LABOUR, MOBILITY AND INFORMAL PRACTICES IN RUSSIA, CENTRAL ASIA AND EASTERN EUROPE

POWER, INSTITUTIONS AND MOBILE ACTORS IN TRANSNATIONAL SPACE

Edited by
Rano Turaeva and Rustamjon Urinboyev

Labour, Mobility and Informal Practices in Russia, Central Asia and Eastern Europe

This book explores daily survival strategies of people within the context of failed states, flourishing informal economies, legal uncertainty, increased mobility and globalization, where many people, who are forced by the circumstances to be innovative and transnational, have found their niches outside formal processes and structures. The book provides a thorough theoretical introduction to the link between labour mobility and informality and comprises convincing case studies from a wide range of post-socialist countries. Overall, it highlights the importance of trust, transnational networks and digital technologies in settings where the rules governing the economic and social activities of mobile workers are often unclear and flexible.

Rano Turaeva is a senior scholar affiliated with the Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology, Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich and an associated senior researcher at Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle Saale in Germany

Rustamjon Urinboyev is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology of Law at Lund University and Senior Researcher in Russian and Eurasian Studies in the Aleksanteri Institute at University of Helsinki

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Contributors

Izzat Amon is an independent researcher and practicing human rights activist and lawyer based in Moscow in Russia. Amon is a popular representative of Central Asian migrants in Russia and participates actively in political and academic events around the world with speeches addressing current situation of Central Asian migration to Russia.

Anna Cieślewska is a researcher at the Department of Iranian Studies, Institute of Oriental Studies at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. In 2019 she got her postdoctoral degree in Religious and Cultural Studies at the Faculty of History, University of Warsaw (UW). She wrote her doctoral thesis at the Institute of Applied Social Sciences (UW). She graduated from the UW's School of Cross-culture Relations with a MA degree, and earned a MSc degree in Development Studies from the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London, as well as completing the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. On account of her interest in Central Asian socio-economic development issues and the geopolitics of Central Asia and Caucasus, as well as in Islam and local traditions in the post-Soviet region, she has spent the last 15 years working on various research and development projects in the CIS region and the Middle East. At present, she leads the project, 'Changes in religious tradition of migrants from Tajikistan in the Russian Federation', and is preparing a research project related to transmission of Islamic knowledge and religious leaders in contemporary Georgia.

Sherzod Eraliev is a postdoctoral researcher at the Aleksanteri Institute, University of Helsinki. He defended his PhD thesis on Russia´s policies vis-á-vis labour migrants from Central Asia at the University of Tsukuba, Japan, in 2018. His research interests include state and migration policies, migration regimes, skilled migration, migration and religion, and state and society in Central Asia.

Anna-Liisa Heusala is a political scientist and university lecturer in Russian and Eurasian Studies at the Aleksanteri Institute, University of Helsinki. Her research focuses on Russian public administration, migration and legal culture, migration and human security, and comprehensive security, in which her publications examine cross-border crime prevention and border security.

Irina Kuznetsova is a Research Fellow and a Lecturer in the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences at the University of Birmingham, the UK. Irina works on migration from Central Asia in Russia exploring government's policies, everyday experiences of migrants and social policy and the impact of migration on rural communities. Her recent projects focus on social consequences of population displacement from Ukraine's war-torn territories and are supported by AHRC, British Academy and Wellcome Trust.

Bakyt Muratbayeva received a diploma in International Relations from the German-Kazakh University (Kazakhstan) and an MA in Sociology from the University of Bielefeld (Germany). She is currently writing her dissertation for PhD (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale), in which she analyses different uses of ethnic categories in the ordinary language of the medical staff of a rural hospital in Kazakhstan.

Nikolaos Olma is a Research Fellow at the Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient in Berlin, Germany. His current research project focuses on how the consequences of chronic exposure to low doses of radiation is negotiated. He previously worked as a Research Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle (Saale), Germany and as a PhD Fellow at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, where his dissertation explored the nexus of embodied memory and urban infrastructure in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Minna Piipponen received her doctoral degree in Human Geography at the University of Eastern Finland (UEF, previously University of Joensuu) in 2007. Dr Piipponen has worked in research and educational positions at the UEF, e.g., as Lecturer (2008–2009), Head of Education (2011–2014) of the VERA Centre for Russian and Border Studies, Project Researcher (2015–2019) and as Research Amanuensis (since 2020). Her research interests include international migratory processes especially in Russia, regional and local development processes with particular emphasis on Russian resource sectors and border areas, as well as cross-border cooperation especially in North-West Russia.

Benjamin Quasinowski received his diploma in Sociology from Bielefeld University, Germany. For his dissertation (University of Konstanz) he investigated the relationship between local, universal and global micro-structures of social interaction in a village hospital of Kazakhstan. Benjamin is currently working in the DFG-funded project, 'Travelling knowledge: the glocalization of medical professional knowledge and practice' (University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany), which investigates mechanisms that lead to the worldwide diffusion of medical treatment standards and practices.

John Round is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences at the University of Birmingham. His main research interests revolve around the nature of everyday life in post-socialist spaces and the ways in which individuals/households cope with socio-economic marginalisation. To date, he has worked extensively in Russia and Ukraine and

employs the work of de Certeau and Lefebvre to theorise everyday practices and Mbeme's theories of necropolitics to understand state responses to them. His current research explores the problems migrants face in Russia and the ways in which they cope with it.

Caress Schenk is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Nazarbayev University (Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan) with teaching and research expertise in the politics of immigration and national identity in Eurasia. Her book, published with the University of Toronto Press in 2018, is called *Why Control Immigration? Strategic Uses of Migration Management in Russia*. Her current research is funded by research grants from Nazarbayev University and the competitiveness improvement programme of Tomsk State University. Her previous research has been funded by the American Councils for International Education, Nazarbayev University and the Fulbright Scholar Program and has been published in *Demokratizatisya*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, and *Nationalities Papers*, and in edited volumes published by Edinburgh University Press and Oxford University Press. Dr Schenk is also a Senior Researcher in the Laboratory for Social and Anthropological Research at Tomsk State University, a member of the Program on New Approaches to Research and Security in Eurasia (PONARS Eurasia) and a regional manager of the CoronaNet Research Project.

Agata Stanisz is a Professor at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań at the Department of Anthropology and Ethnology. A field researcher and fieldrecordist as well as a committed photographer. An author of books. Research interests: anthropology of infrastructure, new rural paradigm, road studies, multisite and mobile ethnography, de-visualizing research methods (anthropology of sound and audioethnography), cyberanthropology. Research areas: Western Europe, Poland.

Rano Turaeva is a senior scholar at the Ludwig Maximillian University and an associated researcher at Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle Saale in Germany. She is currently working on the project, 'The Role of Mosques in Integration of Migrants in Russia', and has been writing on the topics of migration, entrepreneurship, informal economies, gender, border studies, identity and inter-ethnic relations, among many others, which have been published in such journals as *Central Asian Affairs*, *Central Asian Survey*, *Inner Asia*, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, *Anthropology of Middle East*, among other journals. Her book based on her PhD thesis was published by Routledge in 2016 under the title, *Migration and Identity: The Uzbek Experience*.

Rustamjon Urinboyev is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology of Law at Lund University and Senior Researcher within the ERC-funded 'GulagEchoes' project in the Aleksanteri Institute, University of Helsinki. Rustamjon works at the intersection of sociology of law and ethnography, studying migration, corruption, governance and penal institutions in the

context of Russia and Central Asia. His current research focuses on (a) migration, shadow economy and informal legal orders in hybrid political regimes, (b) corruption, informality and legal pluralism in Uzbekistan and (c) informal hierarchies, religious orders and ethnic identities in Russian penal institutions. He is the author of *Migration and Hybrid Political Regimes: Navigating the Legal Landscape in Russia* (2020), published by the University of California Press.

Joni Virkkunen works as a Research Manager at VERA Centre for Russian and Border Studies, Karelian Institute, University of Eastern Finland (UEF). Since receiving his PhD in 2002, his tasks have related to research and research coordination within Russian and border studies and doctoral training at the UEF. His research relates to borders, border governance, cross-border cooperation and EU–Russian relations and transnational migration in Russian and post-Soviet contexts. In his recent research, he has been looking at the 2015–2016 Arctic route through Russia to the EU and the related insecurities, migratory strategies and failed integration of Afghan and African immigrants in Russia. Since 2013, Dr Virkkunen has acted as the Chairman of the Finnish Association for Russian and East European Studies and Member of the International Council of ICCEES (International Council for Central and East European Studies).

Alexandra Voivozeanu is a sociologist interested in Romanian labour migration. Her PhD thesis, entitled 'Posted Migration of Romanians Working in the Construction and Meat Processing Sectors in Germany', focused on levels of precarity experienced by migrants in this non-standard form of employment, as well as on recruitment mechanisms and union approaches towards posted workers. She is currently a post-doctoral researcher at the Centre for Ethnic and Migration Studies (CEDEM) of the University of Liège.

Jvan Yazdani obtained his PhD in Social Anthropology from Sapienza University of Rome, and has worked on diasporic return migration in post-Soviet Caucasus. He is currently working as an editor and translator of academic texts and is undertaking fieldwork in North East Scotland on maritime infrastructures and energy transitions.

Acknowledgments

This volume emerged from a very collaborative effort among an interdisciplinary group of scholars interested in understanding the interconnections between labour, mobility and informality in Russia, Eurasia and Eastern Europe. Generous funding from the Riksbankens Jubileumsfond enabled us to organize two international workshops in Lund, Sweden. The first workshop entitled 'Migration and Informality in Central and Eastern Europe' (MICEE) took place at Lund University on 26–27 March 2018. MICEE workshop brought together scholars, practitioners and civil society actors (human rights activists, journalists) from various countries, disciplinary backgrounds and policy areas. The papers presented during the workshop provided fresh empirical evidence and policy insights and raised a lively discussion on the role and impact of these new migratory patterns and tendencies in reshaping the political, economic, social and legal landscape of Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia that is fed by already existing informal practices. The second workshop 'From Economic to Political Informality: Exploring the Link between Shadow Practices, Policy Making and Development' was also hosted by the Department of Sociology of Law at Lund University on 17–19 September 2019. This workshop allowed us to further explore and conceptualize the interlinkages between labour, mobility and informality, providing a space for reflecting on how we might develop and combine papers from the two workshops in dialogue with one another for eventual publication. Hence, many papers included in this volume come from the scholars who presented their research in Lund.

Introduction

Labour, mobilities and informal practices in Russia, Central Asia and Eastern Europe

Rano Turaeva and Rustamjon Urinboyev

Introduction: mobility and informality

Mobility and migration increased rapidly following the end of the Cold War period and the collapse of communist regimes. These developments led to the emergence of new national, regional and international mobility regimes (e.g., the Commonwealth of Independent States, the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union). These newly established mobility regimes—encompassing visa regulations, union regulations, refugee politics, labour market regulations, migration regulations and capital globalisation—rendered these nation-states visible in new ways and placed state–society relations at the centre of popular discussions (Schiller and Salazar 2013). For many travellers, mobile workers, migrants, refugees and other mobile entrepreneurs moving beyond their hometown or country, these new mobility experiences and strategies generated new challenges, hardships and uncertainties. The social and kinship networks, which served as alternative (to the state's) welfare structures in their home countries, were no longer available in their host countries, leaving individuals in more precarious positions and rather vulnerable (Turaeva 2016). Another key contributing factor was the rapid proliferation of draconian immigration laws and policies within various migration regimes (Coutin 2003; De Genova 2004), a global trend that produced millions of undocumented migrant workers for informal economies.

However, despite tightening immigration laws and flourishing informal economies, legal uncertainty, increased mobility and globalisation, mobile people became increasingly innovative and transnational, whereas a growing number of mobile entrepreneurs have found their niches within and beyond these processes and structures. Since mobility does not recognise rigid state legal systems and boundaries, mobile actors have found alternative ways of navigating restrictive legal landscapes and of organising their economic activities and mobile lives. Today mobile people represent the largest category of people navigating their daily survival through mobile lives beyond nation-state legal systems, crossing multiple geographic and digital boundaries and dealing with diverse power structures, institutions, brokers and gatekeepers. The contributions in this volume include original, fieldwork-based examples from Russia, Central Asia, Eastern

Europe and beyond, dealing with mobilities and informal practices in transnational and digital spaces.

Another key tendency explored in this volume focuses on how informal practices are becoming increasingly transnational due to the explosive growth of communications and transportation technologies. We can no longer confine informal practices to the territory of a single nation-state. In arguing so, in this volume, individual authors show how informality operates across physical and digital boundaries, through varying means and with an identifiable impact on the outcomes of practices that mobile actors (and other actors) engage within their host countries. In other words, the informalisation of societal organisation as well as state–society relations extend beyond national boundaries taking on a transnational and global character.

As the review of informality literature indicates, today we can speak of informal economies and/or practices not only in so-called third-world countries or the Global South but also in the North (Hart 2005; Cassel and Cichy 1986; Tanzi 1980; Roitman 2005; Meagher 2009, 2010). There is, by now, a large body of literature on informal economies, schematically divided into two camps: namely, positive views and optimistic accounts versus negative views with pessimistic accounts (Cassel and Cichy 1986; Tanzi 1980; Tokman 1992; Meagher 2010; Roitman 2005; MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga 2000). The literature on informal economies primarily focuses on examples from Africa, Latin America and Europe. However, some works also examine the former Soviet space (Ledeneva 1998, 2006, 2013; Mars and Altman 1983; Berliner 1952; Grossman 1977; Treml and Alexeev 1994; Humphrey 1998; Kotkin 1995; Kaiser 1997).

The approach to informality taken in this edited volume contributes to the novel debates falling under the 'mobility turn' (Urry 2012, 2016) within migration studies, based on the understanding that people, things and ideas are in constant and dynamic motion, thereby making the rigid institutional structures, boundaries and legal landscapes blurred within mobile transnational and digital contexts. Salazar (2017: 6) outlines the 'new mobilities paradigm' and states that this paradigm 'incorporates new ways of theorising how people, objects and ideas move around by looking at social phenomena through the lens of movement […] It can be seen as a critique of both theories of sedentism and deterritorialisation.' Studies of mobility are not a new paradigm but is rather built on a large body of literature, where mobility was approached from very different angles and depths (Giddens 1986; Appadurai 1991, 1996; Beck 2006; Salazar and Schiller 2014; Salazar 2017). Giddens (1986) attempted to capture movements through fluidising the structure in his structuration theory. Appadurai (1991) drew our attention to the processes of deterritorialisation. Beck (2006) emphasised the risks and the constructions of risks and power. Thus, fluidity became a central feature defining mobilities, structured through networks, spaces and orders (Urry 2016; Salazar 2017; Levebfre 2004).

Armed with these perspectives, in this volume, we attempt to shed light on the daily navigational and survival strategies within mobile transnational and digital contexts. As we show in the chapters that follow, in such contexts, institutional

structures are not rigid, but rather fluid and changing, where various boundaries become blurred and legal systems are no longer able to catch up with the ever-growing mobilities, calling for more informal means of arranging things, getting things done and living mobile lives (Schiller and Salazar 2013).

In what follows, these insights are explored within the context of post-socialist societies in Russia, Central Asia and beyond Eastern Europe. Literature on informal economies focusing on the Soviet era is scant, although some studies have shown that informal economies function in grey zones, between legal and illegal, parallel to the central state-planned economy (Portes and Böröcz 1988; Morris and Barclay 2008; Mars and Altman 1983; Round et al. 2008; Berliner 1952). Some of this literature focuses on shuttle traders (*chelnoki/chelnochkovyi biznes*) in the late Soviet era (Turaeva 2010; Mukhina 2009; Humphrey 1999; Pohorila and Korzhov 2001; Markova 2014; Cieślewska 2014).

Since the end of socialist regimes, the end of the Cold War and accelerated globalisation, mobility and transnational flows, informal economic activities have increased dramatically, and employment patterns have drastically changed (Nazpary 2002). In many countries of the Global South, economic or social incentives no longer remain in state-provided jobs, whilst welfare was often provided under the socialist or communist promises of those states (Raeymaekers et al. 2008; Hansen and Mariken Vaa 2004; Maloney 2004; Chen 2006).

The empirical examples collected in this volume show that actors living within transnational spaces crossing several national boundaries innovatively respond to the bureaucratic and institutional constraints and invent various informal channels and strategies in order to navigate the repressive legal landscapes which often do not accommodate mobile labour. Trust, transnational networks, digital technologies and informality play crucial roles in the verbal agreements replacing formal contracts (Turaeva 2013, 2014; Urinboyev 2017). Rules governing the economic and social activities of mobile workers are *ad hoc* and flexible. They can be renegotiated on the spot and are subject to changing circumstances. There are many variables in play across all aspects of the negotiating process, the institutionalisation of new rules and relations, status maintenance, transnational pressures and networks as well as the formation of trust networks (Turaeva 2013; Urinboyev and Polese 2016). These include historical institutional developments and the history of state formation in the region; current economic and political developments, as well as micro-level aspects of daily life, such as social norms and cultural repertoires. These, coupled with the currents of globalisation processes shared via communication technologies as well as other traditional means of channelling information and knowledge, establish frames of ordering or reordering the spaces of transnational economic engagement and living simple mobile lives (Turaeva 2014).

Mobility–deregulation and immigration–reregulation

Mobility challenges national boundaries and state regulatory systems in both sending and recipient countries or multiple countries relevant to mobile subjects.

This leads to what has been already observed as deregulation. The economic, political and social lives of mobile persons and migrants in the places of their engagement leads to additional engaged practices, requiring recognition or dealing with locally existing state regulations. The countries where mobile persons or migrants live or work, try their best to exert maximum control over all aspects of migrant lives and the migration processes taking place within the boundaries of the relevant states. This process has been observed by many researchers as reregulation experiences of states facing new forms of mobility and migration, which otherwise stemmed from the desired control over the population within the relevant national boundary. These two processes are unrelated and can only be seen as examples of experiences of mobility and the informalisation of economies, societal relations, politics and security.

Regulation and reordering of transnational spaces received considerable attention where new perspectives were opened going beyond state-centric analysis of rules and rule making (Djelic and Sahlin-Andersen 2006). We suggest examining the nation-state legal systems from the opposite side, namely, through the eyes of individuals who can choose whether to follow state laws or not (Ewick and Silbey 1992, 1998, 2003; Silbey 2005). Rather, taking the opposite perspective on the issue and focusing on how ordinary people construct their 'own legal world' (Marshal and Barclay 2003)—namely, the perspective of mobile people themselves—provides more productive thinking about how these laws and policies shape the actions of those at whom such laws and policies are directed. Mobile actors negotiate their host country's legal system in their own terms and with their own tools, which, in turn, play a part in the process of producing new forms of legal order and informal governance. Thus, mobile actors may produce various informal norms and practices (i.e., 'informal legal orders'), providing alternative (to state law) means to regulate their working lives and to seek redress for their problems.

Accordingly, these new informal orders and practices serve as frames of reference and sources of basic order for transnational mobile actors who negotiate their daily economic survival within and outside their home countries. In relation to the state or redefining the state and negotiating rules and norms represent aspects of these daily survival processes (Djelic and Sahlin-Andersson 2006). Rule making, now subsumed within the debate on transnational governance, is conceptualised more broadly than in its classical definition, which assumed the centrality of the state (Baldwin et al. 1998). Critical approaches to the scholarly works on deregulation pointed out the 'new age of legalism' (Schmidt 2004) and importance of the role of the state. Schmidt (2004) for instance points to both declining states and increasingly important 'age of legalism'. Comaroff and Comaroff (2006: 33) refer to this age as 'an Iron Cage of Legality', in which law fetishism is overdetermined and where 'the distillation of postcolonial citizens into legal subjects, and postcolonial politics into lawfare, charts the road from the past to the future, albeit less sharply in some places than in others. Not only are government and public affairs becoming more legalistic, but so are "communities" within nation-states' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006: 33).

Furthermore, transnational regulation was defined as a form of governance which 'structures, guides and controls human and social interactions beyond, across and within national territories' (Djelic and Sahlin-Andersson 2006: 6).

