usually assumed by economists, the altruistic model is based on the latent assumption of equal care or compensatory shares for less able

dependants, the exchange motive is preoccupied with manipulation, the limitations of ownership or a decrease in bequest value. On the contrary, I suggest that the motives could remain altruistic even if they provided inheritors with unequal shares. Thus, in this section I suggest that both types of motives could be involved in the strategic planning of a bequest or follow any strategy which could positively or negatively affect the inheritors future. Importantly, merchants and entrepreneurs in my sample rarely decreased inheritance shares. Even if male offspring did not show the ability or desire to continue the parental business. Most parents were loyal to the occupational or marital choices of their children.

Even though donors in my sample were more inclined to be altruistic and to provide their children with either equal or compensatory bequests, those who set conditions are nonetheless important. I do not intend to fully reconstruct the cases of manipulative inheritance behaviour, my intention was to spot the most representative instances.

5.2.1.1. Exchange for Care

People accumulate money for two general reasons: (1) to provide dependants with a means of living and (2) to save assets for retirement or to cover unplanned expenses (unemployment, medication, children’s marriage etc.). When governments do not provide retirement payments it motivates people to save extra money, to manipulate relatives with gifts or to promise wealth (inheritance) in exchange for care.

Testators’ motives could also be influenced by the type of family or household they lived in at the time of will drafting. According to Meghnad Desai and Anup Shah’s research, while individuals in joint families have less of a chance to accumulate money, they are also less motivated to save. This was because they would live with their children who would provide for them after retirement. In the nuclear families, individuals are more motivated to succeeded financially and had more chances to accumulate assets to ensure their retirement. Dependants, so long as they are not required to care for their parents, they are more likely to save less and consume more suggested Desai and Shah.642

According to Hartog, “Keeping while giving” was the response of some testators to rapid economic growth and decreasing birth rates. In the USA and across Europe, industrialisation and urbanisation not only reduced the size of the family but resulted in a new itinerant generation which tended to move away from home prior to their parents’ death. Before, if

children in large families were regarded as a kind of asset for the elderly, from the beginning of the nineteenth century parents shifted that investment from children to other forms of assets accumulation. The promise of an inheritance was a way to keep children close but it was also a way for parents to ensure care before the spread of retirement benefits and nursing homes for the elderly.

My sample of Moscow testators in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries revealed that this “exchange” motive was not that universal as suggested Hartog. Parents who asked their inheritors to provide for their surviving spouse did not intend to impose any constrains on the inheritance transfer. This reminder was not a warning or condition. It was, instead, a means of prompting children to behave appropriately and to care for their elders. Upholding the terms of a parent’s will was a son’s moral duty. If he violated these duties, he was penalised and judged by God and his peers.

Only a few testators in my sample actually reminded their sons to care and to provide for their mothers. There was the expectation that inheritors maintain the lifestyle of the surviving spouses the way the testator would. Ivan Dmitrievich Beliaev, a Russian legal expert, explained the rarity of mentioning surviving spouses in last wills. This was because tradition dictated that mothers remain in their “old” homes. Sons were required to provide for them. In return, they received the house as part of their inheritance. Inheritors could only ask their mothers to leave the house if they could prove that she embezzled family money or assets. Importantly, remarriage was not grounds to turn the deceased’s spouse out on the street unless it was stipulated in the will. Also, after the death of the paterfamilias, all children were obligated and expected to obey his spouse unconditionally.

5.2.1.2. Exchange for a Mindful Life

There were more serious consequences for inheritors who could tarnish the family name with disgraceful behaviour, who intended to waste family money on frivolous pursuits or who

645 Beliaev, I. D., O nasledstve bez zaveshchaniia, po drevnim russkim zakonam do ulozheniiia tsaria Alekseia Mikhailovicha (Moskva, 1858), pp. 41–46.
lacked the motivation to find a career. Some last wills contained the testator’s wish that their family live in peace, mutual respect and unconditional obedience to the surviving parent. Usually parents did not go further than making this simple request, relying on the inheritor’s conscience and that they would display healthy behaviour out of respect for their deceased parent. Several testators, however, perhaps having reasonable grounds to do so, warned their inheritors against the real possibility of disinheritance if they behaved inappropriately.

At the end of his will (drafted in 1877), Moscow merchant Ivan Alekseevich Bakastov mentioned that he expected his children (both male and female) to live in peace and that they should not divide or liquidate his business until 5 years after his death (he died in 1879). Also, he specified that if any of his inheritors shamed the family name, they would be immediately suspended from the family business. His will stated that “… those of my children who, to the disadvantage of the family, accumulate money in disgraceful and morally unacceptable ways, who will oppress the weak and offend others – I will deprive you of my blessing in this and the next life and I believe that God will not provide happiness in their life. For those who will be convicted of the behaviour mentioned above and lead a variant/unstable life should be suspended from the family business immediately”.

The same punishment was promised to the male inheritors of the Moscow first guild merchant Pavel Semenovich Malyutin: those inheritors without money management skills and who were engaged in the wasteful spending of family assets would lose their share of the inheritance. The testator asked his executors to supervise his sons’ money management and watch their general behaviour. If the executors found a successor’s way of life shameful or damaging to the family reputation, the executors were granted the right to suspend the inheritance and evict the individual from the family business and assets management without additional explanation. Notably, if suspended from the family business, the “ungrateful” son was nonetheless granted an annual allowance and the chance to clear his name before turning 35. If the son worsened or improved his behaviour before age 35 it would affect the amount of his allotted allowance and his place within the family. Malyutin set 35 as the age whereby his successors should have accumulated enough experience and responsibility to manage assets independently. Even though 21 was the age when an individual reached legal adulthood, responsible and qualified assets management, according to Malyutin, required more time and experience.

When another Moscow merchant, Aleksandr Alekseevich Eremeev, drafted his will in 1883, his son Mikhail was 41 years old. Nevertheless, Eremeev was unsure if his adult son was responsible enough to manage an inheritance. Aleksandr Alekseevich bequeathed all his acquired assets (of all kinds) and a woodworking business to his second wife, Aleksandra Ivanovna. In addition, his spouse was granted the right to supervise the behaviour of her stepson. The testator, however, left his son an annual allowance of 300 roubles. Yet, Aleksandra Ivanovna was free to decide when and if to cease this allowance. When “Mikhail will behave gracefully and show proper skills to manage a business of any kind independently, my wife has to give him 3,000 roubles at once and cease the annual allowance forever. In accordance with my will, my son has no right to ask for anything else”, 648

Aleksandr Alekseevich became an independent merchant (purchased an individual patent) at the age of 53 when his father died. From this perspective maybe 41 could be considered a young and acceptable age to look for a career. Nevertheless, it seems doubtful that Mikhail was interested in merchant’s career since four of his younger brothers aged between 17 and 25 had already separated from their father’s family (the youngest and sixth son was born in 1869 and was still in the family). Since these individuals were not mentioned in will it is likely that they had already received their share of their father’s inheritance as an allotment. Mikhail’s lack of motivation was likely an exception rather than the rule. Thus, it appears that testators, irrespective of their sex, social and material status, aimed to protect inheritances from the recipient’s incompetence in money management. Parents foresaw that children might be overwhelmed by the amount of money they received through inheritance and make poor decisions.

Ten testators in my sample established the age of monetary adulthood between 21 and 50 years old. Equally, male and female successors were meant to learn money management experience by around 35. Before that time, they were expected to live on capital interest or income from real estate. Only rarely was marriage a stipulation for receiving an entire inheritance bequest. More frequently, if marriage occurred before the age set in the parents’ will, daughters would receive a part of the bequeathed amount, but still this was still more an exception than the rule.

The exact motives of parents who granted their children lifetime ownership of inheritance cannot be established. It could be that they wanted to be confident that their successors would

never be in need. Similarly, they may have wanted their children to care for property they accumulated in their lifetime but were suspicious that the next generation would not understand the value of money. Care for grandchildren, I can assume, was of secondary concern because male and female grandchildren were granted equal shares of inheritance in full ownership without any age-specific conditions. The future of the testators’ children was likely of primarily concern.

In only two exceptional cases, children were granted lifetime ownership. Those children, and consequently the testators’ grandchildren, were granted partible full ownership rights of inheritance disposition. The three female successors of Moscow merchant and honorary citizen Aleksandra Alekseevicha Kartashova received their lifetime income from capital interests in their mother’s will (the three daughters were bequeathed differing amounts). After the daughters’ death, this capital would be transmitted to their successors equally, irrespective of sex. At the same time, Aleksandra Alekseevicha’s male successors received all real estate, business and movable property which was divided equally between them. They could not, however, receive full ownership rights until they turned 25.

Providing the opportunity for failure while pursuing a career was, as shown in my sample, equally important for wealthier and lower income middle class families. The widow of a psalm reader, Maria Orlova, named her only son Aleksandr as her single universal inheritor under one condition: full ownership would only be granted when he turned 50 years old before that event the successor would receive interest from money deposited in a bank.649 In another example, Moscow merchant Vasilii Vasil’evich Goliubev granted his wife lifetime business and property ownership. His three male successors could only receive their inheritances after their mother’s death but not before the age of 30. The eldest son, however, was allowed to take between 10 to 20 thousand roubles as initial capital for his enterprise at 21 years old. The remainder of his share and full-right ownership would be dispensed at 30, as was the case with his younger brothers.650

Clearly, there are not enough cases nor sufficient evidence to generalise about the exact changes in bequeathing motives and patterns, but there are several examples which show that, with the development of the credit and bank system, donors acquired additional means to control recipients’ behaviour. By placing money in these institutions, parents were able to

secure their money against frivolous waste and also to ensure their children’s future for some years. Such a stable and guaranteed income was a kind of *carte blanche*: an inheritor was free to try various occupations, acquire an education and move up the social ladder. Apart from the individual benefits, this promoted the national economy, which also profited from postponed full ownership. Before the recipient received their inheritance, capital assets were kept in banks or other credit establishments and could be used for investment and profit-making. The outcomes of postponed full ownership, I suppose, were different for male and female inheritors. For female successors, lifetime capital interest was probably beneficial as there were few occupational opportunities for women. Yet for men it was, to a certain degree, inconvenient as the deprivation of free assets explicitly affected potential marriage partners and future income.

5.2.1.3. Exchange on Education

In my sample, the most extraordinary example of inheritance disposition (which included the possibility of the disinheritance of both successors if they failed to receive academic degrees) was a will drafted in 1903 (probated 1907) by Aleksandra Adrianovna Abramova (maiden name Silversvan, 1854-1907). Abramova was a noblewoman and the widow of a Moscow first guild merchant. According to her will, both of her sons had to follow two conditions in order to receive lifetime rights to manage their inheritance. Until these conditions were met, the lifetime inheritance management was supervised by several executors. These executors were to ensure the careful management of real estate, land and other assets. At the same time, all Abramova’s grandchildren, irrespective of their sex or level of education, would inherit equal parts of the inheritance with full rights to manage their bequests in any way they saw fit. Yet, both sons would only receive their lifetime inheritance under the undisputable condition that they obtain a university degree. They were free to choose any course of study or dedicate themselves to an academic career, but after their first degree they would be granted lifetime rights to inheritance management. Before they received their degrees, Sergei and Adrian would each receive an annual allowance of 1,200 roubles. If they failed the state exam, they would receive this annual allowance for life, but the estate would remain in the management of executors.