The above discussion on regulation, deregulation, reregulation and transnational governance recognises that the state is not the only governing agency and authority for regulation, such that other actors and sources for authority provide order and norms. From this point of view, nation-state law and regulations merely represent one among many other normative orders within society. Thus, no single, integrated set of rules in any society exists, whether codified into law, sanctified by religion or established as the rules of daily social behaviour. Quite simply, there is no uncontested universal normative code that guides people's lives and actions; the very nature of the legal order is determined by the outcomes of the struggles and the interplay amongst plural normative orders. This conclusion regarding plural forms of regulation and normative orders are well supported by examples from alternative regulations and legal pluralism (Merry 1988; Griffiths 1992; Keebet von Benda-Beckmann et al. 2009; Eckert 2004) as well as the examples offered in this volume.

Uncertainty as a resource: from mobilities to informalities

Uncertainty is maintained and even fostered for use as a resource for economic gain by those in power—be it the middlemen offering services to avoid the state or state officials acting in the name of the state. Interethnic relations and nationalistic discourse rather strongly shape encounters, particularly when crossing borders (Turaeva 2018). Intensified by the additional uncertainty of the travellers, this creates favourable conditions for violence and abuse.

This environment is precarious, as described by Judith Butler (2009, 2016). Butler (2009: ii) defines precarity as a 'politically induced condition of maximised vulnerability and exposure for populations exposed to arbitrary state violence and to other forms of aggression that are not enacted by states and against which states do not offer adequate protection'. Here, it is important to distinguish between systemic qualities of risk—as in Beck's risk society model (Beck 2009)—and precarity as a structural condition where knowledge of these qualities (precarity and risk) are given. However, in situations of uncertainty, a lack of knowledge about security stands as an a priori requirement for feeling insecure and in doubt (a state of uncertainty). On the individual level, uncertainty—namely, the lack of knowledge about risks—renders one completely dependent upon others and, therefore, vulnerable to violence and abuse. Pelkmans (2013) highlights the intellectual aspect of doubt, whereas McBrien (2013: 253) draws attention to the emotional aspect of doubt. The anthropology of uncertainty (Boholm 2003; Samimian-Darash 2012) is an emerging field of study, and scholarly works on uncertainty and risks remain dominated by quantitative analysis primarily in the fields of medicine, health, business and trade.

Mobilities imply change and always involve novelty if focused on location, people, institutions and rules. Mobilities are, therefore, often connected to a

positive outcome and moving up the social and economic ladders. However, mobilities as something fluid also denote instability and uncertainty. New locations, new rules, new environments and the absence of familial networks and family support lead to situations of uncertainty and risk unless people are friendly to each other, state officials do not abuse their authority and people are protected by their families and networks. In an environment of precarity, those who have no power depend on the mercy of those in power, feared as capable of abusing their power at any moment. The condition of uncertainty is maintained through, for instance, constant questioning of travellers' belongings, documents and the purpose of travel. Uncertainty is not always viewed as negative, depending upon the actors and if an actor is in a position to make use of the uncertainties of others. Uncertainty represents a significant resource, making it easy to gain profits in the form of money, presents, private numbers and the attention of good-looking women (Turaeva 2018).

Uncertainty and informality represent a married couple, where precarity and uncertainty are related to informal relations and activities producing vulnerabilities. In this volume, we have collected diverse examples of informal practices taking place in the contexts of mobility and migration. These examples show that individuals who live mobile lives must face the consequences of fluidity and the instability of rules, institutions, locations and networks. Flexibility, navigation and entrepreneurship are important skills actors should possess in order to live mobile lives. Constant efforts aimed at stabilising fluidity and change produce temporal orders and spaces as well as effective networks of trust, where individuals attempt to deal with the challenges of mobile living and uncertainty.

Volume overview and chapter outlines

This volume is organised in three sections, which focus on three interlinked themes: (a) labour, (b) mobility and (c) informality. The three sections may overlap in terms of their contents; however, our aim is to emphasise the central themes which cut across the chapters of this volume. The chapters highlight the ways in which mobile actors and entrepreneurs organise and negotiate their daily precarious livelihoods, navigating the multiplicity of rules, institutions, locations and networks within national, transnational and digital landscapes.

Part I: Labour in times of uncertainty

The chapters in this section explore how mobile actors and non-citizens deal with legal uncertainty, unequal power relations and precarity under the conditions of uncertainty, undocumentedness, a weak rule of law and a shadow economy. All four chapters demonstrate that the condition of legal uncertainty and precarity produces varying outcomes in different social contexts and arenas. On the one hand, such circumstances may indeed lead to unequal power relations and arbitrariness in decision-making. On the other hand, however, some actors can make use of this uncertainty as a resource and opportunity to

structure navigation through the legal restrictions or to gain access to facilities and resources otherwise difficult to obtain within the official legal framework of their host country. Flexibility, navigation, street smartness and the ability to adjust to a weak rule of law environment and corrupt system represent important traits and skills actors need to possess when dealing with the challenges of mobile living.

Nikolaos Olma in his chapter, drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in Uzbekistan conducted between 2014 and 2016, examines the informal practices and experiences in the (informal) taxi sector in post-socialist Tashkent, which serves as a primary income-generating arena for many unemployed internal migrants originating from Uzbekistan's rural areas. Taxiing is a quintessentially informal activity in Uzbekistan, given that it is not only a precarious profession practised outside the institutional and legal boundaries of the Uzbek state and its agencies but is itself also informed by multiple modalities of informality permeating the subjectivities and the everyday lives of the drivers involved in it. From acquiring a car to finding their way around the city to escaping regulatory pressure and paying bribes to traffic police officers and tax agency officials, informal taxi drivers continually navigate a wide array of informal processes, negotiate power relations, adjust to market forces and manoeuvre around various legal frameworks. The involvement of rural labour migrants in taxiing further exacerbates this informality given the informal character of most actions and activities pertaining to the settlement and employment of these individuals in Tashkent. In this sense, Olma examines the informal taxi as an index of how and where two seemingly independent mobility paradigms—that is, rural–urban labour migration and informal urban transportation—converge. Thus, Olma uses the informal taxi sector as a lens through which he explores the various informal processes and everyday livelihood strategies rural labour migrants employ in their attempts to deal with the uncertainty and precariousness accompanying relocation to Tashkent.

Round and Kuznetsova's chapter on the labour relations of Russian businesses and other employers with migrant workers describes the daily struggles of migrants who attempt to formalise their work despite continuous barriers established by employers more interested in abusing the precarious existence of migrants. In doing so, Round and Kuznetsova show that even those migrants who possess all of the necessary papers and permits to work legally face difficulties securing work based on contracts, which employers avoid. This chapter provides a theoretical contribution to discussions regarding uncertainty as a resource and power relations within labour markets and the state regulation of labour markets.

Turaeva and Amon's contribution on deportation regimes in Russia illustrates the consequences of the legal regulation of a deportation regime, namely, the new regulation adopted after 2012, which granted the police and courts as well as others even more power over the unprotected migrant population in Russia in order to abuse the system of deporting migrants. Here, the authors describe contradictory statutes within Russian law used to establish a deportation regime in order to remove unwanted migrants. This chapter also contributes to discussions of how

uncertainty is used as a resource by those in power to abuse migrants by rendering them easily deportable.

The last chapter in this section by Voivozeanu explores the informality within the transnational labour market revolving around the recruitment process (or posting) of Romanians who work in the German construction and meat processing sectors. This migration infrastructure of posting involves numerous actors, namely, companies that facilitate posting, migration intermediaries, migration networks and migrants, who actively make use of grey zones and informal practices, creating transnational spaces that often do not fit within legal systems. As this chapter shows, in the context of the current European regulatory framework, the social fields created by posting are filled with informal norms and structures through which the actors involved negotiate across borders. Within recruitment for this type of employment, formal actors (typically, companies) rely on informal actors and practices to recruit workers and remain on the market. Arrangements which involve agents and/or networks might be beneficial for migrants, since they may bring (better) employment opportunities. Yet, they might reproduce power relations in favour of those actors controlling the recruitment process, thereby leading to exploitative contexts for workers. As a result, closely examining the entire migration process, where diverse actors develop both formal and informal relations and practices, it becomes difficult to differentiate between formal and informal arrangements amongst companies, agents and migrants.

Part II: Mobility as blurring legal, physical and digital boundaries

The four chapters in the second section of this volume all illustrate the ways in which mobility blurs all kinds of boundaries such as legal, informal, physical or geographic, digital or real world. As a result, rigid institutional structures, physical boundaries and legal landscapes become blurred within mobile transnational and digital contexts. Mobile actors, drawing upon their premigratory cultural legacies, practices and social capital, negotiate and redefine the rules and norms and innovatively navigate bureaucratic, institutional and legal constraints within national, transnational and digital contexts. These navigational strategies serve as an alternative adaptation venue, enabling mobile actors to organise their precarious livelihoods in repressive legal environments.

These processes are vividly illustrated in Urinboyev's ethnographic study of smartphone transnationalism amongst Uzbek migrant workers in Russia—a migration context characterised by a weak rule of law, malfunctioning institutions, large shadow economies, a poor human rights record, widespread xenophobia and a weak civil society. Hence, given the restrictive sociopolitical environment, corrupt legal system and widespread xenophobia, Uzbek migrants in Russia can hardly engage in collective action or transnational activism and instead attempt to minimise their visibility in public places (e.g., parks, streets, shopping malls and on public transport). Although Uzbek migrants' transnational activism and diasporic identities are barely visible in public places, rapid improvements in

communications technologies (e.g., smartphones and social media) have enabled Uzbek migrants to remain in touch with their home societies, as well as create efficient, smartphone-based translocal communities in Moscow, typically centred around migrants who hail from the same neighbourhood community or village in Uzbekistan. The existence of this smartphone-based transnational environment helps migrants cope with the challenges of *musofirchilik* (being alien) and avoid or manoeuvre around structural constraints such as complicated residence registration and work permit rules, social exclusion, racism and the lack of any social security. These smartphone-based transnational interactions serve as a 'legal order', regulating contractual relationships and obligations amongst migrants, exerting an identifiable impact on the outcomes of many practices Uzbek migrants (and other actors) engage in whilst in Moscow.

Eraliev and Heusala's chapter is an important contribution, primarily because it extends the scope of this volume to include the transnational experiences of Central Asian female migrants in Russia. Because the vast majority of migrants in Russia are male, the bulk of the literature on migration and informality in Russia has focused primarily on male-dominated transnational social spaces. Whilst the reasons prompting labour migration might be similar for both men and women, the consequences of migration can be drastically different for more vulnerable immigrant groups within migrant communities and, particularly, for women. Eraliev and Heusala argue that vulnerable migrant groups such as women often do not fit into transnationalism, informality or legal cultural narratives without taking into account the specificities of the female experience. To examine the transnational social spaces of Central Asian female migrants in Russia, the authors explored the life stories of four female migrants originating from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, all residing in Moscow. In contrast to the previous chapter by Urinboyev, Eraliev and Heusala found that transnational social spaces did not include informed or equal choice for women. Informality, which includes multiple types of actors and reasons, currently sustains a transnational social space where the relatively well connected—typically, men—acquire rights and exercise these rights, whilst leaving other groups such as women and children in highly dependent positions. Female migrants as representatives of vulnerable migrant groups have limited opportunities to endure the precarious migrant life. They are not in a position to manoeuver around the official state structures using individualistic strategies. The revolving door migration between Central Asia and Russia, a lack of social capital and financial resources, their dependent position within migrant communities and strict family traditions limit the real agency of many female migrants. Instead of representing an empowering source of survival for female migrants, the current transnational social space in which Central Asian migrant women live recycles organisational pathologies of Russian authorities and the inequalities of their home countries. Thus, the decisions female migrants take regarding legal matters in Russia are often random, unpredictable and depend upon informal networks.

Mobile transnational actors not only carry their premigratory cultural repertoires, traditions and morality to their host country, but they can also reproduce their informal spiritual practices in their new environment. The transfer

of unconventional healing practices from Tajikistan to the Russian Federation is at the heart of Cieslewska's contribution to this volume. Her chapter explores the development of the healing practices industry (such as writing amulets, divination, cupping therapy, etc.) in Russia. In doing so, she presents three case studies of migrant spiritual healers and/or religious leaders from Central Asia who perform spiritual services in Moscow. In particular, she examines how migrants create informal and formal spaces for expanding spiritual healing, and the ways in which those practices function in the local market as alternative medicine. Cieslewska argues that the informal nature of healing practices relates to the migrants' status in Moscow. That status also reflects the role and function of these healing methods within a particular spiritual tradition. Various healing practices have come to Russia with migrants from Central Asia as part of their religiosity, becoming services offered on the 'spiritual market' to migrants and nonmigrants. Transfer takes place primarily informally through trust networks and is embedded within social relations. Some migrants use the informal healing services as a coping strategy due to their limited access to medical care in Russia. They also view certain practices as part of their identity, which helps them in their experience as migrants by connecting them to their country of origin. In Moscow, the spiritual/healing practices serve as a source of support for individuals, but also become a means to improving one's social position and increasing their income. Migrants find a niche amongst various alternative forms of healing, gradually changing the spiritual market in Russia. Their social and geographical dislocation also triggers their transformation, since they adapt to the local conditions and reformulate the meanings of their practices. Some of these meanings are transferred back to the countries of origin, influencing the local market for alternative healing practices.

Finally, Stanisz's chapter focuses on road regimes, where mobility created economic niches for a variety of actors in suburban Western Poland. Here, Stanisz draws upon an 'ethnographic study of roadside villages and towns located along Poland's national road no. 92, exploring how local and mobile people—that is, ordinary citizens, representatives of local governments, entrepreneurs, passing immigrants, road workers and truck drivers—adapt, change and maintain informal and/or semi-legal economic strategies'.

Part III: Informality as state practice dealing with mobility

The themes developed in the final section of this volume revolve around questions of bureacratising informality—in other words, formal machines with informal wheels. This section includes contributions that illustrate (a) how the state implements immigration control through various informal practices, a tactic that is essential for reconciling conflicting state priorities and practices, (b) informal practices surrounding border control and smuggling of migrants, (c) state services of health care or other services to provide citizens and migrants is obviously an ideal image of the state but not always a practice and (d) how the absence of viable formal legal channels incited minority groups to invent various informal practices outside the legal system.

Schenk's chapter on symbolic and informal state practices 'demonstrates how formal and informal practices are not only a normal part of the state function, but they can be essential for reconciling conflicting state priorities and practices'. Here, she skilfully provides an insightful analysis of two policy mechanisms—migration quotas and deportation—within a surrounding package of policy and implementation practices. In doing so, Schenk shows that 'by selecting one key practice to elevate to the level of symbolic immigration control, state actors can absorb attention away from contradictions in the policy sphere that serve as evidence of ineffectiveness within the system'.

Virkkunen and Piipponen investigate an episode, the so-called 'Arctic route', through Moscow and Northern Russia, which became a major transit channel to the European Union (via Finland and Norway) during the 'migration crisis' of 2015 and 2016. Migrants from various Asian, African and Middle Eastern countries chose the Arctic route given its cheaper price and, significantly, because it was considered safer than the overcrowded route through the Mediterranean Sea to Greece, Italy and Spain. These new migratory flows were partly driven by extensive coverage in social and online media reports that spread rumours amongst migrant communities and smugglers in Russia and globally. Another key factor contributing to the emergence of the Arctic route was the informal practices of Russian state officials (e.g., corruption, the ambivalent behaviour of state authorities and ambiguous deportation orders) that served both as push and pull factors for migration. On the one hand, these informal practices created severe insecurities, pushing migrants to negotiate their daily survival by circumventing and exploiting state legal systems. On the other hand, a weak rule of law and a corrupt political system served as an opportunity structure and allowed smugglers, local businesses and migrants to establish the Arctic route. Russian state officials were indirectly involved in the operation of the Arctic route by allowing asylum-seeking migrants with deportation orders to enter the usually well-guarded border zone in the North and to approach the Finnish and Norwegian borders. Migrants had their own agency, and, with help from intermediaries situated between migrants and the state, they were able to manage their trip to Finland and the European Union. In other words, because the informal practices functioned as the contextual foundation for migration in Russia and along the Arctic route, transnational and local intermediaries along with their contacts operated in order to negotiate concrete solutions and practices for migrants and the state bureaucracy alike. Without these, neither transnational migration nor the Arctic route would have been possible.

Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, a different mode of mobility emerged. This mode is translocal, much more dynamic than the typical Soviet mode of mobility and characterised by its recurrence over individual lifespans. Kazakhstan's Oralmandar are a social category particularly affected by this post-Soviet form of mobility. As a people whose family networks and mobile lifestyles are often spread across several countries, healthcare systems, labour markets and jurisdictions, they are also especially affected by the respective regulatory frameworks in each of these areas. The chapter by Muratbayeva

and Quasinowski describes the new practices related to informal healthcare services in rural Kazakhstan, which emerged in response to the new mobility of 'paperless' Oralmandar—that is, ethnic Kazakhs who immigrated from China and Uzbekistan to Kazakhstan in the post-Soviet period. Whilst from a strictly juridical point of view, 'paperless Oralmandar' are not legally entitled to treatment, in reality they have been provided with free primary healthcare services. These practices of informality tend to take on a complementary role to the formal healthcare provision, particularly in rural contexts, where regulatory frameworks are often inconsistent or entirely absent. However, these informal practices have been significantly affected by initiatives aimed at reforming and digitising Kazakhstan's healthcare system, requiring medical professionals to formally register and report each medical treatment they provide. Digitalisation no longer allows doctors to transgress regulatory frameworks and prevents them from providing free health care to the Oralmandar. As a result, rather than optimising and improving healthcare delivery, the digitalisation reforms introduced an element of arbitrariness into medical practitioners' decision-making, thereby leading to more informality and corruption within the healthcare sector. This example suggests that informality may usurp a complementary function alongside formal practices in spaces where the formal state policies and institutions are ineffective.

In the final chapter of this section, Yazdani investigates the informal practices of 'dual citizenship' amongst Meskhetian diasporic communities/return migrants in Georgia and Azerbaijan. The Meskhetian are an ethnic group that lived in villages along the Georgian–Turkish border until November 1944, when the Soviet army deported them en masse to Central Asia. Meskhetian Turks and their return to their historical homeland resulted from one of the main conditions Georgia needed to fulfil when negotiating its accession to the Council of Europe. Subsequently, when Georgia became a member of the Council in April 1999, the country accepted an official obligation and commitment to adopt legal measures to facilitate Meskhetian Turks' return to Georgia. Accordingly, in 2007, Georgia adopted the 'Law on the Repatriation of Persons Forcefully Resettled from Georgia by the Former Soviet Union in the 1940s', a legislative act specifically aimed at facilitating the return of Meskhetian Turks. However, this law provided insufficient time for submitting applications, imposed cumbersome requirements, left too much room for interpretation by government officials and contained many other legal requirements economically unfeasible barring their fulfilment. These legal barriers were further exacerbated by Georgia's new citizenship regime, which emphasised Orthodox Christianity and the Georgian language as primary markers of Georgian national identity. Meskhetians, a Turkish-speaking and Sunni Muslim people, thus became an 'internalised Orient' with little or no connection to mainstream Georgian society. Due to these hardships and legal uncertainties, Meskhetian Turk communities produced a myriad of informal practices and transnational lifestyles outside the nation-state's legal boundaries. Their daily lives feature an indisputable transnational quality and are based on family and kinship-driven trust networks, exhibited perhaps most comprehensively in family

formation processes and in their eccentric relation to canonical, geographically sanctioned national identities.

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Part I

Labour in times of uncertainty

1 The struggle for formal work

The everyday experiences of Russia's Central Asian labour migrants

John Round and Irina Kuznetsova

Introduction

Russia receives one of the highest numbers of labour migrants in the world—the majority coming from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan—and is the source of one of the largest total remittances, worth US$21 billion in 2018 (IOM 2020: 93). Estimates for the number of migrants working within the country vary dramatically, due to the chaotic nature of the country's migration policy, ranging from three to five million. Given the increasing labour migration resulting from the global economic crisis, there is a renewed interest in the working experiences of migrants (see, for example, Potter and Hamilton 2014; Bloch and McKay 2016). Yet academic discussions on such issues in Russia are still developing (see Reeves 2013; Eastman 2013; Malakhov 2014; Urinboyev and Polese 2016; Urinboyev 2017). Through qualitative and participatory research, this chapter's primary role is to reveal the immense difficulties that Central Asian migrants face in their working lives in Russia. In both political and media discourses, such migrants are commonly portrayed as 'illegal'—despite the fact that the migrant body cannot be illegal—which renders them ostracised from many areas of society, and 'fair game' for exploitation by employers (Round and Kuznetsova 2016). As Williams et al. (2013) have shown, many ethnic Russians struggle to operate fully in the formal labour market, due to the actions of employers, and, as what follows demonstrates, the situation is even worse for labour migrants. Even those with genuine work permits or *patents* struggle to formalise their work practices, leaving them open to abuse, such as the withholding of their pay, a lack of safety regulations at work, extremely long working hours and/or highly unstable work.