The reason why it was so critical to obtain a degree was explained by Pavel Tret’iakov (Abramova likely supported the idea) in a letter to his daughter Aleksandra: “Money is a very vicious thing which causes ill relationships between parents and children. Parents must provide an opportunity for children to receive an education, and not simply provide a lifetime allowance or income from inheritance. [I arrived at this] profound idea, which I have elaborated, at an early age and...I have lived my entire life...[thinking] that earned money has to come back to society in the form of charitable donations or beneficent establishments...” 652

The second example where education was an obligatory condition of receiving an inheritance bequest can be seen in the will of Vladimir Isaakovich Arzumanov (drafted in 1917), who was a citizen of the city Shusha. 653 The text of the will suggested that Arzumanov was probably childless since he did not mention any lineal descendant. He divided his assets between his mother, two nieces, the children of one of niece and the soon to be opened Tiflis University (which was opened in 1918). One of his nieces (Khanuma) received all his real estate without any conditions, his mother received a lifetime annual allowance (1,000 roubles per year), but the other niece (Nakhshuna), Khanuma’s children, and the university were obliged to fulfil some terms in order to be eligible for Arzumanov’s inheritance. The second niece was, at the time of drafting the will, a student at the Highest Women’s School. 654 If she still would remain a student at the time of the will’s probation, she would be granted with a monthly allowance of 100 roubles. She would receive this allowance until the end of her education, regardless her academic progress. Khanuma’s children, however, had to demonstrate high academic performance in order to receive a monthly allowance of the same amount. The level of education (higher or secondary) and the sex of Khanuma’s children did not matter. Tiflis University was appointed as an inheritor and the general executor of Arzumanov’s wealth. After the liquidation of the testator’s business enterprises, the university was required to introduce scholarships named after Arzumanov himself. The potential bursar had to show excellent academic progress, have only one absence in the academic year and be physically healthy (free of sexually transmitted diseases and tuberculosis). 655

Another testator, honorary citizen and entrepreneur Aleksandr Ivanovich Bezzubikov was less strict about the academic success of his inheritors. In his will, he wished that his children,
if possible, at least successfully graduate from secondary school. He did add, however, that he would be absolutely delighted if his children (both male and female) pursued higher education regardless the academic subject.\textsuperscript{656}

5.2.1.4. Exchange for Family Loyalty of Spouses

While Bezzubikov found education important, the rest of his inheritance disposition motives were quite traditional. His three male linear successors received his real estate and business. His four daughters inherited 50,000 roubles each which was to be treated as dowry, and before adulthood they would receive the annual interest from this capital. Once they reached adulthood or, alternatively, were married (whichever came first), Bezzubikov’s daughters would receive the full right to their inheritance capital. While Bezzubikov was liberal regarding his children’s academic success, if his spouse remarried, she would immediately forfeit the rest of her inherited capital. Initially, Bezzubikov left his wife 50,000 roubles outright and an additional 8,000 rouble annual allowance which would cease after all male children reached adulthood at 21. Remarriage as the ground for disinheritance was rare among male testators and it was never mentioned in women’s wills in my sample. I have only found three reasons as to why wives would be disinherited. First, it was peasant tradition to treat women as temporary family members. Only permanent (i.e. male) family members could inherit shares of the family wealth. Secondly, the testator may have concerns about how a new husband might treat underage children. Thirdly, a testator may be afraid that his money might be spent on a new household instead of maintaining the old, disobeying the rules which were set up by the initial head of the family.

Only four male testators mentioned remarriage as grounds for disinheritance. In all cases remarriage was equated to death. In two cases the children were either adults or the couple was childless. In the other two cases the main concern of the testators was not sponsoring a new, probably happier, life for their widows. Iosselson (a Moscow meshchanin) and Varakin (a merchant with peasant origins) bequeathed their wives with lifetime property rights. In exchange, they were never to remarry.\textsuperscript{657} Eremin (an ex-officer) and Bezzubikov (an honorary


\textsuperscript{657} Nariad. Dukhovnye zaveshchaniia, zakladnye, dannye, kupchie i dr. Notarius Moskovskogo okruzhnogo suda E.Iu. Shidlovskii. 1908. Zaveshchanie Iosselsona Nikolaia Vasilevicha, meshchanin (1908). F. 142,
citizen and merchant) bequeathed either an annual allowance or capital, but in exchange for family loyalty.\textsuperscript{658} Remarriage was the only cause for their widow’s disinheritance among male testators. In my sample there are only two cases where a husband’s access to his wife’s inheritance was limited. In both cases the husband was granted with lifetime property rights.\textsuperscript{659} In one will, the female testator Volkova stipulated that her husband would receive the entire inheritance only if all other inheritors mentioned in the will had died before will probation.

Male testators in 38 percent of wills named their living spouse as either the simple universal inheritor (45 wills) or the lifetime universal owner of the estate (13 cases). Three testators formulated their wills in such a way it is clear they wished to protect their estate from careless children. Instead, they bequeathed their wives full lifetime ownership of all patrimonial property and acquired assets. This, however, was extraordinary and only appeared in a marginal number of cases. As mentioned previously, wills that negatively impacting living spouses, among both male and female testators, were an exception.

5.2.2. Appeals

“I, the widow of an honorary citizen and Moscow female merchant, Elizaveta Il’inichna Kotova, draft this will in order to prevent dissatisfaction and misunderstandings between inheritors after my death… I forbid any inspection or inventory of my business and enterprises by the State authorities … inheritors should be satisfied with the bequests they will receive, [and] accept them with humility”.\textsuperscript{660}

Slightly over a quarter of wills in my sample contain a sentence which discourages inheritors from voicing dissatisfaction with the share of their inheritance. This was because a parent’s will should be obeyed unconditionally. There is an adage that if there is an inheritance, there will be a relative. Yet, it is difficult to find academic works specifically devoted to contested wills. John Addy’s research on contested wills in York between 1660 and 1750 is the only detailed and complete research on this topic. The book provides a sample of 450 contested wills.
wills where potential donors made promises of inheritance leading to expectations which were unfulfilled in the final will. Envious individuals sued their deceased friends, husbands and parents because they had planned on receiving some measure of inherited wealth and were upset by the broken promises of their friends and relatives.\textsuperscript{661}

My sample of probated wills does not contain many of these cases. Surprisingly, it appears that inheritors almost unconditionally obeyed their parent’s will, even if this obedience cost them a fortune. Only four inheritors out of about 50 cases (where I was able to trace the entire process from will drafting to inheritance probation) rebelled against their parent’s will. In two of these cases the inheritors soon ceased legal action due to moral pressure from relatives and executors.

Statistics on appealed civil cases in the Moscow District Court also support the impression that going against a parental will was abnormal in Russian society. For example, in 1908 the Moscow District Court proceeded with 12,467 civil cases and only 1.3 per cent of which were appealed.\textsuperscript{662} Unfortunately, the published statistics are not detailed and do not specify the number of appealed last wills. Nevertheless, even if all appeals were against inheritances, they would still only make up no more than 9 percent of all probated inheritances in that year. Though stories about the perfidious manipulation of potential successors by testators are sensationally attractive plots in novels,\textsuperscript{663} according to official statistics these cases were extremely rare, which probably contrasted an unofficial, emotional context of wills probations.\textsuperscript{664} Below I will provide some examples of appealed last wills.

After many years of anticipating a favourable share of his father’s assets, Andrei Maksimovich Drozdov found he was painfully mistaken about the instructions in his father’s last will. His father, Maksim Dmitrievich, was Moscow merchant for 54 years from 1844 until

\textsuperscript{662} Sbornik statisticheskikh svedenii Ministerstva Iusitsii. Svedeniia o lichnom sostave i o deiatelnosti sudebnikh ustanovlenii Evropeiskoi Rossii za 1908, vol. 24, part 1 (SPb, 1910), p. 84.
\textsuperscript{663} Orlov, A., \textit{Pogrebienie kuptsa, ili dva odnomu pritivnye zaveshchaniia dlia naslednikov} (Moskva, 1831); Krylov, V. A., \textit{Po dukhovnomu zaveshchaniu. komedia v trekh deistviakh} (Sankt-Peterburg, 1871); Gnedich, P. P., \textit{Po dukhovnym zaveshchaniiam. Vodiane. sbornik raszkazov} (Spb, 1900).
\textsuperscript{664} Lipskerov, A. Ia., \textit{Delo ob izorvanii dukhovnogo zaveshchaniia potomstvennogo pochetnogo grazhdanina Andreia Pervushina} (Moskva, 1872); Lipskerov, A., \textit{Podlog dukhovnogo zaveshchaniia (depo Pirozhkova i dr. v Tulskom Okruzhnom sude)} (Moskva, 1881); Novonashenny, D., \textit{Delo o dukhovnom zaveshchaniia Sukhoitoi po sporu gg. Iazykovyh} (Sph, 1866); Delo o Moskovskikh kuptsakh Gelgarde, Geitman i Luis i dr. obviniaemych v sostavlenii podlozhnogo dukhovnogo zaveshchaniia. stenografcheskii otchet (Moskva, 1873); Kratkii otchet po delu o priznanii dukhovnogo zaveshchaniia Taganrogskogo kuptsa Ivana Ivanovicha Loboda podlozhnym i nedeistvitelnym (Novocherkask, 1913).
his death in 1898. He owned two vegetable shops and two taverns. For the first 36 years of his life, he was a peasant in Serpukhovskoi uezd (Moscow region). Based on his business portfolio, Maksim Dmitrievich appeared to be a shrewd, careful and wise merchant. His prudence can be identified in two areas. First, at the time of his death, he had no debts which was quite rare for individuals in his occupation and of his social origin. Second, according to the inventory of his personal assets, he did not lend money either. Moreover, it is incredibly impressive that a first-generation merchant was able to sustain businesses for more than a half a century and to live to 90 years old in full possession of his faculties.

Maksim Dmitrievich Drodzov had at least six children, five sons and one daughter. The three younger sons (Nikolai, Petr and Pavel) officially left the family and choose their own occupations. The two elder sons, Mikhail and Andrei, stayed in their father’s family with their own children and wives. This behaviour was practiced in many merchant families. The elder sons were meant to help their father run the business and, in exchange, would inherit his property after his death. In 1897, however, Maksim Dmitrievich replaced his previous will (which he made a year before). The replacement was probably connected to some familial discord. In his final testimony, Maksim Dmitrievich’s daughter, Aleksandra Maksimovna Krupkina (who was the widow of a Moscow merchant), was appointed as the single successor of all movable and immovable property, assessed at a total of 65,000 roubles.

At the time the last will was created (and at the testator’s time of death), Krupkina was listed as a Moscow meshchanka (or female meshchanke). Two years after his father’s death, Andrei, who at the time was a monk at the Nikolo-Ugreshskogo monastery, legally claimed that his father’s last will should be invalidated because his father was ill at the time of drafting and the will was falsified. It seems obvious that Andrei became a monk and started the trial for two reasons: he had no money and no place to live after his father’s death. Apparently, his living relatives, including his sister Aleksandra, son Mikhail and daughter Ekaterina, did not want to support him. Andrei’s son Mikhail bought an independent merchant certificate in 1899. He did

666 Unfortunately, I have no information on their social status or occupation.
667 Practically, this meant that the head of the family put them on his merchant’s certificate. This gave them social status as merchant sons and comparable social but not economic rights. The law did not distinguish between large or small families: the merchant and his wife, along with any sons listed on the certificate (and their families) were required to live under one roof and officially be one household.
669 Mikhail died some months before his father’s death.
not ask his father to join him, and moreover, he obeyed his grandfather’s will in that he did not try to legally contest or debate its provisions. The trial lasted seven years. Ultimately, the forgery accusation was deemed fictional and the case was dismissed. Unfortunately, there is no evidence as to what happened to the slighted son.

This case shows that even though the testator could feed all of his children for many years, and apparently, his grandchildren as well, he resisted succumbing to manipulation. This, however, was not the case for other merchants. Mikhail Eremeev was the eldest son of Moscow second guild merchant Aleksandr Alekseevich Eremeev, and was apparently more successful than Andrei Drozdov in extracting inheritance. The merchant Eremeev (1821-1885) relied on his eldest son for many years. In his last will, Eremeev did not want to abandon the tradition of the eldest son continuing the family business, especially because Aleksandr Alekseevich and his two younger brothers (Ivan, 1830-1886 and Matvei, 1835-188?) were the second generation of the merchant family. Unfortunately, Aleksandr Alekseevich’s hopes, as expressed in his will never came to fruition. Mikhail received an annual allowance in exchange for demonstrating decent behaviour. “I, Aleksandr Alekseevich Eremeev oblige my wife, Aleksandra Ivanovna, to pay my son, Mikhail Alekseevich Eremeev, an annual allowance of 300 roubles, for as long as she considers appropriate, acknowledging his lifestyle. The rest of Eremeev’s property was left to his wife under the right of full ownership.670 His other five sons, who were also listed on his merchant certificate for some years (though probably later separated from the household), were not mentioned in the will. As far as I was able to establish, all Eremeev’s sons were incapable of or had no interest in trade. Unfortunately, his second wife did not either and was not listed as a merchant the following year.