Such discussions add much to global debates on the increasing precarity of work in the (post)crisis period (see Standing 2011), but the primary literature it engages with stems from the growing interest in the management and work literature on informal work (see, for example, Godfrey 2011; Webb et al. 2014; Ketchen et al. 2014 for its origins). Despite the truism that the informal economy, if taken broadly, rather than following the typical state definition of tax avoidance (for a full overview of this debate, see Siqueira et al. 2016), has operated for far longer than the formal, within these literatures there has been a 'discovery' of the

informal, with subsequent calls for the setting of 'research agendas' (Ketchen et al. 2014). As discussed in more depth below, the majority of such literature sees informal practices as either a response to an overly bureaucratic state (see Kuehn 2014 for further discussion) or a stepping stone to formality as people try out new ideas without making the commitment of registration (Kus 2014).

However, there is a significant lacuna in the literature on the actions of employers who force their workforce into informality via a series of nefarious practices. Addressing this provides insight into the nature of Russia's socio-economic development and suggests a recalibration of research agendas to consider in more detail the experiences of those working informally in labour markets across the world. After detailing the research methodologies below, this chapter is then situated within the literature on labour precarity and informality, noting the lack of work on employer-forced informality, before turning to empirical discussions. The latter are split into three sections: the first examines the governance of labour migration in Russia; the second reveals how this actually works in practice in order to erect barriers to formal work; and the third explores the lived realities of work for labour migrants. We conclude by arguing that, in the current situation, there is no incentive to improve the lives of migrants since the current stasis is extremely profitable to those with power.

This chapter draws upon in-depth interviews conducted in 2013 and 2014 with 300 labour migrants from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan working in the Russian cities of Kazan and Moscow. Despite some changes in the labour migration regulations including the creation of a single labour market within the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) recently, we argue, the embeddedness of informality into the migrants' work experiences still remains highly topical. Whilst there are some differences in the experiences of the different groups in the two respective cities (for Moscow, see, for example, Round and Kuznetsova 2018), the space available precludes a full examination of them. Thus, here we concentrate more on their everyday work experiences. Whilst there are many younger migrants working in Russia, the experiences of older workers were also explored, and there was an equal split of interviewees between genders. Our sample consisted of an entire range of migrant statuses amongst the interviewees, but here we focus on those who were legally documented to work in Russia and struggled to formalise their practices. Interviewees were approached through existing contacts, through nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) working on migrant issues and, then, through the snowball method. We conducted interviews in Russian or, if the interviewee was not comfortable, with the assistance of a translator in the language of their choice. In many cases, the interviews were recorded and later transcribed, but, given the sensitive nature of the issues under discussion, some were unwilling to be recorded. In such instances, notes were made immediately after the interview concluded. 'Elite' interviews were also conducted with government officials, NGO workers and practitioners, upon which the section on Russia's migration system is based. Both authors were in Russia for the duration of the research. The first author was a labour migrant working under the country's highly qualified migration scheme. Whilst his experience

is quantifiably different from that of Central Asian migrants, it provided many insights into the country's stifling bureaucracy that surrounds migration and work.

Precarity, informality and labour migration

Around the globe, labour precarity in the workplace is expanding as a result of the form of neoliberalism emerging from the current economic crisis. Zero-hour contracts, successive internships, non-unionisation, a lack of any long-term stability and stagnant pay rates are a reality for increasing numbers, with little sign of a return of workers' rights (Gialis and Leontidou 2016). Obviously, within this context, there are differing scales and levels of precarity, across differing economic forms and average income levels (Geyer et al. 2013; Williams and Lansky 2013), with Standing (2011) showing the depths of issues in countries as diverse as Japan and Italy, arguing that a new class of worker is forming around these uncertainties. Precarity exists in all employment spheres, from cultural economies (de Peuter 2014) to gold mining (Hilson et al. 2014); common across them is the nature of informal behaviour that exists within sectors. Whilst many of the above-noted employment practices (such as zero-hour contracts, which are expanding in the formal economy) have always existed in the informal sector (such as day labourers being paid cash in hand), given the global rise in precarity, there is, nevertheless, a renewed—and, in some disciplines, an emerging—interest in informal economic practices, featuring both vague and contested definitions.

Traditionally, informal work has been infused with negative connotations since it is hidden from the gaze of the state and concentrated around issues of cash-in-hand work, with no tax paid on the proceeds, regarded as something that will decline in scale as formal economic growth occurs (see Williams et al. 2012). This fails to recognise both the diversity and the persistence of the informal sector, with Schneider (2014) arguing that, in fact, globally the informal sector's size is growing, with many countries seeing levels of informality rise above 50% of their GDP. Furthermore, as Williams et al. (2013) note, there is also a false dichotomy attached to formality/informality: work is often seen as either formal or informal, not reflecting the nuances within a sector, the linkages between formal and informal work or the breadth of practices and motivations behind them. The work of Gibson-Graham (2006) broadened such discussions by demonstrating the diversity of informal practice to include volunteering, care-giving and mutual exchange in addition to their relationships to the paid sector. Within this more nuanced context, informality came to be seen as positive in certain spheres, especially in relation to new enterprise formation, accompanying the recognition that nascent entrepreneurs often try out their new ideas in an informal manner before committing to formality and all the bureaucracy, time and effort this involves (Rezaei et al. 2014). Thus, some (see, for example, Webb et al. 2014; Ketchen et al. 2014) call for new research agendas on informal entrepreneurship, as if it is a new phenomenon rather than a practice predating the formal economy as it is currently 'accepted'.

Given the often precarious nature of migration and the problems of entering titular labour markets, a rich body of literature has emerged exploring how informal work and entrepreneurial behaviour have provided employment to migrants (for recent discussions, see Likic-Brboric et al. 2013; Sidzatane and Maharaj 2013; Sheehan and Riosmena 2013). Through this literature, there is a deep understanding that migrants often face little option but to operate informally, either as workers or entrepreneurs, because of restricted access to the labour market they have entered or because of a lack of documentation enabling access, such as visas and/or work permits. However, there is less understanding of the more pernicious practices of employers forcing documented workers, both domestic and migrant, into informality in order to increase profits (through the avoidance of payroll taxes and social obligations such as holiday pay) and time (by avoiding the bureaucracy of formally registering workers), as well as the government frameworks enabling these (however, see Williams et al. 2013). Using the example of Central Asian labour migrants with working visas in Russia, this chapter begins to fill this lacuna by concentrating on the informal practices of employers who force their workers into precarity. By taking this approach, what follows also expands upon discussions in the entrepreneurship literature on informality by highlighting the linkages between the state and the economy. Currently, this usually involves exploring the relationship between taxation rates (Kuehn 2014) and/or the administrative burden to enterprises on levels of informal behaviour. However, there is a growing literature on the more general impacts of the forms of political economy existing in a country on the formal/informal spheres. For example, Kus (2014) demonstrated the impact of Turkey's neoliberal reforms on the nature and scale of its informal economy and De Castro et al. (2014) explored how informal enterprises operate within differing scales of governance, as well as how these various layers implement regulations differently. One of their key arguments is that if there is a close linkage between the state and the economy, as there is in Russia (William et al. 2013), then a system will evolve and become codified to enable making a maximum profit at the expense of powerless sectors of the labour force. Within this context, there is no incentive for the system to change, since it works for those who hold the power, carrying serious implications for the long-term economic development of the country (for similar discussions on Albania and Kenya, respectively, see Muceku and Muça 2014; Meagher 2014). Framing informal economic practices in this political economy context allows us to complicate the current tendency to view informality in a more positive light (as an enabler of entrepreneurial start-ups and/or as an understandable reaction to burdensome regulations) by demonstrating the more hidden activities of employers who force workers into this sphere.

The governance of labour migration in Russia

In relation to employment, one of the primary outcomes of the form of political economy that has developed in Russia since the Soviet Union's collapse is the disconnect between its regulatory labour framework and its lived experience.

As numerous studies have shown (e.g. Williams et al. 2013; Walker 2010), many Russian workers struggle with uncertainty in the workplace as a result of employer practices, such as the partial payment of salaries in cash and simply ignoring contracts. However, nowhere is this more keenly felt than in the labour migration sector. Whilst the federal government has long realised that there is a need to develop an effective system enabling migrants to contribute more fully to economic development, such attempts have been stymied by the sheer scale of migration, the competing ministries involved in the process and the practices of employers. The situation is further complicated by the visa regimes that exist between post-Soviet countries, which, in the majority of cases, allow for Central Asians to be in Russia for a 90-day period, travelling on their internal passport with no need for a visa. Therefore, people can enter the country (although often not without problems, as illustrated below), stay for a while, then leave the country and return quickly. Also, as Reeves (2013) demonstrates, there is a thriving market for fake work permits. In fact, we have observed how these are sold in the McDonald's closest to Moscow's main mosque. Russia needs labour migration, since the country has the third-lowest labour productivity rate in the world and, as a resource-rich country and despite the global economic downturn, major cities are expanding and mega events such as the Sochi Olympics and the World Cup ensure a large demand for labour (Müller 2012). In addition, under Putin's first government, the growth in living standards has meant that more people are unwilling to undertake low-paid menial work, such that there is a high need for cleaners, cashiers, janitors and the like. All of this is compounded by the demographic dip in people entering the labour market and by outwards migration. Migration to Russia is driven by socio-economic marginalisation in Central Asia, which has the lowest levels of income in the Northern Hemisphere. For example, GDP in Tajikistan in 2018 was US\$826.60 per year, compared to Russia's US\$11,288.90 (The World Bank 2018). As one interviewee said:

> In Moscow we can earn enough to live and support our parents and children back in Tajikistan. If we did the same jobs in Dushanbe we would only be able to feed ourselves. We cannot work in our professions here and we have to work all the time but it is the only choice we have.

Formal labour migration into Russia is governed through two systems: formal work permits and a *patent* system (Kuznetsova 2017). The citizens of EAEU's member-states (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia), established in 2014, now participate in a single labour market, meaning they are not required to possess any permits to work in Russia. At the same time, the single labour market, as Ryazantsev et al. (2019) show using the example of labour migrants from Kyrgyzstan, does not automatically reduce the many issues they face.

For a long time, a general work permit served as the main channel for labour migration to Russia, until 2010 when the *patent* system for foreign workers established who does not require a visa to enter Russia. Currently, general work

permits are granted only to foreign citizens who enter Russia with a visa. In 2015, more than 140,000 such permits were granted (25% fewer than in 2014), half of them granted to citizens of China and Turkey.

As for the work permits, enterprises apply during the previous year for the number of permits they think they will need for the forthcoming period. These are then, supposedly, distributed through a quota system. For many enterprises, this is inefficient since they are unsure of the amount of labour they will require in future. This leads to the hoarding of permits, which can then be used as a means of gaining a competitive advantage if a competitor does not receive the permits they require. In total, over the time period between 2010 and 2014, about six million such permits were issued. Most of them were granted to citizens of Uzbekistan (about 42%), Tajikistan (15%) and Ukraine (11%) (Kuznetsova 2017: 140). Upon arrival, the work permit must be registered with the migration service. The *patent* system aimed to expand the taxation base from workers who had previously worked informally. The price of a *patent* is, however, different in Russian regions; in Moscow in 2020, for example, it cost 5350 Russian roubles (approximately US$72) per month. As we show below, both systems are open to abuse and are staggeringly overly bureaucratic.

Given the chaotic nature of the migration system and the need for labour migration, the current Putin administration introduced the 'Concept of the State Migration Policy until 2025' (President of Russia 2012), with the idea of developing effective migration regulations, increasing cooperation between countries and enabling the increased integration of migrants into Russian society. The latter is important since, similar to many countries experiencing high levels of labour migration, antagonism is directed towards labour migrants, especially in Moscow. Migrants are constructed as 'illegal' regardless of their actual status, deemed criminals and carriers of disease. The Moscow Mayor, Sergei Sobyanin, even went as far as to say that, if it were not for migrants, the city would be the world's safest (Nikolaeva 2013).[1] To increase the integration potential, migrants must now pass Russian-language and culture exams prior to beginning work, with the aim of increasing interactions within the city. There is little evidence demonstrating that these exams have or will improve relations between migrants and the titular population or become anything more than a new site where informal payments will be required. Moreover, as Ruget (2018) stresses, these exams are laden with Russian nationalism, and many questions are disconnected from migrants' everyday concerns. With regard to the technical development of the migration system, the primary aim was to decrease the bureaucracy for both employers and employees, reduce the corruption inherent in the system and increase the training of migrants and thus their productivity.

The concept was derailed, however, by events surrounding the Moscow Mayoral elections in late 2013, which turned into a race to the bottom of just how xenophobic the candidates could be towards Central Asian labour migrants. The leading contenders all argued that Moscow's socio-economic problems were the result of migrant behaviour and their participation in the informal economy. Navalny, often held up in the West as a liberal opponent to Putin, stated that

migrants should be banned from the metro, since ticket prices are subsidised and 'migrants don't pay tax, so why should they benefit', or that if they are not paid then they simply go and rob a Russian (Navalny 2013). Within this xenophobic context, it was no surprise that tensions increased, resulting in riots in Biryulyovo after a Russian was killed by an Azerbaijani, prompting the closure of the region's ethnic market and the detention of over 3000 Thai migrants in a makeshift camp within the city limits. In relation to our arguments here, this tension greatly impacted migration management, since senior politicians realised that they could make political capital out of the situation. More restrictions for immigrants have been introduced, including, for example, compulsory registration in their accommodation beginning in 2014 and a re-entry ban began in 2015 for those against whom two administrative law violations have been filed. As Schenk (2018) argues, the increasingly restrictive migration policy is politically motivated and contributes to the enforcement of centralised control which led to the increasing of deportations of labour migrants (see Chapter 9). In 2016, the Federal Migration Service (FMS) was closed down, and its functions were transferred to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which also demonstrates the securitisation of the migration policy.

Barriers to formality and everyday realities

As numerous studies have shown, formally entering Russia's labour market is difficult, not only for migrants but also for ethnic Russians (e.g. Round 2004; Walker 2010, 2015). This difficulty results from the informal processes inherent in the labour market, such as the use of connections to secure employment, the prevalence of cash in manual work and the lack of job security. However, such issues are magnified for the migrant community, very few of whom have the connections enabling them to secure 'good' jobs. The first barrier they must face is actually entering the country. Many travel by bus, the cheapest method; but, in many cases, they are required to pay bribes, even though they have a free right of passage into the country. In the study of border crossings undertaken for this research, at every passport control, each bus we rode on featured collections to ensure there would be no problems at the crossing. When the bus reached the outskirts of Moscow, it was stopped again and another informal payment was required, even though no border was crossed at that point.

Before 2014, Migrants forced into informality must leave the country every 90 days to obtain a new migration card, crossing, in the case of Moscow, the closed border between Russia and Ukraine. Although they are legally entitled to make this journey, on average migrants are forced to pay US$70 to leave the country and US$90 to return. A border guard explained that every day they must pay their superior US$5000, with anything over that representing a 'profit', in order to keep their positions.[2] By air, the situation is a little better. Upon arrival, Central Asian migrants are often separated from other passengers and herded from room to room. They are treated with absolutely no respect and shouted at repeatedly, with little attempt to engage with them in their native languages. Interviewees discussed how

they are 'treated like animals', forced to wait for seemingly no reason for hours at a time before they can enter the country; often, informal payments are requested.

The next problem migrants must face is the registration of their work permit, both with their employer and FMS. The issues surrounding employers' practices are perhaps the most pernicious in the entire process, since they force labour migrants to operate informally, thereby reducing their security and salaries and enabling the state to construct them as 'illegal'. The International Organisation of Migration (IOM) argues that the term 'irregular migrant' is more appropriate. But, within the Russian state and media discourse, such nuances do not exist, and an extremely narrow definition of informal work—that the worker is undertaking this practice simply to deny the state tax—is almost always applied. Thus, by default, labour migrants are 'illegal'. The reality has much more to do with the neoliberal form of economy that has emerged in Russia, which sees more than 50% of GDP accumulated informally (Schneider 2014), a system within which the employer is all-powerful. Russia has a flat-rate taxation system, whereby the employee pays a relatively low 13% tax; however, employers pay a high 30.2% payroll tax based on the employees' salary. This provides a clear incentive for employers to reduce their formal salary-based taxation bill and instead make additional cash-in-hand payments to reduce their tax burdens. Many Russian workers outside the state sector are offered two salaries when they begin work—the low official one and the higher cash payment—with little choice but to accept this arrangement. For labour migrants, our interviews revealed that, in the majority of cases, they are simply offered cash-in-hand payments or extremely low formal salaries. Since they are in no position to turn down work, they are forced into such arrangements. This obviously invalidates their work permit, and employers simply refuse to register them as working there. With no power, there is nothing the migrants can do but accept the situation. They also lack any security that the salary will be paid, safety regulations can more easily be ignored, and, if the migrant is injured at work, then, according to NGOs who try and protect such workers, often they are simply taken from the workplace and placed on the street such that the company has no obligation to pay for their healthcare. This chapter looks at precarious work and employer/state practices; therefore, migrant entrepreneurs are not in its focus.[3]

Interviews with elites revealed that employers often make informal payments to ensure that they are not raided by the migration and/or tax authorities, enabling them to undertake the above practices with impunity (or, conversely, payments can be made to ensure that a competitor's workplace is raided). Another practice is to subcontract work through employment agencies. For example, a state institution claiming that all its workers are employed formally will employ its cleaning staff through an agency. By interviewing such workers, the reality of their employment was revealed. Firstly, the workers' documentation is not checked by the agency, and thus the migrant is unable to obtain the paperwork needed to register their employment. Secondly, their pay is much lower than the official payment for the post at the agency (and no doubt other participants take a significant cut). For example, a cleaner earns around 17,000 roubles per month cash in hand (approximately US$228) for working 12 hours per day, six days a week, with no

payments for breaks, holidays or sick leave. Any period away from work will lead to dismissal, meaning that migrants with young children who remain at home find it extremely difficult to visit them. Illness is a great concern, as this interviewee, who had a problem with her hip making it extremely difficult to walk, explained:

> I get to work by 7 in the morning and work until 1 pm, and then I make an hour's journey to an informal Kyrgyz clinic [she cannot access formal health care since she is concerned they will report her to the migration service and it is too expensive]. I pay someone to work for me while I am away, and, after my treatment, I return to work around 5 pm and work until 8 pm. If I took more than a day off work, then I would simply lose my job.

To place this salary into context, the above interviewee pays 19,000 roubles in rent per month for a room in a shared flat; for food, travel and money to remit home, she relies on her husband's salary of around 24,000 roubles per month (US$322). Moscow is an extremely expensive city in which to live, with the cost of food, for example, exceeding the average costs in most Western European cities, as exemplified by the following. A major Western European-owned supermarket chain has had good success in breaking into the Russian market. During its emergence, large posters advertised for staff. On every advert, there are pictures of smiling ethnic Russians, and the blurb states that only Russian citizens can apply and that the working week is 30 hours. It was somewhat puzzling, then, to see that on most days almost all of the cashiers were from Central Asia. Interviews amongst this group again revealed the use of subcontracting. Labour migrants work primarily for cash-in-hand wages, 11-hour shifts, with an unpaid 30-minute break, receiving 100 roubles an hour (US$1.3). They receive no holiday pay and no healthcare coverage, and again, if they miss more than a couple of shifts they are dismissed without notice. Given the high cost of goods within the supermarket, they are not even able to buy products from it given their low salaries.