It is possible to contextualise and better understand the testimonial decision of Aleksandr Alekseevich by presenting a short history of his family. Aleksandr and his brothers (Ivan and Matvei) were second generation merchants who had their own independent businesses which they started at different times. Aleksandr, the oldest brother, bought his first merchant certificate at 53 (1874). Almost ten years earlier, however, he had purchased his first home671 along with some land (1865). In the next several years he acquired three more plots of land with buildings in a nearby neighbourhood (1866, 1873, 1874). Moreover, from his early thirties he held many official positions related to the merchant social estate.672 These were, on the one

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670 Which was assessed (minus his debts and his share in patrimonial property) as at least 45,707 roubles.
671 These two houses in the same district were held as joint patrimonial property with his brothers.
672 For example, from 1852 to 1855 and 1867 to 1870 he served as a commercial inspector. From 1858 to 1862 he was a procurator which meant he could represent and entrust merchants in commercial trials or run a
hand, and to a certain extent, honourable, but on the other hand, incredibly time consuming. In other words, even though he was not an independent merchant, he did not entirely rely on his father’s business or connections. He built his own reputation and managed his own profits. Thus, even though Aleksandr was successful on his own, he and his younger brother Matvei stayed in their father’s family until his death before buying their own patents.

Matvei bought his first guild certificate in 1877 in order to run a wood trade business.673 Aleksandr, however, was also involved in wood trade but as a second guild merchant.674 It is interesting that the two brothers managed the same type of business but enjoyed different public and occupational paths. The middle brother, Ivan, separated from the family in 1853 when he acquired a merchant certificate. For the rest of his life he ran a tavern in Moscow. Even though at least one brother separated from the family, each of them inherited two Moscow houses equally (which became a patrimonial property).675

In his own last will, Aleksandr did not exactly follow his father’s behaviour. On the one hand, he kept the eldest son in his family unseparated until his death, as his father did. On the other hand, he did not provide his other sons with any personal assets (at least in the will), instead leaving everything to his wife.

Even though there are limited facts about their cases, Andrei Drozdov and Mikhail Eremeev were nevertheless clearly trying to manipulate their parents’ feelings and expectations. Yet, they failed to comprehend that their inheritance rested on performed duties or at least a clear demonstration of some kind of entrepreneurial spirit, whereas Aleksandr Eremeev proved to his father that he was capable of running a business. In contrast, Andrei and Mikhail lived off of their fathers’ money. I can only assume that both fathers were not pleased with their eldest sons’ way of life. Drozdov, however, got what he deserved (i.e. nothing). Mikhail Eremeev was luckier, and he received an annual allowance in exchange for good behaviour. This meant that he had probably given his father an illusory hope that someday he would become a merchant. This second probation case demonstrates that the personal and business qualities of successors could affect the testator’s decision more than tradition.

673 In 1881 he bought a second guild certificate.
674 Spravochnaia kniha o litsakh poluchivshikh kupecheskie i promyslovye svidetelstva po Moskve na 1879 (Moskva, 1879), p. 126.
Maxim Lazarevich Morozov was born in 1832 in the small village of Makarovo in the Kaluga region. The testator, together with his wife Maria Petrovna and his eldest son Ilia (born in 1870) were peasants until 1898 when they officially registered as second guild merchant in Moscow (Maxim Lazarevich was 66). Maxim Lazarevich enrolled his eldest son on his merchant certificate, which probably meant that Ilia helped his father to run the bakery business that they owned. Maxim Lazarevich’s younger son, Ivan, separated from the family and moved south to the Voronezh province where he was registered as meshchanin in the town of Lebedyan’. In separating from the family, Ivan eliminated himself from potential shares of his father’s inheritance. In doing so, moving to another region and even changing his social estate (from rural to urban), Ivan appeared to have realised that he had more potential on his own than staying with his older brother, mother and father, even though it could cost his share of the inheritance. It appears, however, that Ivan’s father held him in high esteem.

In his last will, Maxim Lazarevich transmitted his entire business, all real estate and all capital (in cash and debt documents) to his younger, independent son Ivan and to his (Maxim) wife Maria Petrovna. The value of all assets was estimated at 91,652 roubles and was to be split equally between them. The eldest son Ilia only received a lifetime monthly allowance of 25 roubles. Ilia did not agree with his father’s inheritance decision and eventually appealed against the last will in order to invalidate it. Within a couple days, however, he withdrew the lawsuit. Ivan agreed to inherit his father’s business which remained open until the 1917 Revolutions.

 Apparently, the main reason appeals took place is differences in understanding between parents and children regarding equity and the value of self-acquired assets (or businesses). For parents, equity apparently meant responsibility and the capacity to continue the business (or at the very least not to sell all property without careful consideration). For children, equity was seen as a birth right, as was an equal, if not majority, share in the inheritance based on parental material achievement. Consequently, children conflated equity and equality whereas parents divided these concepts based on experience and equity.

A testator’s experience and, accordingly, the set of values they held were influenced by the challenges of upward social mobility and the necessity of adaptation in new business occupations. Thus, self-acquired property and businesses embodied an individual’s ability to

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677 The same amount as Eremeev’s son received in 1883.
678 Unfortunately, the archival file does not contain the actual appeal or the court trial. Ilia’s claims against his father’s last will only appeared once in a Circuit Court internal correspondence letter.
attain, sustain, and build upon their achievements. Accordingly, I suggest that the equity of inheritance distribution was not usually based on birth right, but on handwork, loyalty and trust.

5.2.3. Patterns of bequests

5.2.3.1. Overview

Table 5. 1 Number of wills and recipients, Moscow the eighteenth and the long-nineteenth century

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Eighteenth century</th>
<th>Second half of the nineteenth century</th>
<th>Wealthiest (Second half of the nineteenth century)**</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Merchant (ordinary)*</td>
<td>Other urban population</td>
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<tr>
<td>Absolute number of</td>
<td>113 (81 – male, 31-</td>
<td>55 (45-male, 10- female)</td>
<td>189 (106-male, 83- female)</td>
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<tr>
<td>wills</td>
<td>female)</td>
<td></td>
<td>62 (51-male, 11-female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolute number of</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>637</td>
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<td>recipients</td>
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<td>Median number of</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recipients per one</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>will</td>
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*“ordinary” merchants refer to the wills of Moscow merchants collected without any special condition except membership in the merchant social estate.

** the minimal level of wealth for transmission was 100,000 roubles.

The sample of last wills for this section is composed of 419 testaments and 1,538 recipients, unequally distributed between chronological and social groups (Table 5.1). The most important change in inheritance division between merchants of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is the doubling of the average number of recipients per single will. This likely reflects the profound changes in both the public (the national economy, wealth profiles) and private (the role of wives, daughters and kin-family relationships) spheres and less likely on better survivability of children. The decrease in the proportion of female merchant wills (from around 30 percent to almost 20 percent) could equally point to more dynamic occupational mobility and that wives less frequently succeeded their deceased husband in

679 It is an approximate number since some testators mentioned inheritors as “to all my grandchildren”, for example
business likely because by the time of the husband’s death or by the will he divided or liquidated the business.

The proportion of male testators in the Moscow urbanite group was lower than in both groups of merchants (see wealthiest and “ordinary” in Table 5.1). If more than two thirds of merchant testators (81.8 percent) were male, in the group of “other urban population” there was a smaller proportion of male testators (61.9 percent). The overwhelming number of male merchant testators was likely due to the gentlemanly nature of the Russian business community. During the second half of the nineteenth century, women composed only about 11 percent of the Moscow guild merchantry and apparently not all of them were widows. The high proportion of women in the group of Moscow urban testators (about 40 percent) suggests a relatively sex-neutral pattern of property ownership in late Imperial Moscow. The second sharp difference between the urban population and merchantry was the average number of recipients per will. If merchants mentioned, on average, 4 recipients per will, the wills of urban dwellers usually had only one recipient who inherited the entire estate. This likely reflects the difference in bequest patterns between more and less wealthy testators and their wealth profiles (the proportion of easily divisible liquid assets in contrast to land and real estate).

5.2.3.2. Simple Universal, Partible and Impartible Inheritances

Josiah Wedgwood places unequal inheritance strategies among the most influential causes of wealth inequality.\textsuperscript{680} While inheritance may not directly affect levels of personal wealth, it is the most important issue in perpetuating wealth inequality between generations. In this section I aim to trace the patterns of wealth division in merchant families, urban families (of all origins) and the families of the wealthiest merchants and entrepreneurs over two centuries (the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries). A comparison of the bequest patterns of the nineteenth century urban population, eighteenth century ordinary merchants\textsuperscript{681} and the wealthiest merchants in late Imperial Moscow provides important context. It demonstrates the role of ordinary nineteenth century merchants in the transmission of economic control, patterns of property ownership, lineage ties, social structure (class formation) and even State efficiency.

\textsuperscript{680} Unequal economic abilities and unequal luck, Wedgwood, \textit{Economics of Inheritance}, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{681} I assume that since the sample of eighteenth-century merchant wills and the nineteenth century wills of the urban population were collected randomly, this represents bequeathing patterns only of the ordinary population rather than the poorest or the wealthiest individuals.
Table 5.2 Proportion of wills with different patterns of bequeathing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Eighteenth century*</th>
<th>Second half of the nineteenth century</th>
<th>Wealthiest (Second half of the nineteenth century)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Merchants (ordinary)**</td>
<td>Other urban population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple universal</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>55.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partible</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impartible</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*5 testators were commanded to sell all assets (real and personalty) and transfer these assets to different churches (to pray for their souls).

** Here and throughout this section I considered merchants in the nineteenth century to be those whose wills showed any trace of mercantile agency (in trade or production). Those who officially held the title of merchant but did not make any testamentary arrangements for their business were counted as part of the urban population.

On a very general level, neither the chronological period nor the level of wealth changed common patterns of wealth transmission among Moscow merchants (Table 5.2). Unequal bequest patterns (impartible in the above Table 5.2) were almost equally present in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Yet, the proportion of merchants who transferred wealth to a simple universal recipient decreased (from 32.7 to 27.2 percent). The wealthiest merchants followed this pattern even less frequently than other donors (16.2 percent of transmissions).

The main difference between the ordinary and the wealthiest merchants was that simple universal transmission was the second most popular choice for ordinary merchants. The wealthiest merchants rarely transmitted all assets to one recipient. The wealthy elite did not trust individual succession, whereas the urban population of all social origins (except merchants) did. More than the half (55.5 percent) of urban donors bequeathed everything they had to one recipient (Table 5.2 and 5.3). At the same time, the wealthiest preferred partible wealth division (41.9 percent).
Table 5. 3 Proportions of bequeathing patterns among social estates of the urban population (in %)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Absolute number of wills</th>
<th>Simple universal</th>
<th>Partible</th>
<th>Impartible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Merchants</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban population</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peasants</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>69.0</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobles</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligentsia</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honorary citizens</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>47.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: my sample of last wills

5.2.3.3. From Kin to the Nuclear Family

Table 5. 4 Proportion of last wills in which different types of recipients appeared

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Eighteenth century</th>
<th>Nineteenth century</th>
<th>Nineteenth century</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Merchants (ordinary)</td>
<td>Other urban population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolute number of wills</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>55*</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*In addition, one individual bequeathed all business to the church (except a small shop which was patrimonial and by law passed on to close relatives). I do not count this will as a business.

The principle difference between merchants in the eighteenth century and the ordinary merchants of the nineteenth century is the clear turn of the latter towards bequeathing their wealth to members of their nuclear family, rather than sharing their wealth with other (usually male) relatives (Table 5.4). If in the eighteenth-century kin male recipients appeared in wills more often (54 percent of wills) than sons (35.4 percent), in the nineteenth century merchant

682 Usually brothers, nephews and other members of kin.
wills most commonly listed sons (61.8 percent) or spouses (58.2 percent) while “other” recipients appeared in lesser proportion than previously (47.3 percent of wills). This tendency is not apparent in the behaviour of wealthy merchants and entrepreneurs. If 47.3 percent of the wills of ordinary merchants were granted to an individual outside the nuclear family, in wealthy families the proportion was two times less (21 percent). Moscow merchants, in contrast to the rest of the urban population, mentioned their sons, daughters and wives more often. Merchant sons appeared in parental wills three times more often than in urban dweller wills (61.8 percent as opposed to 22.7 percent). Spouses also appeared as recipients more frequently in merchant wills than in the wills of the wider urban population (58.2 percent and 49.2 percent). The difference here, however, was subtle.

5.2.3.4. Marriage or Individual Settlement

Daughters were perhaps the most fluid or invisible members in both the nuclear family and among inheritance recipients. By the time a parent drafted their will, the eldest daughters had likely married and separated from the family. The separation notice, in which daughters officially accepted that they received a dowry as their share of the inheritance, officially liberated parents from their daughter’s claim to any further inheritance. For the majority of testators in the second half of the nineteenth century married daughters were not listed among recipients. At least six parents, however, included their married daughters in their wills. Another seven testators did not pay special attention to the future marital status of their daughters: their property was bequeathed as personal wealth rather than part of the dowry tradition, whether their daughters married was their own business.