Even if migrants are able to entice their employer to employ them formally, they still face difficulties in formalising their status. After receiving the documentation from their workplace, the migrant must then go to the Office of Visas and Registration (OVIR) to register the documents. At Moscow's main OVIR, migrants are literally caged in as they wait outside, with waiting times to enter the building running into days (migrants put their name on a list and return to the same place the next morning if they are unable to enter that day). Interviewees explained that, when they are inside, they are, similar to experiences in airports, treated like animals, with no respect at all afforded to them. Often they are accused of having false documentation, and, given the above, it is no surprise that they are regularly asked for informal payments to expedite the process. Interviewees discussed how the process often takes months to complete, requiring multiple trips to the office. As one interviewee said:

> We spent three days queuing up at the registration office trying to get some-
> one to help us understand the regulations and what we need to do, since it

changes all the time. We waited outside office after office and eventually
someone told us to leave and just look it up on the internet. I really don't
know why they make it so hard for us to find the information we need to
register our work permits.

Given how difficult it is for migrants to take time off from work, many are
reluctant to spend days queuing at OVIR, since, at best, they lose income given
that they are not paid whilst not working and, at worst, they lose their jobs.
Furthermore, formality offers them little protection from the police nor provides
greater stability with employers. The lead author spent time around the city's
main OVIR, and when walking back to the metro station he saw a police van full
of Central Asian migrants. From observing the situation and talking to migrants
in the area, it became clear that the police were waiting for migrants to return
after depositing their documents at OVIR and then stopping them and asking for
said documents (see also Round and Kuznetsova 2018). Since the migrants did
not have their documents to hand, the police then detained the migrants until
they made an informal payment to secure their release. Given that technically
the only people allowed to ask for your documentation on the street, unless you
are suspected of committing a crime, are FMS agents, this is obviously illegal.
However, such practices are embedded in the practices of the police, many of
whom view migrants as a source of income.

   The benefits of formality for migrants are negligible. Even if employers
pay the social tax, migrants remain ineligible for free health care except in
emergencies, and, in the vast majority of situations, they receive no benefits
from their employers. Often, factories and markets are raided by FMS, and
migrants are swept up regardless of their migration status and detained for a few
days before their release. Those working under the *patent* system, who pay for
a stamp in their passport each month enabling them to work, also suffer from
a lack of understanding of how the system works. In many cases, interviewees
recounted that, when stopped by the police, those stopping them stated that the
documentation was incorrect and fined them unofficially. Unable to take holidays,
workers are trapped in their jobs, causing great strain on their families. This
female interviewee's situation is commonplace:

> I have two daughters, 9 months old and 2 years old, and I have not seen them
> for five months—they are living with my parents in Tashkent. I cannot have
> them here since we both need to work and cannot afford childcare. This year,
> only my husband will go home to see them in the summer since I would lose
> my job if I am not there every day and it is not a bad place to work. Also,
> our room is not too expensive to rent and we would lose that if we were both
> away because they would just put someone else in it.

The last point about accommodation represents a further barrier to the formali-
sation of labour migrants since many struggle to formally register their living
arrangements. Those offering rental accommodation are unwilling to register

tenants because they do not want to pay tax on the income; often they rent out the space to more people than allowed (many interviewees lived six to eight persons to one room), and/or the bureaucracy of registering them is a complicated and tedious process. Thus, even if migrants are lucky enough to be formally registered at their workplace, it is unlikely that they will enjoy similar good fortune with regards to their living arrangements. Again, this puts them at risk for detention by or needing to make informal payments to the police, given that often their documents are not completely in order. Overall, the labour framework is extremely problematic for migrants in Russia and they hold no power at all. Employers, landlords and the police collectively make migrants' lives extremely stressful and insecure, yet they have no choice but to endure it because of the dire economic situation in their home countries.

The societal lived reality for labour migrants

The majority of Central Asian migrants in Russia are forced into informality and precarity with little hope of improving their situation. Whilst Russia has regularity frameworks surrounding migration, labour and employment, these are far too often circumnavigated by employers with the tacit support of the state and its various actors. This leads to a lived experience for many of constant worry due to low wages, a fear of detention by the police, a lack of permanency in the workplace, an underutilisation of their skills and no prospect of career progression or training. Furthermore, there is the knowledge that any period of illness will lead to dismissal and that a major health event would be catastrophic since access to the Russian healthcare system is barred. Some migrants purchase health insurance, but, often, interviewees indicated that it is too expensive for them to justify or they are tricked into making payments for worthless policies (see also Demintseva and Kashnitsky 2016). Because many migrants are young, there is a belief that ill health or an accident at work will not happen to them. Yet, given the many millions of labour migrants in the country, healthcare access remains a major issue for many. If ill health befalls them, migrants must make out-of-pocket payments, which are often extremely expensive. Many drugs, with the exception of antibiotics, are available over the counter, but at a rather high price compared to the average wages in the country. As noted above, there are informal clinics staffed by doctors or at least people with some medical training; whilst costs in such places are lower than in official clinics, treatment still amounts to a significant percentage of one's monthly salary.

Overall, for labour migrants wages remain rather low, with interviewees saying a good salary would be around US$1000 per month. In addition to covering their living expenses, which are often as high as in Western Europe, migrants often support their families back home; thus, every rouble is accounted for and there is no provision for leisure activities. This is exacerbated by their informal status since almost every interviewee discussed how they had experienced problems with their salary, be it delayed, less than agreed upon or not paid at all. Of course, since they are informal employees, it is virtually impossible for them to complain

successfully if they are cheated. One group of interviewees, for example, had not received payment for the construction work they had completed; collectively they approached a lawyer to try and help them but were told not to continue since drawing attention to the problem would only lead to difficulties with the police and migration services.

Within the workplace, labour migrants also face difficulties in comparison to their Russian counterparts. This example from a bus driver is typical for many:

> I have worked here for a long time, but I am still treated differently. I get the worst shifts and have to work all of the holidays. I also get the worst bus to drive and I have to spend my own time making sure that it runs ok. My colleagues are friendly enough, but I know I will never be 'one of them'.

The vast majority of migrants do not work in their chosen profession, with the majority employed in manual or service work. Yet, whilst there is a strong discourse in Russia that Central Asian migrants are unskilled and lack the Russian-language skills needed to work in Russia in anything other than 'menial' jobs, for many interviewees this was simply not the case. For example, amongst the cleaning staff we interviewed, many had a higher education degree and a number of them were teachers. Yet they were unable to find suitable work:

> I was a biology teacher, but the salary was almost nothing and often we were not paid. My husband was not earning enough in Moscow to support us all, so I left the children with my grandparents and moved to Russia. At times, it is a real struggle, but this job is ok and I can send money home each month.

She works a 72-hour week (for around US$700 per month), with an hour's commute to and from work, which she makes by bus—even though the metro would be quicker—because there are more police patrolling the metro system. Any spare time she has, mainly on Sundays, she spends cleaning private apartments for extra cash-in-hand income.

As the above interviewee's method of commuting hints at, for migrants, the biggest problem informality brings is how it is translated by politicians and the media. There is a symbiotic relationship between the two, with pronouncements on migration made by politicians followed by media stories. Such pronouncements are made through 'investigative' journalism, when reports reveal 'facts' about migration, such as multiple registrations at an apartment. Politicians, then, respond by calling for stricter legislation. Labour migrants from Central Asia are constructed as only aiming to act informally to avoid paying tax, breeding criminality and contributing nothing to Russia. This is based around constructing the 'illegal' migrant as an object to fear since they are constructed not only as 'the other', but as a violent, criminal, illegal body (see Round and Kuznetsova 2016; Kuznetsova and Round 2019). This reached an apogee in late 2013 when the main candidates for the Mayor of Moscow post competed with each other to make the most xenophobic statements about Central Asian migrants. This resulted in

increased raids in the city in areas with high concentrations of migrants garnering high levels of media coverage; in some instances, hundreds of migrants were placed into temporary camps in the city, in full view of the local population. After a few weeks, many of the detainees were quietly returned to their workplaces without charge. The outcome of such constructions was that migrants were seen as 'fair game' for attack by nationalist groups, and the actions of employers were further obfuscated.

As the above sections have shown, Central Asian labour migrants are forced into informality by the actions of employers and the overly bureaucratic nature of Russia's migration process. As a result, they form an extremely large precariat class of workers whose daily experiences demand attention and a concerted international effort through organisations such as the IOM, the World Trade Organisation and the like in order to increase their protection. Whilst the exploitation of labour migrants is not unique to Russia, what renders it atypical is the sheer numbers involved, the use of the media to demonise their practices and the xenophobic and racist elements within the processes (see Kuznetsova and Round 2019). Furthermore, within the debates on informal economic practices, forcing workers into informality receives little attention—a concern given the scale of the issue and the abuses this opens workers up to.

Conclusions: stasis and a system working for all but the workers

Given that Central Asian labour migrants contribute significantly to the Russian labour market and economic development, and despite the scale of abuse they face, the issues surrounding their employment demands attention. As demonstrated in this chapter, the vast majority of labour migrants are forced into informality along with all of the potential abuses and lack of security this entails. Such exclusion through the actions of employers adds a new strand to the emerging literature on informal economic practices and reveals a more nefarious side to these debates. These are not instances of entrepreneurs 'testing the waters' before committing to formalisation, nor of small and medium-sized enterprises attempting to avoid an overly bureaucratic state (although this is a problem in Russia). But, rather, this context appears to be employers deliberately avoiding Russia's significant payroll tax and denying benefits to their workers. Such practices also benefit employers since they enable the enterprise to hire and fire at will, making them much more responsive to changes in demand. Even when labour migrants are able to negotiate formality with their employers, the time and cost of doing so with the state (in terms of losing salary whilst queuing to submit documents and making informal payments) pose the question of whether it is worth the investment. The value of formality, then, is questionable since the police simply say that any documentation is falsified, demand informal payments when leaving and entering the country and routinely view migrants as a source of income.

This situation also contributes to debates on precarity, given that the workers are forced to leave their homeland because of extremely low salaries even if they are able to find work and destined to work outside of their profession in

low-skilled, unsecure employment. A further strand to such discussions is that this precarity is based upon xenophobia and ethnicity. The lived experience of Ukrainian labour migrants in Russia is quantifiably better than that of Central Asian migrants, even if their labour and social practices differ little. Central Asian migrants are increasingly becoming a scapegoat for all of Russia's social ills—from crime to the health of the nation to unemployment, for example—which goes far beyond the typical migrant-specific phobia existing in many countries. Within this scapegoatism, we find a rash of new proposals to stem the migration tide into Russia, despite President Putin arguing that the growth of the economy depends upon such workers. These proposals are ill thought through and will do little to alleviate the true causes of the problem: the actions of employers and the state. However, what exists in Russia is a political–economic stasis within which there is no incentive for the political and economic elite to enact meaningful change. In other words, the current system works for too many people: for employers, it provides the space to exploit workers and not pay taxes; for state actors, it presents numerous opportunities for collecting informal payments from both migrants and employers, who pay to avoid higher tax bills or punishments. With so many people working and profiting in these spheres, often with low formal salaries, why would they want to change this profitable status quo? Such high levels of informality and exploitation have worrying implications for the future economic development of countries experiencing such problems, given that innovation, productivity and overall economic efficiency remain secondary concerns to rent seeking.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 There is a popular discourse that argues that migrants commit 50% of all crimes in Moscow. At almost every round-table or urban development event, this figure is repeated by presenters and by members of the audience. The truth is rather more benign, with the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs putting the figure at 3.8%. Yet, all sides seized upon the former figure during the campaign for the Mayor of Moscow post in late 2013, further entrenching this discourse.

2 No doubt the border guards would have had to make an informal payment to obtain the position, and see the taking of bribes as a way of earning this money back and supplementing their relatively low wages. Such practices were witnessed at two different border points and were also observed in different research projects (see Williams et al. 2013). Since 2014, migrants from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are allowed to stay in Russia without a visa not more than 90 days in total during 180 days.

3 Though as Turaeva (2014) shows 'mobile entrepreneurs' also play an important role in migrants' transnational economic activities which social order is influenced by kinship and relations of trust (see also Chapter 5).

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2 Driving in the shadows

Rural–urban labour migrants as informal taxi drivers in post-socialist Tashkent

Nikolaos Olma

Introduction

In the aftermath of the Soviet Union's dissolution, Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, underwent an abrupt demographic shift driven by two parallel and interrelated, yet opposing, migratory flows. The collapse of the republic's industrial and agricultural sectors and a scarcity of arable land led to unprecedented levels of impoverishment and unemployment in rural areas, forcing large parts of the local population to migrate to urban centres, with Tashkent receiving the lion's share of this influx. In turn, the arrival of these 'new poor' (Ilkhamov 2001) intensified the discomfort Tashkent's multi-ethnic Russian-speaking old-timers experienced as a result of the 'nationalizing nationalism' (Brubaker 1996: 4) of the Karimov administration and prompted thousands to emigrate to their titular countries, even if they had never set foot there before. Whilst the mass 'exodus' (Buckley 1996) of Russian speakers from Tashkent dwindled in the early 2000s, the flow of predominantly Uzbek-speaking rural–urban labour migrants into the city remains strong to this day given stagnant unemployment and low salaries in the provinces. But the integration of these individuals into Tashkent's socioeconomic life and job market is hindered by their low qualifications, limited knowledge of Russian and stereotypes that follow them, as well as by the strict civil registration mechanism in place in Uzbekistan, known as *propiska*. The *propiska* system seldom allows the poor surplus population to officially register in the capital and, hence, rural–urban labour migrants cannot obtain a legal residence status and/or work permits in Tashkent. Inevitably, their everyday lives are characterised by precariousness and uncertainty and they themselves become illegalised and deprived of basic citizenship rights (Turaeva 2016).

Whilst from the mid-2000s onwards women also began to join these migration flows (Hashimova 2008; Maksakova 2006), rural–urban labour migration in Uzbekistan remains dominated by young men. These men move to Tashkent impermanently with the aim of supporting their families, covering expenses related to life-cycle events (e.g., weddings) or earning enough money to build a house in their hometowns and villages. To that end, most resort to labour-intensive, low-paid and insecure temporary or odd jobs in the 'informal economy' (Hart 1973)—that is, as construction workers, loaders and vegetable

sorters—which they find either through kin- and locality-based networks or in the informal labour markets known as *mardikor bozorlari*. Yet, as this chapter will show, those labour migrants who either own a car or manage—via various channels—to obtain access to one gain the opportunity to join the ranks of Tashkent's private car drivers who generate income by offering paid rides to their fellow residents. Most of the drivers involved in this practice, locally known as 'taxiing' (in Russian, *taksovanie*), pick up passengers occasionally—when, for example, on their way to and from work—provided that the passenger's destination is more or less along their route. However, unfavourable socioeconomic conditions have forced a considerable portion of Tashkent's male population to take up taxiing either part-time as a source of secondary income or full-time as their primary occupation. The majority of the rural–urban labour migrants who become informal taxi drivers belong to the latter category.

Taxiing is, thus, a quintessentially informal activity in the sense that it is not only a precarious profession practised outside the institutional and legal boundaries of the Uzbek state and its agencies but is itself informed by multiple modalities of informality that permeate the subjectivities and the everyday lives of the drivers involved in it. From acquiring a car to finding their way around the city to escaping regulatory pressure, informal taxi drivers continually navigate a wide array of informal processes, negotiate power relations, adjust to market forces and manoeuvre through various legal frameworks. The involvement of rural–urban labour migrants in taxiing further exacerbates this informality due to the informal character of most of the actions and activities pertaining to these individuals' settlement and employment in Tashkent. In this sense, the informal taxi becomes an index of how and where two seemingly independent mobility paradigms—rural–urban labour migration and informal urban transportation—converge. Simultaneously, it also provides a lens through which we can examine the various informal processes and everyday livelihood strategies that rural–urban labour migrants employ in their attempts to deal with the uncertainty and precariousness accompanying their relocation to Tashkent.

It is in this context that this chapter examines the practices and experiences of the rural–urban labour migrants who become informal taxi drivers. To do so, it draws on a total of 11 months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted amongst Tashkent's informal taxi drivers between May 2014 and February 2015 and during a follow-up two-month spell in autumn 2016. The chapter touches upon the limited employment opportunities available to labour migrants from the provinces in Tashkent's formal sector and the taut relationship with the state that their subsequent informality results in. Hence, it contributes to a broader understanding of migration-related informal practices in urban post-Soviet Central Asia. Just as importantly, it provides empirical evidence regarding the ways in which internal migration has given new momentum to taxiing, an informal urban mobility practice eradicated in most major post-Soviet cities. Thereby, it offers a glimpse beyond migratory flows and of an understudied type of informal urban transport that has remained rather peripheral to scholarly work on postsocialism (but, see

Karjanen 2014; Kovács et al. 2017; Morris 2016; Polese 2014; Urinboyev et al. 2018).

Entering Tashkent's informal taxi industry

The practice of offering paid rides in one's private car existed as a relatively popular means of generating extra income in large Soviet cities already during the socialist era (Siegelbaum 2009). Yet, it was in the early 1990s that it evolved into a fundamental 'survival strategy' (Johnson, Kaufmann and Ustenko 1998), employed by people across the former Soviet Union in order to cope with the adverse socioeconomic conditions accompanying the transition to market economy. In recent years, decisive state-led offensives against the practice as well as the emergence of taxi aggregators and ride-sharing applications offering safer and more reliable services led to the marginalisation or even eradication of the once-ubiquitous informal taxis in most large post-Soviet cities. Nevertheless, in Tashkent, taxiing remains widespread thanks to the ambivalent stance of the local authorities towards the practice. This stance is a product of the authorities' realisation that taxiing provides much needed employment to thousands of rural–urban labour migrants. Amongst these individuals, taxiing is widely considered one of the more dignified jobs available in the informal sector. Compared to the physically demanding and low-paid odd jobs offered in *mardikor bozorlari,* taxiing provides better working conditions, a higher income, a sense of stability and a larger degree of freedom and autonomy. Yet, since access to a car is necessary for entry into Tashkent's informal taxi industry, the fact that only a few labour migrants own a car and even fewer are in a position to purchase one allows only individuals with a certain amount of financial or social capital to take up the practice.

Taxiing in Tashkent is not the first engagement with this type of economic activity for all of the labour migrants who arrive in the city, since many have previously worked as informal taxi drivers in their home provinces. However, the working conditions in the provinces are quite different, as low salaries and high fares have rendered taxis—formal and informal alike—rather unpopular with local populations for short and medium distances. Thus, most drivers work on long-distance routes, connecting localities otherwise poorly connected to one another. Whilst new railway connections have recently been established between Tashkent and large provincial centres such as Samarkand, Bukhara and Andijon, the number of train services remains limited and ticket prices are relatively high. Therefore, people travel via the much cheaper shared taxis that depart throughout the day. In Tashkent, these taxis depart from and arrive at informal taxi stations situated outside the large markets scattered around the outskirts, which means that drivers who work on long-distance routes seldom enter the city. Yet, for some of them, such as Abbas, a 27-year-old informal taxi driver originally from the city of Fergana, bringing passengers from the provinces to Tashkent constitutes their first contact with the capital and, by extension, with its informal taxi industry:

> Before coming here [to Tashkent], I worked as a taxi driver in the [Fergana] Valley, carrying people from Fergana to Namangan, from Fergana to Andijon and so on. … But the distances are long, people are poor and fuel is expensive. So, at the end of each day, I made very little money. … One day, I took a group of men from Fergana to Tashkent. … They asked me to take them back to Fergana the next day. I slept at a cousin's in Tashkent and the next day I drove them back. … [It was then that] I saw that I could easily become a taxi driver in Tashkent. In an hour, I could make the same amount of money that I made in half a day at home. … I returned to Fergana, and then came back to Tashkent a few weeks later. There are many passengers here, I can work more hours if I want to and so I make more money.

Whilst Abbas came to Tashkent in his own car, many other potential informal taxi drivers arrive in the city with little more than a suitcase. Therefore, one of their main goals, second only to securing accommodation, is gaining access to a car. Those with relatives or acquaintances already living in Tashkent are often allowed to drive their cars for a few weeks, a concession quite illustrative of the importance of social networks and 'reciprocal ties based on mutual help and exchange' (Kandiyoti 1998: 561–562; Wegerich 2006). Such an offer does not always come for free, for even relatives are usually expected to contribute to the car owner's household either in kind or in the form of a portion of their daily income. Nevertheless, such arrangements are paramount to the prompt entry of newly arrived labour migrants into Tashkent's informal taxi industry, for they grant them the opportunity to begin earning an income immediately, to familiarise themselves with the city and to understand the industry's structure and workings.