Moscow second guild merchant Ivan I. Bakastov had four sons and three daughters. By the time Bakastov drafted his will in 1877, only one of his daughters, Maria, was unmarried. His other two daughters were. Maria received a share of Bakastov’s inheritance equal to that of her four brothers in real estate, business, personalty and business debts. If she decided to marry within five years of her father’s death, her brothers would separate her from the family and pay her 15,000 silver roubles. Upon receiving this sum, she would be officially separated. If, however, she married after this five-year window, monetary separation was not an option and she would remain a full co-owner of her father’s wealth. Bakastov’s second daughter Varvara I. Malyukova, while married (she was the wife of a merchant’s son), still received an annual

683 In this section I only use examples from the sample of nineteenth century merchant wills (55 in total).
allowance from her father in the form of real estate rent. If she, for any reason, decided to cease her allowance, her brothers were obligated to pay her a one-time 5,000 rouble settlement which would end her claim on the inheritance. Of his third daughter Prakov’ia, Bakastov commented that she “has already received enough during my life”.684

Moscow meshchanin Aleksandr Rukavishnikov also transferred his real estate to his six sons and daughter in full right ownership, but first in-life to his wife (she received full ownership of the business). If his daughter was to marry, at any time, either his wife or her brothers had to endow her with an equal share of the entire inheritance. The share, however, would be monetised.685

In one extraordinary case, female Moscow merchant and honorary citizen Elizaveta Kotova left one of her four married daughters a large stone cottage. Her other three daughters received nothing in the will. Unfortunately, the will and the probation case do not explain why. No motives are included in the will, though the tone and formulations give the impression that it was perhaps daughter’s dowry which, for whatever reason, was not transferred to her when she married.686 The married daughter of another Moscow merchant, Anna Motyleva (maiden name Aborina), received half of the paternal house in lifetime ownership. After her death, however, the property was to be transferred to the testators’ three grandchildren. Another two unmarried daughters received only 10,000 roubles each as their share of the inheritance.687 Similarly, another testator, a former peasant Grigorii Yashin, bequeathed 10,000 roubles to his widowed daughter Evdokia Kholina. The rest of his property was transferred to his wife who received the right of full ownership. If his wife died before himself, Grigorii stipulated that his property should be inherited in equal shares by his two sons Petr and Ivan.688

Perhaps the most interesting cases are examples where a daughter’s material well-being [outside marriage] was an issue for parents. Whether the daughter decided to marry and merge her dowry property was of second importance: several parents with merchant and meshchane social backgrounds distributed their shares in a way that their daughters’ future would be safe with or without a husband. Among eighteenth century wills I did not find any examples where

685 Ob utverzhdenii domashnego dukhovnogo zaveshchaniia meshchanina Aleksandra Mikhailova Rukavishnikova (3 sentiabria 1894 g.) (1894). F. 142, op. 4, D. 161, L. 44-45.

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the daughter was provided with a “strict settlement rather than marriage settlement”. The world of eighteenth-century merchants was strictly gendered: women, at least in public, were shadows rather than actors. In nineteenth century wills, however, several testators divided their property in a distinctly middle-class way, dividing shares equally (in assets but not in property) without any specific mention of the daughter’s share being used as dowry.689

I have already mentioned above that Russian nobles provided daughters with extra money to purchase land or real estate. These extra funds were dowry settlements in all cases, yet they were more flexible.690 A similar strategy was employed by Moscow merchant Petr Nikilaevich Tatarivov. In his will, which was drafted in 1878 and probated 4 years later (1882), Tatarinov bequeathed his deceased wife’s jewellery and personalty to his two underage daughters, Vera and Elisaveta. His business and real estate was left in equal shares to all his children (two sons and two daughters). When his daughters married, they were to receive their shares691 and, additionally, the share of each daughter should exceed the sons’ shares by 5,000 roubles.692 The extra shares were likely compensation for unequal occupational and status opportunities.693

The children of Moscow female town dweller Praskov’a Pulneeva received inheritances unequal in value but equal in type. Praskov’a invested all her wealth (18,000 roubles) into corporate bonds of the Moscow city load association. Her daughter Maria received 9,000 roubles, her son Mikhail inherited 6,000 roubles and the remaining 3,000 roubles were left to her husband Sergei.694

Moscow meshchanin Sergei Aleksandrovich Mal’tsov was, in a way, the Russian version of the central individual (James Luckcock) in Davidoff and Hall’s book. James Luckcock established his small business in order to provide “moderate independence” for his family to live “in a simple but comfortable way”.695 Before drafting his will, Sergei Mal’tsov settled in Moscow and opened a small print shop with a store. In 1916, he equally divided his business

689 See discussion on the way the members of the English middle class provided their daughters with inheritance and dowry in: Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, p. 206. Especially see reference № 45 on page 499.
690 Marrese, Babe tsarstvo, pp. 185–186.
691 The donor did not specify whether the shares should be monetised or transferred in another way.
693 See an extended discussion on the effects of “compensatory” shares for daughters in Miller and McNamee, Inheritance and Wealth in America, p. 56.
695 Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, p. 16.
and everything he had at the time of his death to his wife, son Viktor and daughter Tamara.\textsuperscript{696} The will gives the impression that the testator was probably not personally attached to the business itself (no personal sentiments), but the business was small and was transmitted undivided to all dependants. Unseparated, it provided a stable income for all dependants. His daughter’s marriage prospects seemed to be overshadowed by the primary importance of family survival, which was also widespread in middle class Victorian families.\textsuperscript{697}

Wealthy merchants were usually more flexible with property division than their less wealthy peers. They also had more freedom to dispense inheritances based on affection. Yet, they were more inclined to control dependants’ behaviour. In my sample, however, wealthier merchants were more likely to bequeath extra money and property to their married daughters and (in general) would mention them in their wills more often (34.5 percent and 51.6 percent, \textit{Table 5.4}). It seems that using inheritance to influence daughter’s marital choices was not common practice in the late Imperial period. Daughters, however, sometimes still received their shares separately from sons and as liquid assets.

The first guild merchant Ignatii Skobelev (originally from Baku) left his four unmarried daughters a plot of land in equal shares in the centre of Baku. He also left them 250,000 roubles each with the condition that they only receive interest on this capital prior to turning 32. Afterwards they would receive full ownership shares. The remaining real estate and personality was left to his two sons and wife in equal shares. His sons, like his daughters, would only receive interest on their inheritance capital before the age of 32, after which they would become full owners.\textsuperscript{698}

Another example of equal in type but different in value conditional inheritances can be seen in the will of Moscow meshchanin Mikhail Ivanovich Brovkin. His capital was in easily divisible bonds and shares. He bequeathed his four married daughters shares of different value (from 1,500 to 4,000 roubles) but all recipients received their shares unconditionally and with full ownership rights. At the same time, his two sons were bequeathed 12 and 13 shares of Kharkov land with the condition that they would only receive interest on this land before they reached 40 years old. After 40, they would receive full ownership of their inheritance shares. If one or both sons died before the age of 40, his or their capital would be transferred to their

\textsuperscript{697} Davidoff and Hall, \textit{Family Fortunes}, pp. 312–315; Green and Owens; ‘Gentlewomanly Capitalism’.
successors. If they died childless, the inheritance capital would be transferred to the testator’s daughters or their successors.\textsuperscript{699}

\textbf{5.2.3.5. Spouse Priority and Exclusion}

In my sample of 244 wills from the nineteenth century, male testators mentioned wives among recipients more than two times more frequently than women mentioned their husbands (66.2 and 26.8 percent or 100 and 25 in absolute numbers, respectively). A surviving spouse listed as the single universal inheritor also occurred more frequently among male testators (37 percent or 56 people) than among female testators (14 percent or 13 testators). While the average female testator prioritised children before their surviving spouse, in my sample there are several female donors who bypassed their children and favoured spouses instead. From the text in the wills it was clear that they were not childless, but in this case the children acted as substitutes in case the husband died before the testator.\textsuperscript{700} These three female testators obviously were not childless and chose their husbands over their children presumably due to intrafamilial tension between the parents and their children.

One example where a surviving spouse was left without any bequest is the case of Moscow merchant’s wife Ekaterina Aleksandrovna Bolichina. In her will, which was drafted a few days before her death in 1906, Bolichina\textsuperscript{701} equally divided all her assets (real estate purchased in 1900, estimated at 34,500 roubles) between her 5 daughters and 4 sons.\textsuperscript{702} It appears that both Bolichina and her husband came from wealthy Moscow merchant families. Presumably, because her husband was a second guild Mosco merchant, Bolichina assumed that he had the ability to support himself, which influenced her decision to exclude him from her inheritance bequests. It is possible, however, that a potentially strained relationship between husband and wife could equally account for his absence in her will.


\textsuperscript{701} Her death was caused by septic fever following the difficult delivery of her ninth child.

Was marital harmony challenged when each spouse had their own assets? To answer this question, I have examined four cases where both marital partners drafted their own wills. In each case, both spouses produced drafts of their wills on the same day, which diminished the chance that the other spouse would not accept their inheritance. In all four cases the families originated from different social strata and soslovie: a retired State Counsellor, a medical doctor (and collegiate assessor), a priest and a peasant. These social origins, however, could be fully applied to males only, since women’s social statuses were not listed, and they were instead referred to as “the wife of…”.

Three men (all but the State Counsellor), even though they had linear successors, appointed their wives as simple universal successors. It was only in one case (the doctor’s wife Liza-Vel’yamina Petrovna Lipskaia), however, that a woman mutually appointed her husband as the simple universal successor.703 Their daughter Evgeniia received only her father’s life insurance which amounted to 10,000 roubles.704 The only case in this group where a wife was excluded from the inheritance bequests was in the will of State Counsellor Konstantin Andreевич Petrov.705 The spouses did not have any children in-common and the wife (Sara Petrova) was childless. Sara left her husband the full rights to all her assets.706 If he died before herself, she substituted her wealth to his daughters from his first marriage. Sara Petrova’s husband did not mention her at all in his will. All of his assets were divided equally between his three daughters from his first marriage without any conditions or limitations. The priest’s wife (Maria Pokrovskaja)707 and the peasant’s wife (Maria Tulisova)708 did not mention their husbands among their wealth recipients. Maria Pokrovskaja bequeathed almost all of her assets (urban real estate with two story buildings, capital and personalty) to their common daughter Nina who was a private tutor and teacher. Their son Aleksandr received several icons, a men’s watch with a shielded golden chain and two gold pearl earrings. Yet, Aleksandr Pokrovski, Maria Pokrovskaja’s husband, left everything to his wife. A few days later Pokrovski edited his will

to include their common daughter Nina who was granted the right of substitution if his wife died before he did.\textsuperscript{709}

From the beginning, Maria Pokrovskaja was certain about the distribution of her wealth and the need to bequeath her daughter a greater share. The peasant’s wife, Maria Tulisova, however, changed her will four times in 1908 alone. All four edits of her will show that she believed that both male and female successors should receive an inheritance of the same composition and value, but she could not decide whether her male or female children should be listed as the general successor who would manage payments to their siblings. Additionally, she could not decide whether her female successors should receive a bigger share or not. In the end, she decided that there would be no general manager of the inheritance, and that her male and female linear successors would receive equal shares in value and type of assets (she owned only capital).\textsuperscript{710}

\textbf{5.2.3.6. The Decline of Posthumous Charity: Keeping All Wealth in the Family}

According to the common view and the legal regulations on inheritance transmission, inheritance is designed so that the testator can provide a secure future for descendants. This, however, is not always the case. In the Medieval period, for example, growing fears about the end of the age meant that testators tended to prioritise individual salvation over providing for their relatives and dependants. Philippe Aries argued that ideas about salvation and an afterlife, together with the emerging value of individuality (which initially appeared in the eleventh century) meant that last wills often contained substantial charitable donations and donations to the Church. These gifts were designed to personally ensure the testator’s salvation. From the thirteenth century, last wills became detailed descriptions of charity recipients, but also included the character of funeral ceremonies, final resting places and the number of commemorations received by the individual which, in some cases, exceeded one thousand in the first year after death.\textsuperscript{711}

By the end of the Early Modern period (1500-1750), and especially during the Mid Modern period (1750-1914), the relationship between the afterlife, salvation and inheritance bequests became weaker. The Reformation and, later, the Industrial Revolution diminished fears about


\textsuperscript{711} Ares, F., Chelovek pered litsom smerti (Moskva, 1992), p. 174.
the end of the age which redirected inheritance bequests from the spiritual to the material “salvation” of descendants. Inheritance bequests evolved from a “passport to heaven”, as Le Goff called it, to an instrument of social and occupational reproduction (according to Alastair Owens).\textsuperscript{712} Philippe Aries suggested that by the fourteenth century charitable donations caused bankruptcies in many wealthy families.\textsuperscript{713} It is tempting to attribute these bankruptcies to generous charity donations, but I strongly inclined to think that underdeveloped technologies, markets and means of investment also played a role.

The prominent role of the Church in spreading the tradition of transferring property through wills was also noted in many countries. For instance, English wills, while different in original structure and drafting tradition than Russian wills (closer to the Scandinavian rather than the Roman tradition), were an important source of income for the Church everywhere. Until the end of the feudal period (the thirteenth century), the Church in England was actively engaged in the drafting and probating of wills. Feudal tradition dictated that two thirds of an individual’s wealth should be left to his wife and children and the final third was to be left to the Church to pay debts, funeral expenses, requiem masses and distributed charitably according to the deceased’s wishes. By the end of the thirteenth century, feudal tradition was replaced by the emergence of life-estates based on the right of primogeniture. The old agrarian economy, which reinforced the primary role of land tenure, slowly moved toward a more urban economy and more flexible types of assets. By the middle of the seventeenth century the role of the Church in drafting and probating wills, and equally their claim to a third of all property, was replaced by civil institutions which emphasised family.\textsuperscript{714}

In Russia, generous donations in return for individual salvation was common practice among urban dwellers and aristocrats until the beginning of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{715} From the seventeenth century (1649) and especially after the Charter on the Secularisation of Church Land (1762), the Church’s property holdings were substantially reduced. The Church was only allowed to receive limited private donations. All donations, either from wills or as gifts, needed approval from the Senate.

The collection of last wills in my sample undoubtedly show that from the middle of the nineteenth century, family members were the general recipients of parental inheritance as

\textsuperscript{713} Ares, \textit{Chelovek pered litsom smerti}, p. 185.
\textsuperscript{714} Addy, \textit{Death}, pp. 7–13.
opposed to the Church. Charitable donations, along with references to testator’s salvation, appeared less frequently than in eighteenth century wills. Namely, among 113 merchants’ last wills drafted in the eighteenth century, substantial charitable donations to the church appeared in 44 wills (38 percent) and 4 testators left realty, personality and business to the Church as a charitable donation to pay for eternal salvation. Many donors (of those 44) asked for multi-year masses in several churches. It is emblematic of the Church’s role in society that there were no examples of civil charitable donations. In the nineteenth century, wills that designated impressive donations to the Church based on the fear of the end of days became less common. Only 12 percent of all testators (and only 21 percent only among merchants) mentioned donations to the Church and charitable establishments. Only two sisters, originating from the meshchane legal estate left their patrimonial property to charity and churches. These women were unmarried and childless. But since their property was patrimonial the court contested the will and transferred all property to their relatives.  

Galina N. Ulianova, an expert in Moscow merchant’s philanthropy, has acknowledged two changes in the nature of Russian charity in the second half of the nineteenth century in comparison with the earlier period. First, there was a clear turn away from charity donations in wills. Instead, individuals chose to donate to charities while they were still alive. This tendency in Britain was noticed by Josiah Wedgwood. He believed that charity was “reanimated” due to human nature which seeks direct and indirect appreciation or, as contemporary sociologists and economists’ term it, “the joy of giving”. The second change Ulianova noticed was a decrease in number but increase in the value of donations. If, in earlier periods, almost every last will contained some donation to the Church, by the second half of the nineteenth century fewer wills left charity bequests. If testators did donate, (in their will or during their lifetime), the sums were considerable giving the false impression of universal charity. Official data suggest that if the average annual gross value of charity donations in movable property in the Russian Empire was around 4-5 million roubles (1900-1905), one or several substantial donations could increase the annual average many times over (see Table 5.5 for the year 1901).

718 Ulianova, Blagotvoritelnost moskovskikh predprinimatelei, pp. 117, 122 - 127.
Table 5.5 The value of property transmitted to charity through the State Treasury, charitable and education establishments, churches, monasteries in the entire Russian Empire, 1900-1906

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Value of transmitted charity</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Real estate</td>
<td>Movable capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>1,227,903</td>
<td>6,786,509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>2,794,775</td>
<td>16,628,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>1,368,905</td>
<td>5,070,132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>1,083,616</td>
<td>6,224,793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>1,238,908</td>
<td>3,846,648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>1,048,226</td>
<td>5,450,940</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The same trend was noticed by Philippe Aries in France a century earlier. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the outcomes of so-called “spiritual bankruptcy” became obvious and the number of salvation services declined dramatically. As a result, heirs more frequently enjoyed entire inheritances, or at least the lion’s part of parental wealth. Whether it was the Enlightenment, economic development, the early stages of industrialisation, secularisation or the late outcomes of the Reformation, heirs began receiving larger portions of inheritances and the odds that inheritances would improve personal living standards increased. Was this the product of changing perspectives about the individual, eternal salvation, the afterlife, the function and size of the family, or interest in the future well-being of children and spouses? I am inclined to believe that the widely accepted concept of moral parental obligation to children, as the product of the patrimonial family affection, was not the only reason the nature of inheritance bequests changed. Instead these changes were a product of many factors that finally impacted the way personal wealth was accumulated and redistributed and also on State-society relations.

### 5.2.3.7. Business Transmission

Data suggests that between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Moscow merchants began to pass their businesses on to single universal successors less frequently (from 70.5 percent to 49 percent, *Table 5.6*). At the same time, the wealthiest merchants preferred to transmit their business ventures in almost equal shares between members of their nuclear

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719 *Ares, Chelovek pered litom smerti*, p. 175.
family (both male and female). If a single universal successor was appointed, however, it was most likely the testators’ surviving spouse (73.3 percent). The same strategy can be seen in the wills of ordinary Moscow merchants (55.5 percent). Passing businesses to wives, or to wives and sons in tandem, was a new strategy. If, in the eighteenth century, businesses were usually divided between sons and male kin members, in the nineteenth century brothers and other male relatives were replaced by wives in wills. The presence of sons as single universal successors also increased (from 34.4 percent and 49 percent).

The data suggests that in the second half of the nineteenth century wives became reliable business successors, but daughters did not necessarily benefit from these changes. While in the eighteenth century 7 daughters in my sample received businesses through inheritance, in the nineteenth century this number only increased to 8. It is important to note that in the nineteenth century daughters appear as co-inheritors (only one was a simple business successor), but in the eighteenth century 6 out of the 7 daughters in my sample received the entire business. This, however, was because they were the only successor (this was indicated by the donor). In contrast, while in the nineteenth century fewer daughters received entire businesses, they more frequently received equal shares with other family members or were considered more able in comparison to their brothers.\footnote{Delo po isku Drozdova A.M. o priznanii zaveshchaniia ottsa nedeistvitelnym (1907). F. 142, Op. 5, D. 839.}

In the average number of business recipients, merchants show a distinct change between centuries. If in the eighteenth century, merchants divided businesses between 1.5 recipients (on average). By the nineteenth century, ordinary merchants were dividing their enterprises between 2.3 individuals, and the wealthiest merchants were listing an average of 3.3 inheritors.
Table 5. 6 Patterns of business transmission in the eighteenth through the nineteenth centuries, in absolute numbers

Eighteenth century merchants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Simple universal transmission of business (number of wills)</th>
<th>Number of wills with business bequests in total</th>
<th>Number of business recipients in total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(average = 1.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Nineteenth century ordinary merchants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Simple universal transmission of business (number of wills)</th>
<th>Number of wills with business bequests in total</th>
<th>Number of business recipients in total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(average = 2.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: my sample of last wills

Nineteenth century wealthiest merchants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Simple universal transmission of business (number of wills)</th>
<th>Number of wills with business bequests in total</th>
<th>Number of business recipients in total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(average = 3.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.3.8. Real Estate

The data on the number of testators who owned real estate suggests that ordinary nineteenth century merchants possessed immovable assets almost two times more often than their counterparts in the eighteenth century (91 and 59.3 percent respectively, Table 5.7). At the same time, in the general sample of Muscovite testators in the nineteenth century, real estate ownership was comparatively rare (88 wills or 36 percent from the total sample). It is significant that 110 testators in my sample drafted so-called “total estate wills” where the composition of wealth was not specified. This meant that in reality the proportion of real estate holders was likely higher. Surprisingly only 39 (63 percent) of the 62 wealthiest testators had real estate in their wealth profiles.

The simple universal transmission of realty decreased in popularity between centuries. While half of eighteenth-century Moscow merchants transferred realty to one successor, in the nineteenth century only one third of both ordinary and the wealthiest merchants transferred realty impartially to a single recipient. In the eighteenth century, merchants preferred to leave all realty to their son (38.3 percent) but by the nineteenth century merchants began to favour transmitting real estate to their spouses (53.3 percent for ordinary merchants and 84.6 percent for the wealthiest merchants). Moscow urban testators, in choosing spouses as simple universal recipients of realty (49 percent), followed this pattern more frequently than merchants (46.6 ordinary and 32.6 percent of the wealthiest merchants, respectively). In turn, this explains why the average number of real estate recipients increased for merchants and was lower in the group of other urban testators. In the eighteenth century the number of real estate recipients per will was 1.4, in nineteenth century for ordinary merchants it was 3.3, and for the wealthiest merchants it was 3.2. For urban testators, however, this figure fell to 2.5.

It is remarkable that the way merchants divided real estate followed patterns of business transmission. Eighteenth and nineteenth century merchants utilised gender-specific approaches to realty transmission, preferring male (but male kin relatives rather than sons) over female recipients. If sons in the eighteenth century made up only one third of the number of realty recipients, in nineteenth century merchant wills this proportion increased substantially (51.8 percent). The same tendency can be seen in bequeathing real estate to spouses (mentioned in 28.3 and 41.3 percent of wills respectively in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries). The proportion of testators who chose to include daughters in their lists of real estate recipients did not change significantly between centuries (19.4 percent in the eighteenth century and 21.7 percent in the nineteenth century). Daughters, however, appeared more frequently in the wills
of the wealthiest business elite (35.3 percent) than in the wills of ordinary merchants (21.7 percent).

Table 5. 7 Patterns of real estate transmission in the eighteenth through the nineteenth centuries, in absolute numbers

**Eighteenth century merchants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Simple universal real estate (number of wills)</th>
<th>Number of wills with real estate transmission in total</th>
<th>Number of real estate recipients in total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Nineteenth century (entire sample)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Simple universal real estate (number of wills)</th>
<th>Number of wills with real estate transmission in total</th>
<th>Number of real estate recipients in total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27*</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: my sample of last wills

* One testator bequeathed all real estate to charity organizations

**Nineteenth century, merchants only**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Simple universal real estate (number of wills)</th>
<th>Number of wills with real estate transmission in total</th>
<th>Number of real estate recipients in total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: my sample of last wills

265
Nineteenth century, wealthiest merchants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Simple universal real estate (number of wills)</th>
<th>Number of wills with real estate transmission in total</th>
<th>Number of real estate recipients in total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


5.2.3.9. Liquid Assets and Personality

Bequeathing businesses and real estate to individuals beyond nuclear family members (or extended kin) in the eighteenth century was an uncommon practice. Similarly, the wealthier a testator was, the less wealth was bequeathed to or divided between “other” recipients (*Table*).

As much as this behaviour was applicable to the liquid assets and personality transmission of the business elite (17.6 percent), ordinary merchants (55.5 percent in the eighteenth century and 49 percent in the nineteenth century) and the urban population (60.6 percent) were more likely to bequeath movable property and money to friends and remote relatives which was presumably motivated by personal affection and gratitude.

As was suggested above, daughters were the only members of the nuclear family who likely remained invisible in parental last wills. Yet, a general overview of bequeathing patterns of liquid assets and personality reveals an increased presence of daughters in wills. While, in the late Imperial period, daughters were still unlikely to be the recipients of businesses and real estate, they were increasingly becoming the recipients of liquid assets and personality.