Access to a relative's or acquaintance's car becomes all the more important in light of the difficulties that labour migrants encounter in purchasing a car. The Uzbek state's monopoly on the production of cars and the prohibitive import tariffs protecting the national car industry habitually hinder the access of the poorer segments of the population to cars (Olma 2020). Not only is the new-car market characterised by systematic shortages, high prices and long waiting periods for the more popular models, but the prices for used cars can be very high as well, as the shortages offer plenty of room for speculation. Nevertheless, the fact that used cars, unlike new ones, are immediately available makes them more popular amongst labour migrants. Accordingly, many inaugurate their stay in Tashkent by visiting the Sergeli car market, located in the eponymous district in the southern part of the city, where they can purchase a used car in cash or, if they do not possess the entire amount, they may 'rent' (in Russian, *arendovat'*) it. Renting involves leasing a car from a company or a private car owner for a predefined period—usually up to three years—with the expectation that by the end of this period the car will belong to the lessee. The final price depends on the size of the deposit, the frequency and size of instalments and the duration of the lease, often resulting in the car costing twice as much as if bought in cash. Nevertheless, despite this drawback, renting remains the preferred method to obtaining a car

amongst labour migrants, since it does not require them to have—or, if they do have, spend—any savings.

Naturally, the cheaper the car, the easier it is to pay it back, which is why most labour migrants choose to buy or rent the locally produced Chevrolet Matiz. This affordable and fuel-efficient small car, depending on the politico-economic climate, can be bought at the used car market for anywhere between US$4000 and US$7000 in cash, but can cost up to US$10,000 when rented. The popularity of the Matiz amongst informal taxi drivers has led many Tashkent residents to sarcastically call Tashkent 'the city of Matizes' (in Russian, *gorod Matizov*), but it has also generated a maintenance service structured around this particular car model, offering a wide line of auxiliary products, affordable spare parts and skilled mechanics. Despite the fuel efficiency of the Matiz, many drivers choose to convert their gasoline-powered models to compressed natural gas (CNG) in order to further save on fuel, the price of which has been steadily rising in recent years. Whilst such a conversion can cost them several million *so'm*, it eventually saves them between 40% and 60% on their fuel costs, especially since informal taxis by definition rack up a high kilometre count. It also ensures that drivers can work unaffected by the frequent fuel shortages that Uzbekistan experiences.

The way in which labour migrants obtain access to a car is defined by—and, in turn, itself largely defines—the length of their stay in Tashkent. Labour migrants arriving in Tashkent in their own cars are not bound to the city in any way other than their need to generate an income. Accordingly, free of the pressure exerted by the need to pay the car's monthly instalments and free to choose themselves how much they work on any given day, car-owning migrants often travel to their hometowns throughout their spell in Tashkent and return home permanently once they have earned and saved the amount of money they had initially aimed at. Similarly, carless labour migrants who arrive in Tashkent with the aim of earning a certain amount of money before returning to their respective hometowns shortly thereafter do not buy or rent a car, but rather use the car of a relative or acquaintance, even if it means paying a daily fee to the car owner. Thus, it is primarily rural–urban migrants who permanently move to Tashkent or who decide to stay in the city for an extended period of time who buy or rent a car. Whilst such an arrangement binds them to the city for as long as the duration of the lease and forces them to taxi for this entire period in order to pay the instalments, it also provides them with a car that they can then take back to their home provinces. In the car-based society that is contemporary Uzbekistan, this is perceived as of paramount importance, for, in addition to the practical advantages that car ownership offers, it is also regarded as an index of the migrants' success in the big city.

Competition and friction

Most of the labour migrants that I encountered during their early days in Tashkent viewed managing to obtain access to a car as the end of all their troubles, labouring under the impression that income levels in Tashkent were so high that

within a few months they would manage to save enough money to allow them to buy or build a house in their hometowns and start a family. However, whilst Tashkent salaries are indeed two to three times the national average, the situation newly arriving informal taxi drivers encounter is somewhat different from what most envisioned. Given the large volume of informal taxis—some estimates put the number at 30,000—drivers fiercely compete with each other, which, in turn, has led to fares so low that, on occasion, informal taxis are cheaper than public transportation. This is because fare allocation is ad hoc, whereby the cost of each ride results entirely from a negotiation between driver and passenger, even if most parties involved know, more or less, how much each ride costs by taking into account a series of variables.

The most important amongst these variables is distance—that is, the further the destination, the higher the fare—but the remoteness of the destination—or, put differently, the likelihood that the driver will find another passenger at the destination willing to pay for the return journey back to the city centre—is something that drivers take into account as well. Additionally, a series of secondary variables, such as car model, weather conditions or time of day, can also affect the fare. Drivers with larger cars, such as the Chevrolet Lacetti, charge more than their colleagues driving a smaller Chevrolet Matiz because a ride in a more spacious and luxurious car is viewed as an upscale service. Fares increase by as much as 50% on rainy days, since drivers take advantage of the higher demand for taxis. Snow or ice on the streets during the winter months can increase the fare by approximately 30%, given that driving on slippery surfaces is considered risky due to the higher probability of a car accident. During rush hour, the additional competition from occasional drivers travelling to or from work pushes fares down, whereas late at night the low supply and unavailability of public transportation increase fares by up to 100%. The number of passengers also plays a role: in a company of two or more, each extra passenger increases the fare by approximately 30%, since drivers claim that the extra weight results in higher fuel consumption and increases their costs. Simultaneously, two or more passengers make it unlikely for the driver to take other passengers along the way, and the extra charge compensates for this loss. Finally, asking the driver to drop a passenger in front of their apartment building also adds to the fare: since residential districts (in Russian, *mikroraiony*) are essentially mazes that are difficult and time-consuming to navigate, drivers charge extra to enter them, which is why most passengers prefer to be dropped off at the main street closest to their building and continue on foot.

These pricing strategies became clear to me in the early hours of a rainy Saturday night in October 2014, when I stopped an informal taxi to take me back to the residential building where I lived, less than five minutes by car from where I was. I had taken the same route by taxi several times before and, thus, I knew that the usual fare was 2000 *so'm*. Yet, the driver refused my offer and asked instead for 4000 *so'm*, which I had to accept since there were no other cars on the street. After I sat in the car, the driver, a 23-year-old labour migrant from the Navoi province in northern Uzbekistan, admitted that he was unfamiliar with that

particular part of the city and asked me to give him directions on how to reach my destination. Surprised, I inquired why he had asked for twice the usual fare if he did not know where my destination was. He replied that, at that time of day and given the weather, 4000 *so'm* seemed like a reasonable price. Furthermore, since my initial offer had been 2000 *so'm*, he assumed that my destination was not too far.

In addition to illustrating how specific temporal and weather conditions can affect the fare, this ethnographic vignette is also quite illuminating regarding the fact that many labour migrants working as informal taxi drivers are unfamiliar with Tashkent's physical layout. This does not necessarily hinder their ability to find their way around the city, since it is not uncommon for passengers to explain to drivers how to reach their final destination. Yet, it does affect their ability to charge accordingly for any given ride and, thus, substantially impacts their capacity to generate income, since inexperienced drivers who do not know the city well habitually agree to take every passenger they come across for whatever fare offered. Only after the destination has been reached do they ask the passenger for additional money, usually an extra 30%, claiming that the fare they had initially agreed upon was hardly enough to pay for the fuel. Nevertheless, in most cases, such pleas remain unheeded, since passengers appear unwilling to pay more than the fare the two parties initially negotiated.

Low fares mean that labour migrants working as informal taxi drivers without another occupation beyond taxiing are forced to work 10 to 14 hours a day, six or seven days a week. Such long working hours physically exhaust them and increase their chances of being involved in a car accident. They also leave little time for leisure or community life, thus alienating labour migrants and hindering their integration into Tashkent's social life. Their socialisation is further inhibited by the fierce competition amongst them, which often results in friction and leaves no room for a sense of camaraderie. This friction is most evident in the way in which drivers try to overtake each other by speeding and performing dangerous manoeuvres in order to first reach a potential passenger standing on the curb. Yet, even when they are not the first to reach a potential passenger, it is not uncommon for one or two cars to queue behind the first to stop in case its driver and the passenger do not reach an agreement on the fare. This practice benefits the passenger, since it offers the latter a potential alternative and strengthens their bargaining position, thereby placing drivers under pressure to accept whatever fare the passenger offers in order not to lose a ride. In this sense, the drivers' elasticity and their capacity to momentarily adjust to the expectations of their potential passengers are, in fact, a token of their precariousness, since their need to generate income places them in a position where they have no choice but to accept the passengers' perception of a fair fare.

The lack of comradeship and the dangerous driving style of labour migrants working as informal taxi drivers are often employed by their counterparts native to Tashkent in order to establish themselves as urban and to differentiate them-selves from rural newcomers, routinely regarded across Central Asia as primi-tive, uncultured, uneducated and unfit to live in an urban environment (see Flynn

and Kosmarskaya 2012). In order to further distance themselves from such stereotypes, most informal taxi drivers originating from Tashkent seldom admit that taxiing is their primary occupation, instead claiming that they only pick up passengers whose destination is along their route. Unsurprisingly, many labour migrants have adopted this strategy as well, presenting themselves as Tashkent natives, even when their knowledge of the city is inadequate for them to successfully find their way around it without assistance from the passenger. Central to such identity micropolitics is experience, understood here as the drivers' familiarity with the flows of passengers and the practices of the population, which is acquired over months or years of taxiing in Tashkent. Outside rush hour, Tashkent drivers prefer to wait for potential passengers in central locations across the city, such as at markets or metro stations. However, migrants not yet familiar with the rhythms of urban life are constantly on the move, eagerly searching for passengers. This practice increases their operating costs and identifies them as outsiders, since, as Jahongir, an experienced informal taxi driver in his forties who claims to be a Tashkent native, put it:

> You can tell who is new and who is old [in the profession] simply by looking at where one taxis. If it is rush hour and you look for passengers in Sergeli [Tashkent's southernmost district, far from the city centre], it means that you are a *kharyp* who has a lot to learn. … Same with those who drive around on Sundays. … There are fewer passengers on Sundays, so it's better to wait at [the] Chor Su [market] or [the] Alaiskii [market] for one to show up rather than drive in circles burning fuel.

Familiarity with the mobility patterns of Tashkent's population, thus, establishes the experienced informal taxi driver as an insider and, more importantly, as a Tashkenter (in Russian, *Tashkentets*). Contrariwise, migrant drivers are relegated to the status of a *kharyp*, a popular derogatory epithet used by non-Uzbeks, but also by ethnically Uzbek Russian speakers to refer to rural–urban migrants. This formulation is quite telling of the way in which migrant drivers—who often speak little or no Russian—are treated by both their colleagues and their passengers. Simultaneously, it highlights the obstacles and stereotypes they must overcome in their attempts to master their occupation and successfully generate income.

Informal taxi drivers' taut relationships with the Uzbek state

Although low fares force drivers to work day and night in order to earn enough to make a profit, they also render informal taxis quite popular amongst the local population, thereby guaranteeing a stable flow of both passengers and income. The majority of passengers are middle-class individuals who take informal taxis on a daily basis, although lower-income individuals also use their services, especially for destinations that are either quite close or quite far. As a result, in addition to competing with each other, informal taxis are in a constant state of competition with public transportation, as well as with their licensed

counterparts. In fact, the preference that Tashkent's residents show to informal taxis has led to the abrupt decrease of the number of licensed taxis from 2664 in 2015 (Anhor.uz 2015) to 2507 in 2017 to 2212 in 2018 (Spot.uz 2018). It is also detrimental to both the state and the city budgets, since, according to some estimates, the Uzbek state annually loses 99.2 billion *so'm* through tax evasion and 25.4 billion *so'm* due to informal taxi drivers' failing to obtain an annual taxi licence (*ibid.*). Recent years, therefore, have witnessed an offensive against informal taxis carried out by Uzbekistan's law enforcement agencies, as part of which informal taxis have been discursively illegalised, with official documents and the media alike habitually referring to them as 'illegal taxis' (in Russian, *nelegal'nye/nezakonnye taksi*).

In the early days of this offensive, drivers suspected of offering paid rides to their fellow citizens were supposed to be stopped and fined by inspectors from the State Tax Committee (GNK) in cooperation with traffic police officers. However, widespread street-level corruption and the difficulty in legally proving that a passenger in a private car indeed paid for the ride resulted in a situation whereby most checks were resolved by means of a firm handshake between the parties involved (see also Urinboyev et al. 2018). Consequently, in 2011, a joint task force consisting of plain clothes law enforcement officers from the Road Safety Directorate (UBDD), the Uzbek Agency of Automobile Transport (UzAvtoTrans), as well as the GNK assembled with the objective of conducting sting operations against perpetrators. Since then, drivers caught providing unlicensed transport to passengers are levied quite high fines—ranging from 20 to 100 times the minimum monthly wage—which, for most drivers, can be financially devastating. Yet, whilst the threat of fines has somewhat demotivated occasional and part-time informal taxi drivers with alternate means of generating an income, it has had little influence on labour migrants who are financially dependent on taxiing and, hence, have no choice other than to continue the practice despite the risks.

Similarly unsuccessful in this regard has been another measure adopted by the authorities involving the suspension of the driving licences of repeat offenders. This measure has failed simply because many labour migrants do not have a licence, as its high costs—3 million *so'm* in 2018—habitually keep them away from driving schools. Until the early 2010s, it was quite common amongst potential drivers to skip classes and to pass an exam organised by the UBDD by paying a bribe (RFE/RL 2011). However, in an attempt to allegedly improve road safety, in 2011, the government ordered the closing of all private driving schools across Uzbekistan, as it was rendered that the school owners' inability—or unwillingness—to enforce mandatory attendance to driving lessons and their facilitation of bribery and other illicit practices resulted in poor skills amongst drivers and an increase in traffic accidents. Accordingly, since 2011, the training, retraining and examination of drivers have been carried out within a stricter framework, leaving less room for bribery and, thus, further affecting the number of labour migrants willing to sit the exam.

All this is quite telling of the fact that rural–urban migration and the determination of labour migrants for whom taxiing is a vital source of income have

rendered state measures against informal taxis largely unsuccessful. In turn, this has prompted Uzbek authorities to adopt a more lenient stance towards Tashkent's informal taxis, since they have come to realise that additional regulatory pressure would result not in the formalisation but in the eradication of informal taxis. Such a development would increase real unemployment and would gravely impact the everyday lives and income levels of a significant portion of Tashkent's population. In fact, as my research suggests, many informal taxi drivers are not against formalisation per se and agree that, under certain circumstances, they would consider it, but excessive red tape, taxi company regulations, limited privileges and the high costs involved all hinder this transition. As it stands, formalisation is a rather complex endeavour, requiring the interested party, first, to obtain a taxi licence and, second, to join a taxi company. Yet, because the majority of labour migrants working as informal taxi drivers do not have a Tashkent *propiska*, they are neither eligible for a taxi licence in Tashkent nor allowed to officially work for a Tashkent-based taxi company.

However, those who have managed to register in Tashkent also face various structural obstacles imposed upon them by taxi companies. Legally, in order to be eligible for a taxi licence, a driver must be over 21 years of age, already have a category B driving licence and have at least three years of driving experience. Fully owning a car is not a legal prerequisite, and owners of rented cars can qualify as well, provided that the lessor accepts the modification of the car into a taxi. Unofficially, however, taxi companies prefer older drivers—individuals aged 30–45—fluent in both Russian and Uzbek with substantial driving experience. In addition, taxi companies seldom accept drivers with cars older than five years or rented, because they prefer to avoid potential problems stemming from a car's ambiguous ownership status. All these considerations make it rather unlikely that labour migrants will be hired by taxi companies, since, in addition to the lack of a *propiska* and/or a driving licence, many do not speak Russian, cannot document that they have been driving for the required number of years and drive old second-hand cars, which, as suggested already, are most often rented.

Even if taxi companies did accept rented cars, however, many informal taxi drivers would still be unwilling to modify the private cars that they drive into taxis, since formalisation is a costly undertaking requiring the driver to invest a considerable amount of money before beginning to work. Expenses include the purchase and installation of taxi-related equipment (e.g., taxi sign, taximeter and cash register), various fees and licences (e.g., annual taxi licence and the registration of a cash register), several types of insurance (e.g., car insurance and carrier's liability insurance) as well as the quintessential repainting of the car, all of which can set interested parties back by several million *so'm*. In addition to the direct costs involved, modifying one's car into a taxi is considered counterproductive by most drivers, because in Uzbekistan a private car is widely seen as a financial asset, which can be bought and then sold in order to finance the purchase of a new vehicle (Olma 2020). Thus, drivers are unwilling to modify their private cars into taxis, since this would compromise their resale and decrease the car's market value by as much as 50%. Similar considerations also apply to rented cars, as, in

some cases, the lessors themselves prohibit the lessees from modifying the car in order to retain the latter's market value in case the lessee fails to pay it back.

In the shadows

Requirements like those mentioned above essentially hinder the formalisation of informal taxi drivers and restrict many labour migrants to precarious labour in the informal economy. Yet, various socioeconomic parameters and the subjective views of the drivers themselves also impact their willingness to formalise. Licensed taxi drivers are employed in accordance with labour law provisions, meaning that they accrue seniority and are eligible for sick leave, paid days off and a pension upon retirement. Such long-term benefits are not viewed as important by most labour migrants, who either cannot appreciate them or urgently need employment and an immediate source of income. Other labour migrants choose to stay 'in the shadows' (in Russian, *v teni*) because the idea of formalising and working for a licensed taxi company seems unappealing. This is because licensed drivers are expected to hand over to the taxi company they work for a hefty portion of what they make each day, in the form of either a flat fee or a percentage of their earnings. Additionally, as Nozim, an informal taxi driver from Bukhara, told the popular news website Sputnik (2016):

> When you work for a taxi company, someone else regulates where you go, how many hours you work, how much you charge. … You no longer belong to yourself and you work for someone else [in Russian, *rabotaesh' na diadiu*].

Literally meaning 'to work for the uncle', the expression *rabotat' na diadiu* Nozim used is a figurative colloquialism employed by informal taxi drivers to refer to wage labour, denoting a socioeconomic relationship between employer and employee that many view as nothing short of slavery. By contrast, 'to work for oneself' (in Russian, *rabotat' na sebia*) is perceived by informal taxi drivers as a token of freedom, and more specifically of 'freedom from' bosses and the 'freedom to' work whenever and wherever they please (see also Sopranzetti 2017). As already mentioned, this also allows them to travel back to their home regions whenever the need or desire arises. In this sense, similar to Bangkok's motorcycle taxi drivers, Tashkent's labour migrants view taxiing as 'a synonym of freedom' (ibid., 75), but also as their sole road to success, not least because a popular conviction amongst youth across the post-Soviet space is that only by working for oneself can one get rich. It is in this context that many labour migrants working as informal taxi drivers often juxtapose taxiing with other informal jobs labour migrants are habitually forced to take up. As Alisher, an informal taxi driver in his mid-thirties coming from the Surkhandarya province, told me when I asked him why he had chosen to taxi:

> Most other men from my village work as construction workers, either in Tashkent or in Russia. … Last year, I was planning to join a team of

construction workers from my village who worked here in Tashkent, but a week before I left to join them, a cousin told me that the person in charge did not pay the workers the entire amount they had agreed upon. I had already planned my departure and needed a job, so I asked my father's cousin who lives here to help me find a job. He offered to sell me his old car, which I rented on good terms, and now I make money by taxiing. [Unlike construction workers], I sleep in a finished building, I have a bed and a toilet, I choose the times I work, I sit comfortably in my car and I get paid any amount I want to get paid in a day. Nobody can cheat me and not pay me the salary I have worked for.