Wealthier donors were more likely to include their daughters in the circle of their recipients. This tendency probably reflected increased life expectancy and the age of the first marriage. In the eighteenth century, daughters appeared as the recipients of liquid assets and personality in 21 percent of wills and in 37 percent of wills among urban testators in the nineteenth century.

Among the wealthiest business elite, daughters were mentioned less frequently (in 43 percent...
of wills) than sons (in 61 percent of wills), but still more often than in the wills of other testators.

Table 5.8 Patterns of liquid assets and personalty transmission in the eighteenth through the nineteenth centuries, in absolute numbers

Eighteenth century merchants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Simple universal instances of liquids and personalty (number of wills)</th>
<th>Number of wills with liquids and personalty transmission</th>
<th>Number of recipients who received liquids and personalty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>315 (average = 3.4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Nineteenth century, ordinary merchants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Simple universal instances of liquids and personalty (number of wills)</th>
<th>Number of wills with liquids and personalty transmission</th>
<th>Number of recipients who received liquids and personalty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>701 (average = 5.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: my sample of last wills
Nineteenth century, wealthiest merchants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Simple universal instances of liquids and personalty (number of wills)</th>
<th>Number of wills with liquids and personalty transmission</th>
<th>Number of recipients who received liquids and personalty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>204 (average = 4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

In the last chapter of the dissertation I aimed to loop the discussion, begun in the first chapter, on the connection between occupational uncertainty of Russian guild merchants and management of personal assets by focusing on the role of inheritance in reproduction of social and economic inequality. The results of my research show that merchants, on the contrary to the urban dwellers of different wealth profiles, indeed, used the inheritance as a means to secure dependents’ future even if the partible inheritance division could negatively influence the future of the business. Contrary to the eighteenth-century Moscow merchants, their colleagues in the second half of the nineteenth century were more inclined to transfer business and real estate not to their male kin, but to spouses and sons. My results correlate with conclusions of Davidoff and Hall research on the English middle-class (1780-1850) in that the middle-class family business was not launched to earn an enormous wealth but rather it was inspired by the dreams of comfortable life and safe future of the dependents. In addition, the nineteenth century testators more often chose family over internal salvation of their souls – cases of posthumous charity became very rare.

In general, inheritance strategies of the nineteenth-century Moscow merchants became to more egalitarian. We see it in the increase of the average number of recipients per inheritance. Thus, if in the eighteenth century the average number of recipients of business and real estate (calculated separately) was 1.4-1.5, in the nineteenth century merchants divided business as the real estate among 2.3 (and the wealthiest among 3.3) recipients on average. Inheritance bequests in a form of liquid assets and personalty, on the contrary, increased in the sample of the ordinary nineteenth-century merchants. Therefore, if the average number of liquid and movable assets recipients in the eighteenth century was 3.4, in the nineteenth century the ordinary merchants mentioned 5.5 recipients on average. The wealthiest guild merchants, however, mentioned 4 recipients on average. I am inclined to connect the change in the number of liquid assets recipients with the change in the way merchants’ daughters were treated in the wills. In the nineteenth-century wills we see a clear turn towards individual settlements for daughters, contrary to previously adapted marriage settlements (dowries). At the same time while the idea of daughters’ share changed, the composition (in liquid assets and movable objects) remained.

Inheritors in the nineteenth-century wills began to be treated as independent individuals since in the absolute majority of wills parents were tolerant to occupational and marital choices of children. The only serious ground for disinheritance was the lack of motivation to receive
an appropriate education and low moral standards. Surviving spouses were also permitted to
live a life they would find more appropriate after the death of the testator. Instances of
disinheritance in case of re-marriage were rare.

The clear turn of Moscow guild merchants towards more equal inheritance disposition and
concentration on the members of the nuclear family gives me the ground to suggest that such
inheritance strategies must have contributed to the decline in social mobility and an increase of
wealth inequality among Moscow merchanty in particular and, perhaps, in Late Imperial
Russia in general.
Conclusion

Historical research on Russian guild merchantry has for a long time focused on three issues: guild merchantry as an element of social (soslovie) structure, guild merchantry as business community and biographic studies of the most remarkable and wealthy merchants. Unfortunately, all issues were never brought together in one research. The lack of connection between different social, personal and economic roles of Russian mercantile agents finally created a pervert picture (Myths) of Russian guild merchantry. The decline in numbers of soslovie members was mistakenly accepted as the fiasco of mercantile agency and low degree of political influence was automatically seen as inability to accumulate personal assets, the presumably low proportion of occupational reproduction was accepted as the sign of professional inability to plan business succession. My dissertation is an attempt to debunk a number of myths and to provide a good balance between quantitative and qualitative analysis. This dissertation is the first attempt to see how concepts (in theory/legislation and in numbers) of social status, demography, property rights, wealth and inheritance of Russian guild merchants interacted and how personal decisions over wealth management infused general level of social/economic mobility and wealth inequality in Late Imperial Russia.

Comparisons of Russian and European mercantile institutions, while few and far between, further characterise Russian guild merchants as pale imitations or replicas of their European counterparts. According to these accounts (which I have questioned in my dissertation), the guild merchantry in Russia was limited and confined by the State, squeezed somewhere between trading peasants, urban petty traders and the myriads of officially allowed (but never officially registered or counted) mercantile agents. While European long-distance trading guilds were a strong economic counterbalance to the State and relationships between them were based on dialogue and compromise, in Russia the relationships were based on enforcement and dependency.

Another crucial reason why in previous research Russian mercantile institutions have not been seriously compared to European commercial and entrepreneurial estates (classes) is that in Russia, a legally established connection between personal and property rights never existed. European traders and entrepreneurs were conscious property owners, politically established and socially valued: they were successful mainly because they knew that they had the right to own, manage and extract profit from assets or businesses. Russian merchants, however, almost always navigated in businesses that were legally unregulated or underregulated, which was risky and fostered uncertainty and anxiety from above and from below. In this environment,
they were confined to risk-averse strategies and business affairs with limited profitability which made accumulation of personal assets and extended business survival rather an unavailable option. According to this characterisation, in proportion to the whole of the Russian population, the number of guild merchants was small and consistently decreasing. This was because the guild merchantry as a legal estate was unable to free itself from the shadow of the State and patrimonial authorities. Similarly, the soslovie was suppressed by the Russian “collective ethos [which] discouraged individual initiative for private gain”. Old Believers, a group of religious outsiders who were at times severely persecuted by the authorities, are usually described in the historiographical literature as an example of a Russian commercial miracle. Contrary to Orthodox guild merchants, for example, Old Believers were known for their strong work ethic and ethos. They were also supposedly able to develop safe credit and social networks which substantially increased the stability of businesses and intergenerational business reproduction. The success of business reproduction was, to a large extent, based on primogeniture which allowed businesses to expand over multiple generations. While control of the enterprises or businesses was officially bequeathed to a single son, his brothers were expected to remain part of the family and business but without the right to make final business decisions. Historians suggest that this intergenerational business reproduction and stability was not replicated in the average Russian merchant family. Instead, the heads of guild merchant families tended to divide assets (in cases where commercial property could not be divided by law) and the most motivated and wealthy of their successors could buy the remaining shares from their co-inheritors. In a way, whether enforced by law or motivated by personal values, “commercial wealth tended to dissipate ... clans ... were more an exception than the rule”.

What emerges from this previous research is that neither the State nor guild merchants could successfully manage both the social and economic structures in place in the Russian Empire. According to this model, the State and society constantly and consistently grappled with ineffective regulations and an unwillingness to support existing legislation and policies. This discouraged personal wealth accumulation, occupational mobility, business reproduction and Russian economic growth. Scholars also use this assertion to explain why a liberal “European” middle-class did not develop in the Russian Empire.

722 West: ‘Old Believers’, p. 79.
My research debunks this model of Russian guild merchant institutions in the nineteenth century. My study of the evolution and sustainability of the Russian business community and guild merchantry suggests that mercantile and personal property institutions in late Imperial Russia were not as ineffective as other scholars have previously indicated. My research is supplemented by social and family demographic information, a large sample of inheritances and an analysis of inheritance strategies and wealth valuations spread along social and geographic lines. Mercantile institutions were effective in ways that allowed individuals (here guild merchants) to make decisions about important life events that influenced businesses, to manage property and to provide for the next generation. I am not implying that the life of the average merchant was easy or certain: obviously there were many challenges. When viewed in context, however, it becomes clear that most merchants were successful in coping with economic and occupational uncertainty and were able to provide their children with real opportunities for the future.

**First Objective**

Historians primarily evaluate the Russian guild merchantry in terms of its proportion to the overall Russian population or other soslovie, the number of enterprises at a given point in time, overall profits, confrontations with trading peasant and meshchane, and charity and risk-averse behaviour. It is less common for scholars to consult data about the number of patent holders, the size and composition of the family, the family as a dynamic unit and the geographic variations of trade and trade specialisation. Exploring the causes, outcomes and overlap of the social and economic statuses of guild merchants and their impact on social stratification and economic growth in the Russian Empire is completely absent in the existing historiography on late Imperial Russia.

The first objective of my dissertation was to broadly contextualise the wider social, economic and legal realities of the Russian Empire, primarily in the second half of the nineteenth century. I did so to question the relationship between the Russian guild merchantry and the State, to examine how the merchantry related to other legal social estates and to determine the demographic and family characteristics of merchants in late Imperial Russia. I also investigate whether the dichotomy between guild merchant social estate status and economic agency hindered its evolution. The Russian guild merchantry as a group was situated between legally established class/estate/soslovie social groips, and thus was an exceptional group. The combination of non-inheritable social and economic privileges and opportunities, which were still available to family members so long as the guild merchant was living and held a merchant patent, has puzzled many scholars. How can such an amorphous group, straddling
social and economic categorisation, be defined? What can their ambiguous classification reveal about late Imperial society?

My analysis of the evolution of State-merchant relationships over time allows me to suggest that the previously accepted model of State oppression and dependency needs substantial revision. Instead, I show that the relationship between merchants and the State was co-dependant: State needed managers for its monopolies and merchants provided this service. In return, they received State buyouts and personal privileges. While this arrangement was not always even, and State policy was not always beneficial to individual merchants, it was a largely balanced and stable relationship. I do not imply that co-dependency was based on ideas of partnership or healthy profit-generating strategies. Rather, co-dependency was the result of confrontations in which each side attempted to preserve its own interests. For example, Peter the Great’s nominal abolition of the gosti mercantile institution in the first quarter of the eighteenth century was later balanced by the Russian business elite’s rebuff of government attempts to introduce a more equity-based progressive system of business taxation and to abolish connections between social stratification and mercantile agency (abolished in 1898).

The inherited discrepancy between the legal and economic statuses of Russian business community members (which included guild merchants, trading peasants and the wide variety of petty traders) was not an insurmountable obstacle in the evolution of mercantile institutions and personal assets accumulation. In another context where, for example, serfdom had been abolished earlier or where geographic and environmental factors were fewer, the guild merchantry’s trading peasant rivals would probably have been a real barrier to the formation of a distinctive group of merchants and entrepreneurs. In the Russian context, however, I suggest mercantile institutions and the continuation of serfdom collaborated and coexisted without much detriment to either group and institution. Still, this coexistence likely perpetuated and extended the duration and durability of serfdom and merchantry as an institution. Peasants were allowed fee-free seasonal petty trade in agricultural goods, which provided them with additional income (though they were required to pay a quitrent to their landlord). Merchants were restricted, as of 1762, from buying land with serfs for use as free labour, though under some conditions merchants were allowed to have possessional serfs who were assigned work in factories.

Data on the evolution of the number of heads of the family (without family members) and single merchants registered members of the business community (from trading peasants and petty traders to first guild merchants) suggests that between 1840 and 1897 the proportion of mercantile agents, compared to the proportion of the urban population, increased from 1.05
percent to 5.4 percent. The proportion of individual guild merchants to the urban population between 1840 and 1897, however, remained stable at 0.8 percent. This was the case even though the urban population expanded by 3.5 times and the number of merchant patent-holders increased by 3.8 times over. This shows that the group of full-time, professional merchants increased proportionally to the growth of the urban population. This furthermore suggests a balance between supply and demand rather than endemic economic uncertainty and professional bankruptcy for merchants as a group. The average annual fluctuations in the number of merchant guild patent-holders in the first quarter of the nineteenth century until the abolition of mandatory soslovie registration in 1898, were in general positive, however, in the second half of the nineteenth century the average annual increase in patents had grown from 0.9 between 1816 and 1858 and 2.2 patents between 1867 and 1897.