In addition to freedom, then, taxiing provides labour migrants with autonomy both from neoliberal production regimes (see Morris 2016) and the whims of employers, not only ensuring that they will receive the money they have worked for but also offering them a higher income and better working conditions. Whilst most labour migrants find the income from taxiing adequate, at least compared to the wages earned in other informal jobs, they are nevertheless on the lookout for new ways to increase their earnings. For example, in recent years, many labour migrants working as informal taxi drivers have attempted to earn extra money by taking advantage of Yandex.Taxi's entry into the Tashkent taxi market. Yandex. Taxi is a ride-sharing service owned and operated by the Russian multinational corporation Yandex, which specialises in internet-related products and services and is known across the post-Soviet space for its eponymous search engine. Given that in Uzbekistan only registered taxi companies are allowed to offer taxi services, Yandex.Taxi's operations in the republic are officially limited to that of a taxi aggregator, whereby the company connects users with nearby taxi drivers, all of whom are, Yandex.Taxi maintains, licensed drivers working for registered taxi companies. Nevertheless, as both users and the media have reported, dozens of Tashkent's informal taxi drivers have managed to connect to the service as well, thanks to the elasticity of employees working in shops acting as Yandex.Taxi's focal points in Tashkent (Ozodlik 2018).

Since fares through Yandex.Taxi are lower than those of licensed taxis but higher than those of informal taxis, informally connecting to the platform has offered informal taxi drivers the opportunity to increase their daily income by benefiting from the popularity of the application amongst passengers willing to pay a higher fare. At the same time, it has also broken them free of accepting passengers' perceptions of a fair fare, for, unlike informal taxi drivers who find themselves under pressure to accept whatever fare a passenger offers, Yandex. Taxi calculates the fare for each ride and communicates it to the passenger a priori, leaving no room for negotiation. In other words, before they even enter the car, the passenger has already accepted the fare indicated on the screen of their smartphone. This function works in favour of Yandex.Taxi drivers, because it guarantees them that, at the end of the ride, they will receive a fare that not only is higher but also is calculated on the basis of more or less objective criteria. In this sense, whilst ride-sharing applications, especially Uber, have been rightly criticised

for disembedding state-enforced labour regulations in the Global North and for retaining the informality of labour relations in the Global South (Rekhviashvili and Sgibnev 2020), in Tashkent, such applications could potentially increase the income of drivers, whilst allowing them to establish a somewhat more formal relationship with the Uzbek state.

Conclusions

Either because they buy cheaper cars already in disrepair or because the financial uncertainty that characterises taxiing does not allow them to service their cars properly, labour migrants working as informal taxi drivers typically drive poorly maintained cars. Accordingly, it is rather common for informal taxis to sport, among other, untrustworthy tyres, cracked windshields, inoperable safety belts and potentially dangerous CNG tanks. Combined with the fact that many drivers do not have driving licences and do not follow road rules, the poor state of their cars habitually leads to—often lethal—traffic accidents. As a result, Tashkent's informal taxi industry has largely become synonymous with the epithets that Tashkent's Russian-speaking old-timers have bestowed upon labour migrants at large—that is, rural, backward and premodern. Hence, despite the fact that informal taxis essentially facilitate urban mobility by covering gaps in Tashkent's transportation infrastructure, the state-led offensive against them is viewed by old-timers and the media alike as nothing short of a modernising campaign, aimed at disposing those aspects of urban life that fail to fit with the image of a modern city. Such views have affected the livelihoods of labour migrants involved in taxiing by limiting their formalisation opportunities, which, together with the state's ambivalent stance towards them, forces many even deeper 'into the shadows', thus reproducing this informal practice.

Notwithstanding whether they pick up passengers off the street or through online applications, labour migrants who work as informal taxi drivers remain largely marginal to urban life in Tashkent. Long working hours, low socio-economic capital and negative stereotypes that follow them result in limited socialisation opportunities and, subsequently, hinder their integration. Simultaneously, even those working for a semi-legitimate scheme like Yandex. Taxi are not guaranteed a stable income or an institutional safety net in the form of social security or insurance that would protect them in case of illness, car trouble or an accident. Finally, their lack of a *propiska,* a work permit or even a driving licence exposes them to state-orchestrated raids against individuals staying or working in Tashkent 'illegally'. All this is quite telling of how the practices and everyday lives of labour migrants working as informal taxi drivers remain characterised by informality, precariousness and uncertainty. Yet, as this chapter has shown, the barriers to the socioeconomic integration of these individuals are not merely formal, but also informal and even subjective, suggesting that the informality of labour migrants, apart from a condition inflicted by regulatory frameworks or socioeconomic conditions, may also represent a choice.

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3 Deportation regimes in the post-Soviet space

Producing deportable migrants in the Russian Federation

Rano Turaeva and Izzat Amon

Introduction

Central Asian labour migration to the Russian Federation (hereafter, Russia) reached its peak in the early 2000s. Estimates for the number of migrants currently residing in Russia reach at least 10 million (including unofficial figures).[1] As a result, the Central Asian economies became remittance-dependent, such that more than half of Tajikistan's GDP is sourced from remittances primarily from Russia. The Russian migration infrastructure was unprepared to accommodate such a massive influx of labour migrants, creating spaces for flexible legal strategies exercised by decision-makers within the justice system as well as security services. The latter use the legal and economic precarities of migrants, who, in turn, also attempt to deal with their semilegal, quasilegal, illegal and kind-of-legal situations as deportable and detainable at any time.

Migration studies, studies of transnationalism and globalisation represent a big body of literature, which has shifted depending on the dynamics of migration and mobilities. More recent studies of migration emphasised blurring national boundaries, the transnationalisation of the migration experience, politics and economies, whilst the securitisation of national borders and policing migration have also intensified (Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Appadurai 1996; Hannerz 1996; Gupta and Fergusson 1997; Vertovec 2009). This chapter contributes to migration studies by focusing on legal issues and deportation regimes as well as the experiences shaped by the deportability and detainability of migrants in Russia, in keeping with the work of De Genova and Peutz (2010) and De Genova (2019). The questions we consider here are as follows: How is deportability legally produced and operationalised? What legal and illegal means are used to render migrants deportable? And what does being deportable mean for the daily survival of migrants in Russia?

We argue that the result of not having a clear regulatory basis for making decisions about deportation as well as for legally violating laws during the deportation process result in chaos within the management of migration and mobility. We also argue that these gaps and contradictions within the legal system serve as both means and opportunities for Russian officials to illegally expel unwanted migrants from Russia. Namely, these gaps and contradictions result in the use and abuse of

deportation as a weapon or punishment, in accordance with findings from Walters (2018) and Navasky (1959). The overall analysis of the practice of deportation and violating the human rights of migrant-victims indicates and supports the findings of De Genova and Peutz (2010), whereby deportability and detainability are produced and experienced.

It is not only contradictions and gaps within the legal system that create opportunities, but, also, the impunity of employees who overstep their privileges and responsibilities. This includes individuals who, for example, enjoy free access to databases they may manipulate if necessary. Such opportunities grant state officials rights over the lives and livelihoods of many labour migrants. The contradictory and paradoxical characteristics of Russian legislation relate to the deportation regime itself, where it is clear that legal provisions are not necessarily followed within that process, including the speed of the actual execution of a deportation order.

The continuous state of deportability and detainability leaves migrants vulnerable to various kinds of exploitation and violence, maintaining migrants' dependence upon those in power. Mobility, migration and uncertainties represent the central topics of this chapter, contributing further to the general discussion surrounding informality and mobilities (Hart 2006; Urry 2012; Urinboyev and Polese 2016; Turaeva 2013, 2014, 2018). Mobility, uncertainty and authoritarian governments are preconditions to the establishment of deportation regimes in a Foucauldian (Foucault 1975, 1980) understanding of the regime as a dispersed but powerful set of institutions, practices and objects. Power is central to the functioning of any regime, and Foucault's recommendation is to 'escape from the limited field of juridical sovereignty and State institutions, and instead base our analysis of power on the study of the techniques and tactics of domination' (Foucault 1980: 102). In other words, power is constituted through strategies, dispositives, techniques and the economy (Foucault 1980).

This chapter, then, contributes to an understanding of how uncertainties are produced through a continuous state of deportability and how mobility or a limitation to it leads to the violation of basic human rights related to mobility and the freedom of movement (Turaeva 2013). The informal and, at times, illegal use of rules and laws to practice deportation also show how much flexibility is possible within Russian legislation in order to easily punish those unwanted or, to use the wording in Russian legal texts, 'undesirable' (*nejelatelnost`*) (The Federal Law, latest version from 07.04.2020 № 111-FZ).

In this chapter, we present an analysis of Russia's judicial and political system related to the regulation and administration of migrants, focusing specifically on Central Asian migrants. Our analysis includes an examination not only of laws and practices implemented by government bodies and politicians but also individual examples of deportation cases derived from the second author's work as an attorney. Here, we pay particularly close attention to the legislative changes related to the regulation of deportation and analyse the conditions of the deportability of migrants relying on the theoretical traditions of Agamben (1998), De Genova and Peutz (2010) and Foucault (1975, 1980).

The policies we discuss in this chapter concern the migration management efforts of the government and its legislative basis. We also discuss the individual experiences of victims and victims' supporters, their families; the daily strategies of migrants living in fear of being deported; and other norms, institutions and practices which form the deportation regime in the post-Soviet space. Various actors within the deportation regime are presented, and we discuss different practices from within the deportation regime in order to understand how deportability is produced, conducted and experienced.

We collected the data for this chapter collaboratively, whereby both authors participated in deportation cases filed in Russian courts against migrants. Specifically, the second author represented the migrants as their lawyer. The first author participated in the deportation case hearings and conducted interviews with migrants in Moscow within the framework of her field research in 2016 and 2017. The first author, employing anthropological methods of field research, conducted both recorded interviews and unrecorded interviews, informal conversations, discussions and follow-up contacts via mobile communication channels through the present. The second author works as a lawyer and human rights activist for migrants' rights and is based in Moscow. Therefore, the data consist of not only research data in the form of the direct observation of deportation cases in courts in Moscow and interviews with migrants in Moscow (clients of the second author) but also official documents submitted to the court as part of the deportation cases in which the second author played a role. The names of the migrants presented here have been changed as well as the locations of the court cases to ensure the anonymity of all participants.

This chapter is structured as follows to address the research questions and advance our arguments. First, we provide background information on the migration situation in Russia, situating our analysis within the migration studies literature. We then outline the legal basis of the migration administration and migration politics in Russia, followed by specific deportation case studies. These case studies are followed by our analysis of the regulation of deportation applied in Russia and an analysis of the entire deportation regime in Russia as regulated, practised and experienced by different actors participating in this regime. Our concluding remarks outline our arguments and indicate future gaps which need to be addressed in the research and policy work concerning deportation regimes globally.

Migration to Russia: numbers and laws

Migration studies, studies of transnationalism and globalisation itself all emphasise increasingly blurred national boundaries, whilst the securitisation of national borders and policing migration simultaneously intensified (Walters 2002; Guild 2009; Tsing 2005; Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Appadurai 1996; Hannerz 1996; Gupta and Fergusson 1997; Vertovec 2009). Furthermore, Vertovec (2009) emphasised that the precondition for the expansion of processes related to migration stemmed from the development of a means for quick communication.

With more recent moves in globalisation studies, researchers began questioning social and political boundaries and fixed identities. They focused on the processes of deterritorialisation and the marginalisation of nation-states in a mobile and interconnected world (Appadurai 1996; Gupta and Fergusson 1997). Later, the critique of this approach prompted discussions of reterritorialisation and reordering the global world, bringing nation-states 'back in' as important actors (Braithwaite 1992; Cutler et al. 1999; Slaughter 2004; Appadurai 2006; Djelic and Sahlin-Andersen 2006). Some authors focused on the reordering process itself, enquiring into how the genesis and structuring of new modes of governance (conceptualised as practices of rule and regulations) frame and reproduce order (Djelic and Sahlin-Anderson 2006: 3). Reordering, placing the state back into the equation, associated with general trends amongst state powers aimed at controlling migration in light of global right-wing populism and antimigrant attitudes more generally (Bigo 2002; Calavita 2005; Chavez 2008; Cole 2002; Cornelius et al. 1994; Doty 1998). There is by now a large body of literature dealing with the state and securitisation of immigration and migration (Ellermann 2009; Fassin 2011; Krause & Williams 1996; Nevins 2002; Simon 1998; Stumpf 2006; Welch 2002, 2006; Willen 2007; Williams 2003).

Central Asians have migrated en masse to other countries, particularly to Russia, in search of better work opportunities and living conditions (Urinboyev 2019; Turaeva 2018; Schenk 2020; Heusala and Aitamurto 2016). Russia is the fourth-largest recipient of migrant workers in the world, whilst Central Asia represents one of the regions whose economy depends increasingly on remittances sent from abroad (IOM 2005: 397). The official numbers given by the Russian statistical agency, Rosstat, from 2011 to 2017 indicate that about three to four million migrants entered Russia, with unofficial numbers estimating twice as many migrants due to restrictions to official residence permits, which we describe below.[2] As a reaction to these rapid developments, Russia introduced restrictive rules and policies to control mobility and migration, particularly in big cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg. These rules and policies include policing migrants, and the administration of residence, labour and taxation along with various conditions governing them. Migration policies across all post-Soviet Republics have been renewed to fit the novel conditions of becoming independent states, aimed at ensuring state sovereignty and securing national borders. However, under the regulation within agreements amongst the post-Soviet Republics, a union known as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), mutual agreements exist on labour mobility, economic cooperation and security issues.

Russian migration regulation following its independence was challenged by mass migration from other post-Soviet Republics. Such laws were developed gradually, fitting the dynamics of the migratory processes as well as the political and economic situation within Russia. Regulation of migration was organised and administered after the collapse of the Soviet Union through the creation of a state body, known as the Federal Migration Service (FMS) in 1992. FMS was a federal law enforcement agency, responsible for controlling, administering, investigating and governing migration (both internal and international) and mobility both

within and outside Russia (Turaeva 2016). FMS occupied a higher-ranking position as an institution within the migration control system and was more powerful than agencies such as the police department. On 5 April 2016, FMS was closed down and its functions were transferred to the Main Directorate for Migration Affairs within the Ministry of Internal Affairs (*MVD* a local abbreviation), a state agency that provides security and is less powerful than the Federal National Security Services, which belongs to the Ministry of Defence. This last development within migration governance in Russia implied that mobility and residence were reformulated, relegislated and securitised, specifically such that migration control became an issue considered within security offices such as *MVD* (that is, the police and justice system). This represented a significant move, illustrating the complexities of power games played within the governing regimes in Russia (Ledeneva 1998, 2006). Details regarding the political machine of migration management in Russia, another understudied field, lie beyond our scope here. Instead, we focus on one of the many tools of this machine or apparatus, namely, the deportation regime. Specifically, we begin by outlining the legal basis of the deportation regime in order to understand through what means security officials operate in order to manage, control and benefit from migration.

Deportation regime: the legal basis

Federal Law No. 114, 'On the Order of the Exit and Entry to the Russian Federation', and Federal Law No. 115, 'On the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens in the Russian Federation', were adopted in August 1996, with further changes to them introduced regularly, often annually (The Federal Law, latest version from 07.04.2020 № 111-FZ). However, based on the second author's experience as a lawyer based in Moscow, the actual implementation of these laws only began in 2013. This can be explained through the migration dynamics in Russia, whereby the influx of migrants skyrocketed during the late 1990s, with the general situation becoming difficult to manage towards 2010 and more so during the economic crisis (2008) following the introduction of sanctions against Russia after 2014 (due to the annexation of Crimea). The wording of the law regulating the exit and entry to Russia deserves special attention here: '*reshenye o nerazreshenii vèzda v Rossiskuyu Federaziyu ili resheniye o nejelatelnosti prebyvania (projivaniya) v Rossiskoy Federazii*', literally translated into English as 'a decision on non-permission to enter the Russian Federation or a decision on the undesirability of a stay (residence) in the Russian Federation'. Essentially, this refers to regulating permission to enter the territory of Russia (a priori to migration) and/or the wishes (desire vs undesirability) of the state towards a migrant. Permission to enter would or could be equated with regulating entry or issuing visas, which would apply to those who wish to enter Russia. Therefore, the condition for this decision cannot logically result in any charges (administrative or criminal) against *de facto* residing migrants. The part regarding the desirability of migrants cannot be legally measured vis-à-vis how one becomes undesirable or desirable and wishes cannot be regulated from

the sociological point of view. The semantic contradiction of this law already, to our minds, allows much room for interpretation and abuse, as well as the possibility of producing undesirability, and, thus, deportability and detainability. The law further states:

> The deportation of a foreign citizen or stateless person with respect to whom a decision was made to not allow entry into the Russian Federation or a decision on the undesirability of staying (living) in the Russian Federation is carried out by the federal executive body in the field of internal affairs or its territorial body in collaboration with other federal bodies, executive authorities and their territorial bodies within their competence. The procedure for interaction between the federal executive body in the field of internal affairs and its territorial bodies with federal executive bodies authorised to make a decision on non-permission to enter the Russian Federation or a decision on the undesirability of staying (living) in the Russian Federation, and their territorial bodies when exercising control over the execution by foreign citizens and stateless persons, such decisions are established by joint regulatory legal acts of the federal executive body in the field of internal affairs and interested federal executive bodies (The Federal Law, latest version from 07.04.2020 № 111-FZ).

In short, this says that if one is found undesirable or not permitted to enter Russia, they should leave the territory of Russia; and if the 'undesirable' does not leave, then s/he should be deported by a federal organ of the executive branch of the government (that is, the police or security services). Since the deportation law is formulated as a law on refusing entry (which does not make sense when applied to already-residing migrants) and/or on undesirability (which is also less than logical), we refer to these as the laws on the deportability or the de facto deportation law in order to clarify the definition dictating and informing practice.

How does one become undesirable? Two administrative fines are sufficient according to the law on entry to and exit from Russia. This law regulates and defines the deportability of migrants as being fined two or more times for breaking residence regulations, such as the *propiska*, a regulation theoretically and practically impossible to follow (Turaeva 2016; Hojaqizi 2008). The regulation of residence and mobility within Russia is controlled through the *propiska* regime, which restricts the movement of both citizens and migrants (Hojaqizi 2008). Through this system, the number of individuals who became undesirable was rather high, reaching into the millions. According to official statistics from the Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation, from 2013 to 2014, over three million foreign citizens were deemed deportable for violating these specific federal laws.[3] These laws regulate two methods of deportation: voluntary and compulsory. Voluntary deportation is enforced at the foreign person's expense, whereas forced deportation is conducted at the state's expense by transferring the person to a special location.

Deportation practices: semilegal means of deportation

Certain passages from the abovementioned articles and clauses from federal laws and the Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation both contradict and reinforce each other. The principle of '*non bis in idem*' (from the Latin 'not twice against the same [thing]') prohibiting a second prosecution and punishment for a single action is regulated through Article 50 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, which states: 'No one may be twice judged for one and the same crime'. Contrary to this statement in the Constitution concerning the inadmissibility of punishment twice for the same act, Clause 4 of Article 26 of the Federal Law of 15 August 1996 reads as follows:

> [Those who r]epeatedly (twice or more times) within three years are found guilty for breaking administrative laws for committing an administrative offence on the territory of the Russian Federation are subject to deportation.

For violating Clause 4 of Article 26 of the Federal Law—that is, committing (at times, even, not even committing) two minor offences, the executive body has the right to decide on the deportability of offender migrants.

A protocol is drafted naming the offender. Based on this protocol, the offender must pay an administrative fine. This is one punishment. This punishment then results in further punishment for the same offence—specifically, this offence then defines the offender as deportable, resulting in her/his deportation. After the offender pays the administrative fine, s/he faces an additional punishment, namely, deportation. That is, the person is punished twice for the same offence, which is not permissible under the Constitution. In order to explain these legal contradictions and how the deportation law is applied in practice, we provide several case studies below in the narratives from victims defended by the second author (Izzat Amon).

Another contradictory aspect to the deportation regime lies in the timing following the actual court proceedings, detention and deportation itself. The timing does not reflect the regulation for the time necessary to enforce court decisions, the time allowed for the possibility of filing an appeal and the actual execution of deportation. Namely, when a victim of the deportation regime is deemed deportable by a court decision, legally and theoretically the victim should be granted time to appeal, typically within ten days. However, deportees are granted three days to leave the country voluntarily following the date of a court decision, which automatically prevents deportees from the possibility of appealing a court decision. Much about the legal contradictions and textual inconsistencies exists within the regulations of migration control regimes in Russia. But, what happens in practice when all these legal texts are put into practice? Below, we provide examples from actual deportation cases, partly demonstrating how the deportation regime works in reality.