Another revealing trend is evident when looking at the number of family members enrolled on merchant patents. While the annual number of guild merchants increased, the average number of family members enrolled on the head of the family’s patent decreased between 1840 and 1897. In 1840, the average number of individuals registered per patent was 5.8 family members (including the patent holder). In 1897 this number decreased to only 1.6 individuals. In Moscow alone the proportion also decreased, but less substantially: from 5.8 family members per patent in 1871 (data for the earlier period is not available) to 3.6 in 1897. These tendencies in the development and evolution of soslovie (mercantile agents with family members) and the better off part of the business community (here, only merchant patent holders) were not considered in previous scholarly studies, but they represent two different parts of a single process: the decrease in the proportion of guild merchant soslovie to the urban population (4.5 percent in 1840 and 1.3 in 1897) was interpreted as a detrimental feature and failure of mercantile agencies. My dissertation proves otherwise.

The number of family members enrolled in guilds varied. In 1879, according to my calculations, the average number of male family members enrolled on a patent in Moscow (without considering the head of the family) was 3.1 for first guild merchants and 2.5 for second guild members. While wealth (first guild merchants were wealthier) provided merchants with the opportunity to have larger families, it did not necessarily indicate decreased mortality rates among adults. The estimations of the differences in the lengths of life expectancy between (1) wealthy Moscow merchant philanthropists, (2) average Moscow merchants and (3) the national average life expectancy, suggest that between 1870s and the end of the nineteenth century, the average guild member became older but this is actually unlikely because of increased life expectancy. Nevertheless, wealth did not prevent premature death or significantly impact the
mortality rates of adult men. Women, however, who were only 11 percent of Moscow merchant patent-holders, seemed to benefit equally from wealth and education. At the age of 50, wealthy Moscow female entrepreneurs were expected to live another 21 years, while the national average was 20.2 years. From the early eighteenth century, however, the life expectancy among guild merchants increased on the whole. According to my estimations, the grandparents of Moscow merchant philanthropists in the second half of the eighteenth century lived, on average, 64.5 years, philanthropists’ parents lived 66 years, and philanthropists who lived in the second half of the nineteenth century lived 67 years, though this data is not gender-specific.

The idea that merchants lived longer and that, in general, membership in merchant guilds provided a substantially longer life, is likely an illusion. Though the average members of the guild merchantry became older between 1879 and 1897, I suggest that this was the result of an increase in the number of years individuals purchased patents (business longevity) rather than an actual increase in life expectancy. Additionally, if business longevity in equal proportions increased among first and the second guild (1879 – 12.6 and 8.9 and 1897 – 14.2 and 10.7 for the first and the second guild respectively), the average age of members changed less proportionally. In 1879, the average male merchant of the first guild was 46. In 1897, he was 51 years old. In the second guild the average age was 44 and did not change. Female merchant patent holders tended to be moderately older than their male counterparts, but only in the first guild (by 6 years in 1879 and 1897). In the second guild, however, female merchants in 1879 were the same age as men (44) and in 1897 they were two years older (46). The implication is that business succession by spouses in the wealthiest merchant families occurred more frequently than in the families of second guild merchants. This assertion is also supported by patterns of business transmission through inheritance. While 73.3 percent of simple universal business transmissions were made in favour of spouses among the wealthiest merchants, average merchants used this strategy less often (or 55.5 percent of inheritances in my sample). The aging of the Moscow guild merchantry was observed equally for patent-holders and family members of merchant families. In my sample, wives, sons, daughters and grandchildren became older between 1863 and 1881 (on average by 3.5 years for sons, 5 years for daughters and 7.5 years for grandchildren).

What does this data reveal about the evolution of guild merchant soslovie?

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725 I believe that the actual increase in life expectancy of the adult population happened only after a decrease in infant mortality (the demographic transition), which was registered in the Russian Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century.

726 According to my estimations, the average gap in age between spouses in merchant families was 5 to 10 years in the second half of the nineteenth century.
First, merchant status, which encompassed characteristics of both legal social estates and class groups, did not substantially hinder the development of distinctly mercantile institutions in the Russian Empire. This is because the trend in their evolution was positive throughout the nineteenth century. Likewise, the abolition of the third guild in 1863 did not obstruct the evolution of the guild merchantry. The economic shocks and introduction of new taxation certainly influenced the number of guild members, but the negative effects of these changes were not permanent. The Moscow guild merchantry followed international trends: as in Europe, the Russian guild merchantry consequently passed through stages from individual agency, to guild business communities, family firms and public companies. This does not automatically imply that State-merchant relations were of the same nature and that the stages of development were synchronised, but that there were significant similarities between European and Russian guild merchants is clear. The number of individuals involved in petty, middle and high-value trade and production increased proportionally to increases in the urban population, and rates of business reproduction were moderate. The proportion of inherited guild merchant businesses in Moscow was, by my lowest estimations, 10-15 percent of the number of annual patent holders. Between 1879 and 1897, the proportion of merchant businesses that remained, either in the hands of individual merchants or their successors, was 17 percent. This meant that, on average, only 5 percent of merchants left guilds annually, half of which probably did so due to financial difficulties.

Second, though the merchantry as a specific occupation involved income instability and future uncertainty, it also incorporated a wide spectrum of profit-generating activities and access to valuable social status. This status influenced the demographic behaviour of its members. The families of the wealthiest first guild Moscow merchants were larger, though wealth, before the substantial decrease of infant mortality at the national level, did not significantly impact the mortality of male merchants. Female merchants were, in general, more responsive to economic and educational factors which influenced life expectancy. Russian merchants responded to demographic and occupational challenges similarly to European merchants: they developed social networks, decreased the number of children in the family, married later or did not marry at all in order to increase opportunities for making riskier business moves and invested less time focusing on fostering safe family environments.

**Second Objective**

The second objective of my dissertation was to question the effectiveness of the institution of private property in the Russian Empire. I understand the concept of private property as being beneficial when it successfully provides individuals with opportunities to own, control and to
transmit property. By looking at the development of personal property rights in Russia, I first questioned which legal, social, spatial or other factors determined the boundaries between those who could own property, those who could not and those whose rights were limited and how this changed over time.

Since legal regulations present only one side of the institutional framework of private property rights, my aim was to study the value of personal wealth and the ways individuals managed personal property rights. The main question I have asked was: Did specific social, occupational and legal features of the Russian guild merchantry influence their opportunities as personal property owners? To answer this question, I analysed merchants in the national context and, in comparison, other legal social estates. I also sought to determine how many wealthy people there were in the Russian Empire. I understand wealth under these circumstances not only in terms of a certain value, but also whether the proportion of people who managed to save extra income increased over the first decades of economic growth (from 1880). Was the Russian population, at the individual level, able to profit materially from the economic growth? Did the estate system of social stratification, which nominally existed until 1917, reflect wealth inequality or not?

For many decades, research about private wealth in the Russian Empire was limited by a paucity of data. I suggest that official statistics on the value and number of transmitted inheritances and gifts inter-vivos are a reliable proxy for general estimations of trends and proportions of privately held wealth with respect to other characteristics of economic development. Additionally, individual inheritance probations and wealth valuations for wardships show the social inequality of wealth distribution and partially reveal the patterns of wealth management. Thus, using sources on personal wealth valuations, I was able to show social and geographic patterns of wealth accumulation and social and partly occupational inequalities of wealth distribution.

My estimations of the average wealth of Muscovites, focusing on social background, proves the outcomes of Lindert and Nafziger’s findings: that soslovie membership corresponded to the level of income and level of wealth. In 1892, the soslovia in Moscow (in my sample) were arranged in the following order by the average level of wealth at time of death: honorary

727 Transmission of wealth (here, through inheritance and gifts inter-vivos), was also an important component of property rights which I address below.
728 Here, I understand the institutional framework as the complex impulses determined by the State (legal regulations) and the variety of individual responses.
729 Nafziger and Lindert: ‘Russian Inequality’.
citizens (96,632 roubles), guild merchants (64,566 roubles), meshchane (3,023 roubles), raznochintsy (social estate composed individuals of various ranks) (2,421 roubles) and artisans (638 roubles). Thus, the average honorary citizen in my sample was 150 times wealthier than the average artisan and meshchane. Though they composed a quarter of the Muscovite population, they were 21 times poorer than the average guild merchant who were only 3 percent of the Muscovite population at the end of the nineteenth century.

The question remains whether the social inequality of wealth ownership could be explained by dichotomies in gender and social status when considering legislation on personal property rights. I concluded that it was unlikely. My analysis of legal regulations regarding personal property rights suggests that at the second half of the nineteenth century, soslovie-based limitations on real estate, land and labour access were no longer valid, meaning that individuals received more opportunities to own property. For example, in the second quarter of the nineteenth century the value of individually owned urban/residential real estate was bound to soslovie membership. The value of commercial property, however, was never an issue (unlike in France’s patent system where the value of patent depended on the value and profitability of building where an enterprise was located). In Russia, the patent system was based on the number of workers, the geographic location of the trading or production establishment and the geographic extent of trade. Noble monopolies on land ownership and serfs were only legally enforced for 19 years (between 1782 and 1801), though serfs were banned from official land ownership until 1848.

In Russia, women began to gain freedom over their finances at the end of the seventeenth century. There was, however, a significant gulf between de-facto and de-jure rights. While a special study of women’s property rights is outside of the primary focus of my research, the court case of idle husband S. Shchekin against his wife N. Shchekina, who was a first guild merchant and originated from a senior Moscow guild merchant family (Khludovykh), demonstrates the widening of this chasm. After his wife refused him money and put him out on the street, he filed a wardship case against her. He intended to label her as “wasteful” and to gain access to the administration of her finances and business. Since he had little evidence of her business failures, he fabricated an adultery case against her. Because the disagreement was between two senior merchantry kin, and families of inheritable honorary citizenship, the

730 This data was collected from the Moscow ward court which managed urban wardship cases, excluding peasants and aristocrats who had their own courts.
731 He also originated from established merchant kin, but his inherited enterprise was bankrupt and his following business affairs were not successful.
case eventually reached Emperor Alexander III because the Moscow general-governor V.A. Dolgorukov accepted Shchekin’s petition which obviously motivated Schekina to rich the Emperor. In the end, Shchekina was absolved of the charges against her and was granted a divorce. This example shows that in other cases, a woman’s word was not as valid as a man’s, even if she was wealthier or the same social status. Unfortunately, the legal connection between personal rights as the basis of property rights was never established. Nevertheless, this was an issue for men and women alike in the Russian Empire. This shows the limited effectiveness of the institution of private property in the Russian Empire.

Along geographical and social lines, wealth also was distributed unequally. Between 1888 and 1890, 42 percent of probated inheritances by value (above 1,000 roubles) were in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. These inheritances also made up 20 percent of all inheritances (by number) during this period. The gap in the average value of personal wealth between Russian provinces was substantial. My estimations show that if the average value of inheritances (above 1,000 roubles) in the Russian Empire was 30,918 roubles, while the omission of the two capital provinces decreased the average value by a quarter (to 22,413 roubles). The wealthiest testators in the Russian Empire lived in Saint Petersburg, with an average inheritance value of 65,675 roubles.

The question of the proportion of wealthy people and the evolution of this population in the Russian Empire has puzzled many generations of economic historians. Data on the annual number of filed inheritance probation petitions (irrespective of value) show that the proportion of individuals who were able to save and accumulate extra income grew annually. The proportion of deceased adults who died with some wealth, compared to the total number of deceased adults over the age of 20, increased from 12.9 percent to 22.6 percent between 1885 and 1908. The value of transmitted inheritances (above 1,000 roubles) between 1888 and 1905 increased by 12.7 percent. A rough estimation of the value of gifts inter vivos shows that they increased by 18.1 percent. Rough estimations of the proportion of those who died owning (hypothetically) 1 to 999 roubles, suggest that this group was composed of slightly more than one third of all testators (34.6 percent).

Gifts inter vivos, as many academics have shown, balance the increased life expectancy of parents with the beginning of their children’s independent lives and careers. They also have the capacity to improve income opportunities. My estimations suggest that between 1888 and 1905 the proportion of gifts to the value of transmitted inheritances (above 1,000 roubles)

increased from 7.2 to 12.4 percent (in Britain in the 1910s the proportion was 19 percent and in France, 50 percent). Applied to the post-reform Russian Empire, the proportion of value and number of gifts inter vivos between rural and urban areas, in general, were more equal than in cases of inheritances. Geographic distribution suggests that the gifts were often used to establish the continued financial stability of the household rather than increased life expectancy on the part of parents. Rural household divisions, influenced by industrial development, occurred more frequently and usually household divisions in proto-industrial families took place during the lifetime of the head of the family.733

Returning to the general question of my research, regarding the correlation between the occupational uncertainty and wealth management of Russian guild merchants, the estimated average value of assets compared to the average wealth of Moscow guild merchants suggests that there was a connection. Merchants were able to balance occupational uncertainty and soslovie membership by investing the majority of their assets in real estate and maintaining a balance between debt and credit. On average, 44 percent of wealth was held in real estate while debts and credits were almost equal at around 17 percent. On average, real estate was purchased after 8.5 years of guild membership.

What are the general implications of these findings? First, private property rights at the second half of the nineteenth century could hardly be accepted as effective because (1) the connection between personal and property rights was not established for the majority of the population, excluding nobles (importantly, all women, even of noble origins, were victims of this lack of connection) and (2) until 1917, legal regulations were primarily focused on landed property which left urban property (real estate, commercial property, capital, etc.) almost unregulated. Nevertheless, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the most restrictive limitations on personal property rights were annulled. The increasing capacity of the internal market and the consequences of the abolition of serfdom positively influenced the opportunities of individuals in purchasing and managing property.

Secondly, despite the controversial nature of the institution of private property and high indirect taxes, the proportion of wealth-holders to the number of deceased adults and the value of transmitted wealth increased overall. This implies that individuals were able to save a part of their income (which they likely invested or accumulated), though the number of such successful individuals was moderate. The average annual growth of high-value inheritances between 1888 and 1905 was slightly above one percent which probably implies that classic

733 As estimated by Kolle, Social change.
characterisations of the Russian populace (as motivated to revolt simply for economic reasons) cannot be supported by the general increase of transmitted inheritances. I suggest that economic growth positively affected the personal well-being of more urban Russian populations than previously stated by scholars. 

Finally, the Russian population was not equally poor, especially after removing the one percent of super-wealthy individuals from consideration. While wealth inequality between members of urban legal social estates were visible, I suggest it was still far from revolutionary levels. On the contrary, soslovie membership and occupation provided individuals with distinctive rights and opportunities. Yet, wealth inequality (especially in Moscow) was sensitive. The average wealth of meshchane who a quarter of the urban population were (earning, on average, 3,023 roubles) was certainly lower than the average wealth of guild merchants and honorary citizens (which was above 70,000 roubles) who comprised about 4.5 percent of Muscovites in 1882. At the same time the fact that even Moscow artisans were able to accumulate wealth is outstanding.

The Third Objective

My findings, considering the first and the second objectives of my dissertation, posit Russian society as unequal in terms of material well-being along social and geographical lines. Yet, the institutional framework of the merchantry appeared to be flexible and only moderately hindered occupational mobility. The question motivating my third objective was to what extent inequality was inherited or inheritable? Were parents able to reduce their children’s levels of social and occupational uncertainty? Did the social background and occupation of testators affect their decision-making? Also, were inequality generating factors (as inheritance division strategies) more relevant to certain groups of the urban population? What was the role of legal regulations placed on inheritance transmission in bequeathing strategies?

The transfer of wealth through inheritance or gifts inter-vivos influence economic, family and legal institutions and it is also a basic component of social stratification. When some bequest patterns are reproduced over generations and by members of distinctive social groups, they influence the outlook of society in general. Focusing on who gets what and why, within the scope of this project, I have compared the bequeathing patterns of Muscovites of different social backgrounds. For guild merchants, I did so within an extended chronological period between the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The results of my calculations suggest that the boundaries that divided the bequeathing patterns of Russians in post-reform society lay not

734 Mironov, Blagosostoianie naseleniia, p. 598.
only on soslovie, but wealth level, the type of assets accumulated, and occupation: less wealthy individuals and also individuals whose assets were mostly composed of real estate preferred simple universal transmission, which generated less wealth inequality on a national level. For example, peasants in Moscow (half of the city’s population in 1882) in 69 percent of instances, chose simple universal patterns of bequest. In the majority of cases, the surviving spouse inherited all assets (49.2 percent of instances of my sample of non-merchant testators). It seems, however, that children, meant to receive an inheritance after the death of both parents and likely received their monetary allotment of inheritance before the death of their parents, either as a gift or dowry. The final inheritance, after both parents’ death, was unlikely to substantially influence their income opportunities.

The Intelligentsia (in the 57.5 percent of cases), nobles (55.6 percent) and honorary citizens (52.6 percent) also generally applied simple universal bequeathing strategies. The reason was likely based on the type of assets free for transmission through the will. The law of inheritance distinguished between patrimonial and acquired property. While patrimonial property could not be freely disposed through wills, all acquired but indivisible commercial and production establishments could be freely disposed. While the texts of last wills provide little information about the composition of bequeathed assets, unpublished national statistics for 1900-1905 for the Russian Empire in general, suggest that over half of all assets transmitted through inheritance were composed of capital and only 6 percent were land bequests. Real estate was less than a third of all assets transmitted through inheritances above 1,000 roubles.

In the nineteenth century, the average guild merchants transmitted wealth to more than one inheritor in 72.8 percent of cases. In the eighteenth century, however, the proportion in my sample was lower (67.3 percent). Over 80 percent of the wealthiest Moscow guild merchants divided their wealth among several successors. Importantly, the number of successors in merchant wills increased between the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, from around 1.5 to 2.3 for the average merchants and 3.3 for the wealthiest merchants. Also, there was an approximate twofold decrease in the proportion of inheritors who were non-nuclear family members. The well-being of wives and daughters in the nineteenth century, as opposed to the popular in the earlier period Church and other forms of posthumous charity, became more important for testators who were more concerned about their living family members than securing their eternal salvation. Sons, in turn, replaced uncles and paternal business partners, though in the nineteenth century they often divided the inheritance with their mothers. Family, rather than kin or the Church, became the primary successors which, I suggest, positively influenced personal wealth from at the national level.
The difference in bequeathing patterns between merchants and the general urban population raises the question of whether inheritance played a substantial role in the lives of Muscovites and how it influenced material inequality? In other words: was there a type of Russian “Rastignac” (or ambitious rentier) similar to what seemed to be spreading in French society during the same chronological period? It seems unlikely that many individuals received enough inheritance to live solely off accrued interest. Similarly, my findings suggest that between 1885 and 1905 the proportion of transmitted inheritances and gifts was around 4 percent of the GNP. Second, the proportion of adults who had assets available for transmission (of any level) increased and they chose to divide their wealth in ways that could provide inheritors with more than debts.

The available data on the average level of Moscow merchant inheritances and the average number of successors, however, suggests it was possible for the successor of an average merchant to inherit a substantial amount of wealth. If the average merchant’s wealth (in my sample) was around 60,000 roubles (after settling debts), and this amount was usually divided between 2 or 3 successors. Each inheritor would receive at least 20,000 roubles, which was a significant sum. In some inheritance probations, inheritors indicated that they would rather sell real estate assets and deposit the capital in a bank at five percent interest. For these successors, a widow with underage children meant that maintaining a house was problematic and costly. The five percent interest on 20,000 roubles would generate 1,000 roubles of annual income which, by official estimations, was considered the threshold in determining better-off individuals and eligibility for income taxation. While these estimations are preliminary, they still show that the value of accumulated wealth, the number of dependants and the (mostly) egalitarian inheritance strategies among the better-off merchants were successful in providing merchants’ inheritors with a more secure future than their parents had at the same age. In this regard, I suggest that the uncertainty of merchant status and occupation influenced their bequeathing patterns and strategies, and positively influenced income opportunities for their successors.

My data also shows that a decline in the future uncertainty of inheritors was not achieved by business dissolution. In the eighteenth century, only 10 percent of testators in my sample (7 people) ordered that their businesses be liquidated after death. In the nineteenth century, this number fell to 8.3 percent of testators (5 people). The majority of these individuals were

735 Rastignac refers to an ambitious character Eugène de Rastignac in Honoré de Balzac’s La Comédie humaine. In contemporary French, the term is used to describe upwardly mobile individuals.
childless. In the eighteenth century, 70.4 percent and businessmen transferred their businesses indivisibly to one successor. In the nineteenth century, 49 percent of average businessmen and a third of the wealthiest merchants transferred indivisible wealth to a single individual successor. This was rational behaviour partially motivated by legal regulations. Merchants who were not personally attached to their enterprise, however, bequeathed goods and the business premises to different successors implying the liquidation of the business, but such instances were very rare.

Returning to whether inheritance (by law and in wills) was an inequality-generating factor in Russia and if this inequality was inheritable: based on my findings I suggest that by the end of the nineteenth century, any sizable inheritance was still uncommon for the majority of the younger adult population and thus it did not to substantially affect the level of material inequality. The increased value of inheritances and the increased number of testators (and consequently inheritors) by the first decade of the twentieth century was more a by-product of economic growth and improved sanitary conditions than other factors. Nevertheless, the bequest strategies of Russian merchants and entrepreneurs, whether influenced by economic development and/or occupational uncertainty, were similar to those of their European contemporaries. Both European and Russian merchants divided and liquidated assets, narrowed their circle of inheritors by number and to the nuclear family and provided daughters with inheritance shares of equal value but different in asset type with sons. By the 1910s, inheritance was becoming a factor that influenced personal wealth and income in the Russian Empire.

My dissertation further enhances our understanding of the mechanisms of social and economic change which took place during the second half of the nineteenth century. My research is based on micro and macro data, published and unpublished, and demonstrates the constant negotiations between previously visible and invisible factors (inheritance strategies, personal property rights and the specific character of mercantile institutions). These factors shaped the relationships between the State, individuals and social groups, and also influenced social and economic development.

While this study is the first study of its kind to use a combination of private and public, qualitative and quantitative sources, I suggest that a large sample of last wills and their probations, more gender-specific perspectives on the behaviour of testators and inheritors, and more effective estimations on merchant demographics and bequeathing patterns, and also a larger sample of data on the total value of transmitted inheritances at the national level would further specify the findings and conclusions reached above.
### Appendix

#### Appendix 1 Russian mercantile agency, 1816-1912

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<th>3 Guild</th>
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<th>Salesclerks' certificates</th>
<th>Foreigners</th>
<th>Petty trade with permanent trading place</th>
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<th>Peddling (walking retailer)</th>
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**Source:** for 1816-1859, 1880 *Vedomost o svidetelstvakh i biletakh, vydannykh na pravo torgovli i promyslov a tak zhe o dopolnitelnom sbore s tseny torgovykh dokumentov v 1880 god (SPb, 1881), 41, 48. ; for 1869 *Ezhegodnik Ministerstva Finansov, vol. 1 (SPb, 1869), p. 326. ; for 1873 *Ezhegodnik Ministerstva Finansov za 1873 god (SPb, 1875), p. 384. ; for 1875 *Vedomost o svidetelstvakh i biletakh, vydannykh na pravo..."
torgovli i promyslov a tak zhe o dopolnitelnom sbore s tseny torgovykh dokumentov na 1875 (SPb, 1876).; for 1876 Vedomost o svidetelstvakh i biletakh, vydannykh na pravo torgovli i promyslov a tak zhe o dopolnitelnom sbore s tseny torgovykh dokumentov na 1876 (SPb, 1877).; for 1877 Vedomost o svidetelstvakh i biletakh, vydannykh na pravo torgovli i promyslov a tak zhe o dopolnitelnom sbore s tseny torgovykh dokumentov na 1877 (SPb, 1878).; for 1888-1897 Ezhegodnik Ministerstva Finansov za 1900, vol. XXX (SPb, 1901), pp. 140–141.; for 1899-1908 Statisticheskie materialy k proektu ob izmenenii Polozhenii o gosudarstvennom promyslovom naloge (SPb, 1909), pp. 174–175.; for 1909-1912 Ezhegodnik Ministerstva Finansov na 1912, vol. XXXXIV (SPb, 1914), p. 650; Statistika priamych nalogov i poshlin. Gos. promysl. nalog. Osn. nalog s otchet. i neotchet. predpriadii i dop. nalog s neotchet. predpriadii za 1912 g. (Petrograd, 1915), p. 27.
### Appendix 2 Number of Moscow guild merchants, 1865-1910

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Fond 51 – Moskovskaia kazennaia palata
Fond 83 – Moskovskii sirotskii sud
Fond 142 – Moskovskovskii okruzhnoi sud
Fond 179 – Moskovskaia gorodskaiia duma i uprava
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