The case of Mahmud

Mahmud, a citizen of Tajikistan, came to Russia at the beginning of 2000s as a migrant. He found a job in a Russian logistics company as a driver. After some

time, he brought his wife and three children to Russia. In 2014, he received a residence permit (a clean *propiska)* since he managed to buy a flat, whereby he could finally obtain his *propiska.* In 2016, he travelled to Tajikistan to visit his parents but was not allowed reentry into Russia. At Domodedovo International Airport, he was informed that his entry into Russia was barred on the basis of Federal Law No. 114, Article 26, Clause 4. Mahmud's family remained in Russia, and he was forced to remain in Tajikistan. The legal process to change the court decision took a year to complete.

Legally, two approaches were taken to defend Mahmud's case. The first was to argue based on his ownership of property within the Russian territory and his family living in Russia. Banning the Appellant from reentry to Russia violated his right to enjoy familial life, guaranteed by Article 8 Clause 1 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Moreover, according to Paragraph 3 of Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adopted through UN General Assembly Resolution 217 A (III) on 10 December 1948), the family is a natural and fundamental unit of society and carries the right to protection from society and the state.

The second strategy relied on tracing the administrative offences within the last three years to determine if two existed. A lengthy inquiry of his offence history yielded positive results, namely, that he had no more than one offence and that was a traffic violation, for which the fine was paid on time. Moreover, according to Russian regulations, the authorities did not have the right to prohibit a person from using his property. Due to the existing offences (less than two), the Appellant was also illegally punished with the deportation law. After successfully defending him—specifically by appealing the original court decision—a further lawsuit was filed forcing migration services to pay moral and physical damage (in the amount of 3000 Russian roubles) as a consequence of the court decision. Ultimately, he was not paid compensation despite a positive decision from the court to pay damages without any known reasons. The ignoring of the court decision such as paying the compensation is also part of the whole legal regime which uses any gaps and contradictions to the law when it concerns migrants' rights. This legal nihilism at times stems also from the general attitude towards migrants as they are seen as those who can have no rights and can be abused with impunity such as police daily abuse, courts ignoring the rights of migrants and deportation regime just acting on migrants without consideration of laws.

Furthermore, Mahmud's case also reveals how entries in the database of offences are subject to being changed and manipulated. This case shows that a migrant was denied entry on the basis of the deportation law (the 'Law on the Exit and Entry to the Russian Federation'), applied to any migrant who broke laws twice within three years. In the case of Mahmud, he had a clean *propiska* (given that he owned a flat where he could register legally) and broke a law only once within three years. Yet, he was denied entry on the basis of a court decision against him. Without strong legal support, migrants are typically abandoned by legal regimes, which can remove a specific number of migrants to satisfy quotas. Migrants, thus, become deportable, detainable and are denied entry to Russia.

The case of Shahrukh

Here, we use the case of Shahrukh to demonstrate the contradictory legal provisions regulated by Russian law. The following case shows the details of the impunity enjoyed by officials and the system itself, which allows space for a securitised system to render unwanted migrants deportable.

In March 2016, Shahrukh, a Tajikistan citizen, was detained in Moscow on suspicion of having committed a robbery. Shahrukh's wife, a citizen of Russia and an ethnic Russian, actively worked to ensure legal support for her Tajik husband. The investigation of robbery lasted six months, yielding no evidence of Shahrukh's participation in the crime. Thus, the criminal case was dismissed due to a lack of evidence. Despite this outcome, he was not released but instead was transferred from a pretrial detention centre to a special detention centre (deportation centre) for deportees. A district court in Moscow issued a decision to deport Shahrukh. A week later, Shahrukh was deported to Tajikistan, well ahead of schedule set for his deportation. The deportation was carried out before the court decision on the deportation had entered into force. His marriage to a Russian citizen and the existence of two minor children, both of whom were also Russian citizens, did not affect the court's decision nor his subsequent deportation from Russia.

If we follow the procedures used in Shahrukh's case, we see how the entire process from the accusation of robbery to the fast-track deportation without a legal decision on the latter took place. In this process, we find no legal basis for transferring Shahrukh from a pretrial detention centre to a deportation detention centre. Suspecting Shahrukh might be a thief rendered him predestined as deportable at any cost. The case and procedures applied to Shahrukh demonstrate how security officials simply agreed that this migrant should be deported and how it was performed. Any counterarguments in his favour against deportation, such as the existence of his family and children who are Russian citizens, did not interest security officials in the least. His fate was left to the deportation machine, namely, transferring him to the detention centre for deportation. The court, then, becomes a symbolic backdrop, where the deportation decision is made, since the actual deportation of the victim is performed without any legal basis, in this case, without entering the court decision into force (usually there must be time granted to submit an appeal).

This case also provides evidence that any wrong move (more than two administrative fines or other convictions or simply being a suspect) which draws the attention of Russian authorities can end with the deportation of migrants to fulfil quotas without ensuring that procedures follow Russian laws and or adhere to the basic human rights conventions.

The case of Nasrulloh

Early on a summer morning in 2018, the police knocked on the door of the flat that Nasrulloh, a Tajikistan citizen, and his family rented in a Moscow residential district where other Tajik migrants also lived. Security officers (special forces

officers) forcibly entered the flat, ordering everyone to lie down on the floor. After a thorough search, all of the flat's residents were brought to the Federal Security Service's central office, commonly referred to as 'Lubyanka' (migrant detention centre), a notorious place which migrants fear most. All of the detainees were interrogated in separate rooms. After two days, everyone but Nasrulloh was released. Nasrulloh was accused of financing terrorism, having allegedly sent his terrorist accomplices 25 million roubles over the past six years.

The following facts were established by the defence: Nasrulloh was not involved in any financing of terrorism. He was trusted by labour migrants, who gave their salaries to Nasrulloh in cash. He then sent this money home to Tajikistan through various money transfer systems to safely coordinate the distribution of his fellow Tajik labour migrants' salaries. Another monetary transaction in cooperation with a Tajik businessman who brought goods from Turkey was also established as having nothing to do with financing terrorism. The process of fact-finding in Nasrulloh's defence took about six months. Although the investigation concluded that Nasrulloh was not involved in terrorism, all of the initial accusations against him were brought to court due to the unwillingness of the law enforcement officers to release Nasrulloh.

During the court hearing, the case related to financing terrorism was reclassified as illegal entrepreneurship, violating Article 171 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, even though Nasrulloh conducted all of these transfers legally. After his hearing, Nasrulloh was again detained and transferred to a special detention centre for foreign citizens (deportation centre). Subsequently, he was deported from Russia and banned for life from returning. It was impossible to establish who took the deportation decision with respect to Nasrulloh. All of the requests submitted by Nasrulloh's lawyer regarding the decision on his deportation were ignored. This deportation case also did not end with Nasrulloh's deportation, but extended to his other family members (his brother) and others within his networks (all Tajik migrants). In total, 30 migrants have been deported as a result of Nasrulloh's case.

This case of a deportation chain clearly illustrates how deportation serves as a tool for getting rid of unwanted or legally speaking 'undesired' migrants for whom suspicion surrounds. Whether false or not, the suspicion alone grants state authorities a reason to get rid of a migrant or an entire group of migrants by using regulations, officers and institutions within the deportation regime.

The case of Khurshid

Khurshid was a foreman at a construction company and oversaw a team of 28 people who all worked for a Russian businessman named Seriy. Khurshid's team built multistorey buildings, performing the most difficult work with the most responsibility: monolith and lining. Amongst construction workers, Seriy was notorious for his fraudulent actions. Seriy had his *krysha* (protection within the state system) within law enforcement agencies, namely, within the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the National Security Services (*FSB* a local abbreviation) of Russia.

After Khurshid realised that he had been deceived and not been paid for the work he and his construction team had completed, he sought legal support to receive their wages. After communicating with Seriy, the latter became angry and made sure that the construction workers were expelled from their barracks (temporary sleeping quarters for construction workers within the building site or next to it). Furthermore, construction workers were denied access in order to collect their belongings. A nongovernmental organisation (led by one of the authors), which provides support to migrants, decided to organise a public demonstration against Seriy's construction company in front of the construction site where the workers were barred entry. The demonstrations were stopped by Special Security Forces (*OMON* a local abbreviation), who arrived in several buses and detained all of the participants of the demonstration. Within 24 hours, all 28 people—Khurshid's entire construction worker team—were deported from Russia by order from a decision from Moscow's Gagarin District Court. Khurshid himself was detained for a violation of Article 213 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and placed in a special detention centre. Four months later, Khurshid was released from the courtroom by court order and placed in a special detention centre (deportation centre) for foreign citizens, where he was held for more than six months before being deported.

This case shows that not only suspects do become undesired and fall under the wheels of the deportation machine, but simply angering a powerful person who is well connected to Russian security circles can end in deportation. As Khurshid's case illustrates, a situation of uncertainty or continuously living under the fear of deportation is created, what De Genova and Peutz (2010) describe as a state of deportability. These fears and uncertainty are the main reasons that allow individuals such as Seriy to deceive migrants en masse. Such deception includes letting migrant construction workers toil for months and then not paying them at the end without fear of facing justice. Yet, there is also the reality that, at worst, all such migrants can be deported at any time. This also happened to the abovementioned migrant demonstrators, who were removed from the streets and subsequently deported en masse.

Deportation as political revenge

Deportation serves Russian authorities not only by enriching its security officers who search for migrant-victims but also by gaining prominence amongst Russian voters (Russian right-wing populism increased as the number of migrants in Russia increased) who support political steps against migrants. Targeting migrants for deportation proved effective as a 'weapon' (Walters 2018: 1) in exerting pressure on Russia's 'former colonies'—that is, Central Asia. Central Asian dependence upon Russia is well established. In the context of migration, where millions of Central Asian migrants remit most of their earnings to their home countries, it is politically and economically crucial for Central Asian governments that the Russian labour market remains open to their impoverished nationals.

Labour migrants have become bargaining chips between the Kremlin and the migrants' countries of origin. For example, in 2011, the pilots of an aircraft belonging to a Russian airline were detained after illegally crossing the Tajik border. The pilots were subsequently handed lengthy prison sentences. The Kremlin's reaction was predictable and expected, specifically resulting in the hunt for Tajik migrants, which began immediately after the detention of the Russian pilots. According to official records, within just one week, the courts illegally deported over 3000 Tajik citizens to Tajikistan. Public figures and human rights activists held a press conference on the topic of the illegal deportation of Tajik citizens from Russia and called upon Russian authorities to prevent the use of migrants for political purposes.[4] This measure (deportation) affected Tajik authorities. They were forced to free the pilots, whereby following the sentencing, the pilots were pardoned by the President of Tajikistan and released.[5]

Deportation regimes: an analysis

Deportation studies gained increasing attention in scholarly analysis in the early 2000s (De Genova 2002; Peutz 2006; Walters 2002; Kanstroom 2000; Coutin 2003; Gibney 2008) when migration and mobility reached their peaks after the fall of communist regimes and other conflicts escalated following the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s. The internet and increasing global connectivity have served as the primary engines fuelling mobility and the globalisation of markets and capital.

The deportation regime gained prominence with global political insecurities concerning state sovereignty, whilst the securitisation of migration expanded further afield (Coutin 2015; Bleichmar 1999; Drotbohm 2014; Drotbohm and Hasselberg 2014; Galvin 2014; Hasselberg 2014; Kanstroom 2000, 2012; Schuster and Majidi 2014; Walters 2002). Deportation became the primary tool to control migration and mobility (De Genova 2002; De Genova and Peutz 2010; Dreby 2012, 2013; Peutz 2006). According to De Genova and Peutz (2010: 34), 'the practice of deportation has nonetheless emerged as a definite and increasingly pervasive convention of routine statecraft'. Furthermore, these deportation practices became a 'global regime' of controlling mobility and migration (De Genova and Peutz 2010: 34).

De Genova distinguished between the legal process of deportation (from above) and the state of being deportable (from below), not so much as the legal status of a person but as something experienced and perceived (living in fear), full of uncertainties and living with the risk of being deported every day. He describes this state of being amongst migrants as an 'enforced orientation to the present' (De Genova 2005: 427). Central Asian migrants also live with a constant worry that their businesses or economic activities will be stopped at any moment, filling them with the drive to make the best of the present or to think only in the short term. A continuous state of being deportable contributes to the vulnerability of migrants to exploitation, violence and abuse. Remaining silent and bearing injustice then represents an important strategy to continue longer without being

deported. Experiences of this state of deportability are accompanied by multiple sacrifices to freedom, rights, honour and the enjoyment of life.

In all of the deportation cases presented in this chapter, we described the means and methods used to produce deportability, where legal instruments have been abused and used as weapons to fight migration and to gain political recognition amongst Russian voters. The deportation regime was created after the fall of the Soviet Union in order to fight migration and increased mobility, which challenged not only rigid national boundaries, but also authoritarian regimes. Migrants are 'undesirable' not only in the destination country (Russia) but also in their homes by their governments, for whom they symbolise poverty and weaknesses related to the inability to manage their economies such that their citizens are forced to leave their countries. The latter brings the home governments (in Central Asia) into a bad light. For the Russian economy, although cheap migrant labour fill jobs Russian citizens would not like to do remains crucial to maintaining the economy, the Russian government is challenged by the high numbers of mass migration and must negotiate with the mood of Russian voters. The deportation regime is then an easy tool to manage the number of migrants. As we have also seen in one of the case studies presented in this chapter, not only do Russian government actors play a role, but so, too, do the governments of the sending countries which must cooperate with the former. Cooperation with several nation-states in order to manage mobility is a normal practice, but using migrants in political games such as revenge is anything but normal.

Besides employing deportation as a weapon (Walters 2018: 1) and punishment (Navasky 1959), in the hands of powerful actors poor migrants not only experience deportation during the process itself but *a priori* state of deportability symbolises the daily struggle played out through abusive and deceptive employers, police on the street, neighbours or simply others. Knowledge about the deportability of migrants is widely shared through political promotions and media coverage, which do not necessarily serve as a criticism of the mechanism, but rather protect those who can easily abuse this weapon through exploitation as employers, violence in the street against migrants, enforcing obedience and silencing migrants. The creation of such dependencies and power relations between migrants and others in power has a number of implications for the vulnerability of migrants and for the security of their families.

Conclusions

We provided here examples of deportation cases, some personally defended by the second author, some involving court hearings the first author attended and some handled by both authors during field research conducted in Moscow in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. We also noted that deportation cases statistically increased after the procedure was put into practice in 2013 based on the personal experiences of the second author as a practising lawyer. The number of the deportation cases reached millions, where holders of Russian passports with Central Asian ethnicity fell victim to the same deportation regime detailed in this chapter. In cases

involving Russian passport holders with Central Asian ethnicity, the procedure of deportation followed the same pattern described by Agamben (1998), a pattern which lies somewhat beyond our scope here. Agamben (1998) and his Homo Sacer namely follows the same patterns such as individuals were first taken their identity papers away in order to act upon their pure bodies or 'bare life', where a human being without his official and civic papers is nothing more than flesh and soul. Agamben brings the example of Nazi camps where Jews and others have been exploited and killed only after the civic rights have been taken away from the victims. The same pattern follows the deportation cases where Russian citizens with Central Asian origin are deprived of their citizenships first and then deported to their countries of origin. The astonishing number of deportation cases against migrants in Russia who entered legally due to the visa-free regime speaks for itself. Beyond the statistical reality of deportation from Russia, we presented an in-depth analysis of the deportation regime, where not only state interests (national sovereignty and migration control) were supported, but we also show that there were additional interests and cooperation involved within the deportation regime such as collaboration with state officials from the deportees' countries of origin. In this chapter, we demonstrated that Russia's deportation regime not only concerns individuals who violated border-crossing regulations and should be deported, but we also identified a process of politicising deportation, which is becoming more relevant and an increasingly important machine for getting rid of unwanted migrants. We also noted a correlation between deportation and political events regarding, for instance, the arrest of Russian pilots in Tajikistan, which clearly indicates a process of politicising the deportation regime.

Furthermore, we highlighted contradictory and paradoxical aspects of the Russian legal basis of the deportation regime, whereby it is clear that legal provisions were not necessarily adhered to within the practice of deportation, including the speed of the actual execution of a deportation or finding reasons for a deportation. We argue that the lack of a clear regulatory basis for making decisions about deportation, as well as the legal violation of laws during the process of deportation, results in a chaotic management of migration and mobility, opening space for police abuse. We also argue that these gaps and contradictions serve as the means and an opportunity for Russian officials to illegally expel unwanted migrants from Russia, specifically by using and abusing deportation as a weapon or punishment, mirroring findings from Walters (2002) and Navasky (1959). The overall analysis of the practice of deportation and the violation of the human rights of migrant-victims indicates and supports the findings of De Genova (2019), such that deportability is both produced and experienced.

It is not only the contradictions and gaps in the legal system that create these opportunities but, also, as we demonstrated above, the impunity of employees who overstep their privileges and authority through, for example, their unhindered access to databases which can be manipulated if necessary. These opportunities grant state officials rights over the lives and livelihoods of many labour migrants.

The continuous state of deportability renders migrants vulnerable to various kinds of exploitation and violence, keeping migrants dependent upon those in

power. Mobility, migration and uncertainties formed the central topics of this chapter, which contributes to general debates about informality and mobilities. Furthermore, our work contributes to an understanding of how uncertainties are produced through a continuous state of deportability and how mobility or limitations to it lead to violations of the basic human rights to mobility and the freedom of movement. Informal and, at times, the illegal application of rules and laws to practise deportation also reveal how much flexibility is possible within Russian legislation in order to easily punish individuals classified as unwanted or, to use Russian legal text wording, 'undesirable' (*nejelatelnost'*).

Notes

1 It should, however, be noted that the statistics presented here require revision in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led thousands of migrants to return to their home countries.
2 Rosstat migration data for the years 2011–2017, available online via https://showdata .gks.ru/report/276650/ [accessed 24.03.2020]
3 A later law, 'On the Violation by Foreign Citizens or Stateless Person of the Rules of Entry into the Russian Federation or the Regime of Stay (Residence) in the Russian Federation', was mentioned in Article 18.8 of the Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation, dated 30 December 2001 (No. 195–FZ). Additions and amendments to the law were introduced in 2004, 2006 and 2018. Furthermore, on 30 December 2001, the 'Law on the Illegal Implementation by Foreign Citizens or Stateless Persons of Labour Activities in the Russian Federation' was incorporated into the Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation. Changes and amendments to the law were introduced in 2006 and 2018.
4 'Russia has not calmed down: Tajiks will continue to be expelled from the country, despite the completion of the pilots' case'. The article was published in Newsru.c om on 23 November 2011. http://www.newsru.com/russia/23nov2011/tajikistan.html [accessed 17.08.2020]
5 Oleg Kiryanov, 'Released in the courtroom: In Tajikistan, the verdict against the Russian and Estonian pilots was reviewed'. 23 November 2011. *Rossiyskaya Gazeta—* Federal issue No. 263 (5639). Published online under: https://rg.ru/2011/11/22/sud-site.html [accessed 17.08.2020]

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4 The migration infrastructure of posting

Transnational informality

Alexandra Voivozeanu

Introduction

In an attempt to uncover legal, informal and grey zones, this chapter explores the transnational labour market emerging within employment postings from Romania to Germany. Here, I analyse the roles and strategies of actors involved in recruiting Romanians to work in the German construction and meat-processing sectors—that is, companies that facilitate posting, migration intermediaries and migration networks. Furthermore, I show how these actors actively make use of grey zones and informal practices, creating transnational spaces that often do not fit within legal systems. Moreover, I argue that companies, agents and migrants experience different types of transnational realities.

This chapter, therefore, contributes both to debates on recruitment to posted employment and to debates on the informalisation of transnational labour markets and transnational economic networks. Because mobile workers, brokers and companies engage with multiple national legal systems and cross-national boundaries, this multisite research moves beyond methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002).

Typically, a posted worker is sent abroad by their employer 'to carry out a service in another EU member-state on a temporary basis in the context of a contract of services, an intragroup posting or hiring out through a temporary agency' (European Commission 2019). For example, a Romanian firm subcontracted to lay the foundation at a construction site in Germany is allowed to bring its own employees in order to complete the job. Posting represents less than 1% of the total workforce in the European Union; however, it is highly prevalent within several economic sectors in high-income countries, including the construction and the meat-processing sectors in Germany (Wispelaere and Pacolet 2018; Wagner and Hassel 2016).

Posted workers fall under a particular employment regime regulated by the following documents: European Directive 96/71/EC, its German counterpart 'The Posting of Workers Act' and European Directive 2018/957 (adopted subsequent to this research). Whilst regular migrants move through Europe on the grounds of the free mobility of labour, posted workers complete their work under the freedom to provide services.[1] Thus, their access to the labour market of the destination

country is only granted through their employer, with which they should have a history of standard employment in the country of origin. Moreover, at the time of my research, posted workers were not entitled to the minimum wages and working conditions above the minimum standards in the destination country.[2] Therefore, they were often paid less than national workers and regular migrants for the same job. The first indication of informal practices within posting is that most respondents held a contract with their employer only for the short periods of time they spent abroad (in the majority of cases, their contracts were terminated afterwards).

Theoretical background

In my analysis of the recruitment process for posted employment, I draw upon Lindquist et al. (2012: 9), for whom the migration infrastructure represents 'the institutions, networks and people moving migrants from one point to another'. Researchers with similar views draw attention to the importance of infrastructures for the emergence and sustainability of migration (Xiang and Lindquist 2014; Lin et al. 2017). Such studies make use of concepts like 'migration networks' and the 'migration industry' to describe the system that moves migrants from one place to another and to explain its functioning principles (Xiang and Lindquist 2014: 122). Moving beyond established views claiming that migration becomes self-sustaining through networks (Massey 1988), such approaches seek to determine the role of each component within the migration infrastructure. Moreover, whilst scholars of the migration industry insist on the business dimension of migration, this body of work takes into account the fact that agents (brokers) also deal with infrastructure issues, such as collecting documents, organising medical tests or organising pre-departure trainings (Xiang and Lindquist 2014: 122).

According to Xiang and Lindquist (2014: 124), the concept of migration infrastructure includes the following dimensions: 'the commercial (recruitment intermediaries), the regulatory (state apparatus and procedures for documentation, licensing, training and other purposes), the technological (communications and transportation), the humanitarian (nongovernmental and international organisations) and the social (migrant networks)'.

Similar to other contexts (Turaeva 2013: Urinboyev and Polese 2016), posted workspaces ruled out by official regulations are replaced with informal practices. For example, Romanian subcontractors that complete work in Germany count on informal agents (individuals who charge a commission or financially gain from posting) to recruit workers. In some cases, agents or firms charge posted workers recruitment fees, whilst some companies make additional deductions from paycheques for transportation and accommodation costs in the destination country.

The term 'informality' is primarily used in academic studies to 'describe practices that emerge unofficially … or underground, constitute grey areas and form a variety of shadow, second or covert economies' (Ledeneva 2018: 1). In current debates, informality is regarded as immersed in social phenomena (Gudeman

2001; Yalcin-Hackman 2014). Some researchers argue that it is rather difficult to distinguish between formal and informal arrangements and practices, which often coexist and are entangled within society (Williams and Round 2014). Therefore, van Schendel and Abraham (2005) propose using an analytical framework which shows that understanding the formal/informal or licit/illicit may vary depending upon social norms.

Whilst most studies embrace the view that informality is embedded within the national boundaries of a single state, less research reflects how informality manifests within transnational spaces (Cieslewska 2013; Turaeva 2013; Urinboyev 2017). Along this same line of thought, taking into account the principles by which posted work is organised, one can state that the actors involved in this type of employment act within 'transnational social fields' (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). This concept is defined by Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004: 1009) as 'a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices and resources are unequally exchanged, organised and transformed … which connect actors through direct and indirect relations across borders'. In order to distinguish between the different types of transnationalism experienced by the actors involved in posting recruitment, I make use of concepts such as 'transnationalism from above' which refers to 'transnational capital, global media and emergent supranational political institutions' and 'transnationalism from below' which refers to an 'informal economy, ethnic nationalism and grassroots activism', as defined by Guarnizo and Smith (1998: 3).

Simultaneously, posted work is organised and takes place at the level of transnational, supranational and national regulatory systems. In most cases, posting companies hire workers in their country of origin and bring them temporarily to other member-states to complete a specific job. Their employment involves regulations laid down by the European Union, as well as by the sending and recipient states; thus, the concept of 'transnational governance' from Djelic and Sahlin-Anderson (2006) might offer an analytical framework. According to Djelic and Sahlin-Anderson (2006: 2), transnational governance is conducted 'between and across nations' and 'regulatory boundaries do not necessarily coincide within national boundaries'. In other words, in their conceptual framework, states are not central to the act of governing and should, instead, be regarded as one of the many actors involved in multidirectional interactions. In order to analyse transnational governance, they propose a revised field perspective which takes into account spatial topographies (with fluid boundaries between local, national and transnational spaces), network topographies (connecting individuals, groups, organisations or networks) and meaning (institutional forces which involve the negotiation of rules between actors with different interests).

Data and methods

This chapter is based on qualitative research conducted between December 2015 and December 2016 in the German federal states of Baden Württemberg, Bavaria, Berlin and Lower Saxony. The primary data consist of interviews with

19 construction workers and 13 meat-processing industry workers from Romania. Both economic sectors hire a high number of posted workers. In 2017, approximately 13% of all construction workers in Germany were posted.[3] In the meat-processing sector, around 70% of the workers hired by the four largest meat producers were posted based on estimates from the Food, Beverages and Catering Union (Brümmer 2013, in Wagner and Hassel 2016). However, the number of de facto postings is likely higher.[4]

Field access for this research was rather difficult. The migration process for posted workers is organised by their employers; thus, they often remain isolated from German society. Moreover, as a consequence of their employer dependency, workers are, in many cases, reluctant to disclose work-related information. I approached posted workers through the local offices of the construction union, through personal contacts and through Facebook groups of Romanian migrants in Germany and used the snowball sampling method in order to find additional respondents.

The age of the interviewees varied from 23 to 51, and only two respondents were women. Whilst the construction sector is male dominated, my attempts to interview additional women working in the meat-processing sector remained unsuccessful. With the exception of four respondents in the construction sector, most posted employees had worked abroad prior to posting (in countries such as England, Hungary, Israel, Italy and Spain). Six of the meat-processing industry workers had no previous migration history. Others had lived in Italy or had previously worked in Germany, the Netherlands and Turkey.

I interviewed workers who, at any time, had been in posted employment. Interviews focused on their entire professional trajectories. For each posted job they held, amongst others, I explored their experiences with the recruitment process and the particularities of their contracts. Two interviews were conducted via telephone with migrants who had moved from Germany. I also interviewed two construction engineers, two migrant councillors and European-level representatives of IG Bau (the Trade Union for Building, Agriculture and the Environment) and DGB (The German Trade Union Confederation). Interview data were complemented with data collected through participant and non-participant observation. I visited one construction site each Saturday (for two months), I interviewed migrants at their workplace and accommodation sites and I translated for the construction union (IG Bau) during their attempts to organise Romanian posted workers.

Interviews with migrants, construction engineers and migrant councillors were conducted in Romanian, whilst union representatives were interviewed in English. Informal discussions with local representatives of IG Bau were conducted in German.

Situating the migration infrastructure in the construction and meat-processing sectors

The recruitment system behind posting takes on a pyramid structure consisting of primary entrepreneurs (meat-processing companies, private or state actors

that finance a construction project), in some cases a general contractor (present largely in the construction sector), subcontractors, workers and, at times, agents. In the meat-processing industry, subcontractors are normally hired by the primary entrepreneurs, whilst in the construction sector a general contractor might be involved (usually a German company fully responsible for the implementation of the project). Currently, subcontractors are typically Romanian companies that hire Romanian workers. At times, even if hired in Romania, workers are posted through companies from a third country. However, beginning in 2014 as a result of union and media pressure, the six largest meat producers in Germany adopted a 'self-commitment' to abolish posted work. Subsequently, meat-processing factories hired only subcontractors registered in Germany who, therefore, operate according to home-country regulations. However, these subsidiaries continue to be managed by the same foreign subcontractors who resort to abusive practices (Mense-Petermann 2018). For example, workers are still hired for (informal) salaries below the standards in the destination country and/or charged for accommodation and transportation.

Those actors involved in the recruitment process illustrate different types of transnational involvement (Guarnizo and Smith 1998). Companies, both at the bottom and at the top of the subcontracting chain, experience transnationalism from above generated by European Union regulations. Agents experience transnationalism from below. Workers experience both transnationalism from above (generated by European Union regulations) and from below (as generated by the transnational practices of intermediaries). Yet, even if not directly linked with the recruitment process, unions are grounded in the national regulatory framework.

For the purpose of analysing rule-making and 'transnational governance', Djelic and Anderson (2006) proposed a framework that extends beyond a state-centred perspective (and includes non-state actors) (see also Turaeva 2013). Because posting is regulated both officially by institutions acting at the national and supranational levels, and informally by companies, agents and migrants, the framework suggested by Djelic and Anderson (2006) is useful for exploring this type of employment. Drawing upon their revised field perspective (Djelic and Anderson 2006), below I consider posted work using spatial, network and meaning dimensions. In the rule-making process, some actors who take part in posting manage to navigate between fluid boundaries across local, national and transnational spaces, whilst others are unable to. For example, companies are privileged to negotiate between 'an array of regulatory contexts defined only partially and imperfectly by geographical contingency, between which they can choose and strategise', whilst workers cannot fully benefit from the industrial relations arrangements in the destination country (Wagner and Lillie 2014: 416). Posting is organised across the sending and recipient states (and, in some cases, a third state), as well as at the supranational level, through complex networks consisting of migrants, companies and agents. Simultaneously, the actors involved in this type of employment follow their own interest and are involved in power dynamics. Companies at the top of the system resort to subcontracting and posting in

order to reduce labour costs, to enjoy flexibility and to absolve themselves from their obligations towards regular employees (Cremers 2011; Berntsen and Lillie 2015; Lillie and Wagner 2015; Lillie 2016; Wagner and Hassel 2016). Moreover, either through their high bargaining capital (Mense-Petermann 2018) or through informal negotiations (Wagner 2015), meat-processing companies and transnational companies in the German construction sector influence the official regulatory framework of posting to their advantage. For example, as Mense-Petermann (2018) explains, meat processors dictate the conditions of contracts in ways that constrain subcontractors to reduce workers' income as the only opportunity of profiting.

Yet, contracts in Germany involve higher gains for Romanian companies than in their homeland. Given this economic opportunity, although regulations stipulate that workers' stays in the destination country should be temporary and that a share of their activity should take place in their country of origin, in many cases employers recruit for the sole purpose of posting. At the time of my research, these companies benefitted from not being required to pay posted workers above the minimum hourly wage in Germany (whilst workers in standard employment contracts usually received higher salaries negotiated through collective agreements). In addition, some posting firms circumvent regulations by opening letter-box companies or by asking their de facto employees to engage in bogus self-employment.[5] Practically speaking, Romanian subcontractors increase their profits either by circumventing regulations or through informal arrangements with workers, agreements which allow companies to pay salaries below the minimum standard and to take additional deductions from employee paycheques.

On the other hand, in search of better earnings, in some instances, posted workers are eager to change jobs. As a consequence of the highly flexible labour markets and the high turnover rate in the construction and meat-processing sectors, employers rely on an infrastructure that allows them to recruit workers rapidly.

The posting recruitment process: workers initiate contact with a company

Studies attest to the role of the migration industry in facilitating migration (Hernández-León 2013; Kyle 2000), specifically during the beginning of the process when migrants lack information on finding a job or accommodation in the destination country. Correspondingly, upon their first departure to Germany, it was more common for informants working in the meat-processing industry to actively seek a company with which to be posted abroad. The majority did not work in the same field in Romania; therefore, they had fewer chances to develop social connections that could facilitate a job abroad. Yet, most of the construction workers I interviewed were experienced in their sector and had previously worked abroad. Many found their current job through migration networks. However, a look at advertisements posted on Facebook groups of Romanian migrants in Germany or during interviews with migrant advisers showed that, in some instances, migrants

working in the construction sector were also recruited directly by companies or by agents.

In what follows, I use the example of a migrant who actively looked for a company with which to be posted abroad. Ana[6] decided to leave Romania for economic reasons after working for ten years in the hospitality industry. She decided upon employment in the meat-processing sector in Germany, since it required neither previous work experience in the field nor knowledge of the German language. Because she did not know anyone who could help her find a job abroad, she searched for employment opportunities online. Some companies that post workers abroad use the internet to connect with job seekers. Such companies share announcements on their own websites, on e-commerce websites, on Facebook pages purposely designed to promote vacancies, in Facebook groups of Romanians who live in Germany or in Facebook groups of workers in the two economic sectors.[7]

Ana found an announcement for a job on an e-commerce website, called the company and went to an interview (which included a practical assessment test). Even if initially her employers did not agree that she held the required level of skill necessary to work in Germany, Ana was keen to go abroad. Thus, she left her job and insisted on engaging in unpaid work at the Romanian headquarters of the company:

> I didn't know how and where else to go for training and they agreed because they had nothing to lose; I didn't ask for money. And after a week they saw that I was determined and I very much want that, [so] I had the contract to go to Germany. *(Ana, former meat-processing industry worker)*

However, experienced migrants actively look for posting companies as well. For example, Luca worked in the meat-processing industry in Romania for several years and initially found two jobs in Germany through former colleagues. When his second contract ended, he returned to Romania where he contacted a company that secured him posted employment in Germany.

Both workers upon their first migration experiences and, more seldom, those with a history of migration, might initiate contact with companies that post workers abroad. The examples here, involving job seekers recruited in order to be posted and who, in exceptional cases, participate in unpaid training with their future employers, illustrate how grey zones of recruitment have emerged as a result of loopholes within the regulatory framework on posting and through the lack of transnational control (Lillie 2016).

The role of agents in the recruitment process for posted employment

Migration brokers play an important role in informal transnational labour markets. Whilst a body of work focuses on formal and informal recruiters in Asia (Lindquist 2010, 2017 Lindquist et al. 2012; Molland 2012; Spaan 1994), not much research covers brokers in Europe. Elrick and Lewandowska (2008) analysed the role of agents in recruiting Polish women for home care in Italy and Poland. In doing so, they

distinguished between agents and intermediaries, supporting the importance of agents in the migration process. As such, Elrick and Lawandowska (2008: 722) defined the agents 'as persons who want to be materially rewarded for passing on information'.

Ana's second experience with posted migration illustrates how agents are positioned within the recruitment infrastructure of posting and how their interaction with posted workers takes place. When her first trip abroad ended after just a few months because she was unsatisfied with the intense rhythm of work in the factory and conflicts with her supervisor, Ana returned to Romania and looked for another employment opportunity online:

> I found a man from Oradea who, for the sum of €350, was willing to take you to the slaughterhouse, to offer work, accommodation and transport from Romania to the factory's gate. *(Ana, former meat-processing industry worker)*

Ana's agent was the first link in a transnational subcontracting chain. He worked with a temporary employment business in Timișoara, a city in Western Romania. Through this company, Ana's contract was registered with a firm based in Poland, which legally posted her to Germany. In practical terms, her path to the German slaughterhouse passes through three European countries and is organized by four actors with either formal or informal roles in the posting process: a Romanian agent, a Romanian recruiting company, a Polish subcontractor and the German main entrepreneur. The meat-processing company hired the Polish subcontractor. The later employed Ana through the Romanian company. The temporary employment business hired an agent responsible for recruiting workers.

On a different note, whilst Ana did not know her broker before encountering him online, other agents are a part of the workers' migration networks. Andrei, for example, obtained two of his posted jobs through an acquaintance of his colleague:

> She got us in there, this woman, … she probably charges the company a fee.… She didn't ask for anything from us. … A friend at the construction site knows her and it was through her that we went both to Belgium and to Germany. ... She knew people and met the boss who asked for workers. *(Andrei, construction worker)*

In the construction and meat-processing sectors in Germany, agents are either individuals who identified an economic opportunity or former or current migrants—in most cases—well connected with entrepreneurs and/or (future) workers in the two sectors. Practically speaking, they are a part of subcontracting chains consisting of several formal and informal actors. Typically, agents charge companies, although, in some cases, both migrants and employers are required to pay fees for their services.They offer their services to strangers or are embedded within migrant networks, such that recruitment is carried out either by word of mouth or through advertisements posted in newspapers and online. At the same time, agents might earn their living out of facilitating migration or they might be one-time brokers. Essentially, as illustrated in the examples above, the identities of agents vary and

should be considered in relation to time , location and power-related dynamics (Lindquist et al. 2012:8).

Risk associated with recruitment for posted employment

Mckeown (2012) explains that agents are usually presented in a rather negative light in migration reports, either as traffickers or as providers of indispensable services for the beneficiaries of temporary work programmes. However, beyond illegal activities that harm migrants, agents handle documents, make connections and offer services creating fluid, temporary job markets (Mckeown 2012).

In many cases, the interactions between agents and the workers involved in posting go well, as was the case for Ana. For a fee, she found a job in a short time. In other cases, these exchanges carry several risks. Although they pay for a service, migrants might not receive a posted job abroad or they might end up working in poor conditions. Ana explains:

> And many of them [the agents] are scumbags. They take people's money and either leave them on the street or promise a price [a salary] at home, which has nothing to do with what they offer abroad. *(Ana, former meat-processing industry worker)*

The case of Doru illustrates the risks brought about through interactions with agents. He was approached in his village by a former supervisor, who offered him a three-month posted job on a German construction site. Doru accepted the proposal and went abroad with four of his acquaintances. One-and-a-half months later, after realising that their employer would not advance payment, he and his colleagues stopped working. The Romanian subcontractor registered his posting with the German authorities, so that everything appeared legal on that end of the deal, but failed to register the workers' contracts in Romania. Without a valid employment relationship, the company could not be held accountable by the authorities. Doru, who is aware of the commodification of his migration, describes his experience with the agent in negative terms: 'So that was his purpose; he came, he placed us and left … just like slaves, he sold us.'

Labour abuses are not an exception to construction sites in Germany (Voivozeanu 2019). A migrant advisor of the Counselling Office for Posted Workers (BEB) explained that, in other cases, taking advantage of migrants' lack of knowledge of both the German language and the regulations concerning posting, rather than hiring them directly, recruiters ask a potential employee to open an individual enterprise or a firm with which a contract can be concluded.[8] Thus, migrants who are able to set their own tariffs under this arrangement will charge sums below the minimum wage. Because this recruitment process is informal, in cases involving labour-related issues, migrants often have difficulties in identifying their employers.

However, even posted workers recruited by formal actors (Romanian firms) might end up in highly precarious or abusive employment relationships. For example, George, who found a job abroad through a company in Timișoara, ended

up working alone at a construction site for ten hours a day and was housed in his employer's basement (for whom he presumably worked for no pay during his free time as well). Similarly, Gina paid her posting company a recruitment fee and had to deal with deductions for accommodation costs, despite companies not being allowed to impose fees for facilitating migration and being obliged to provide accommodation free of charge.

These examples show that informal practices and—at times—illegal transactions are part of the posting system. Often, terms are negotiated in favour of the actors who control the process of recruitment.

Interconnections between formal and informal, legal and illegal actors within the posting infrastructure

Ana's case also illustrates the processes of blurred boundaries between legal and illegal, formal and informal, offering an in-depth insight into the dynamic character of the posting infrastructure, which is organised beyond the legal system of a single country. At the beginning of her migration history, Ana made use of the services of an agent—that is, an informal actor who charged her a fee to facilitate her migration. However, Ana ultimately signed a contract with a company registered in Poland—a formal actor—whereby her posting contract was formalised and became legal. The meat processor and the Polish company collaborated under the terms of the officially signed contract; therefore, their relationship was also formalised.

There are also examples of agents (brokers) who open their own companies and, thus, formalise their involvement within the posting business. In order to recruit personnel, they use their contacts in the construction industry in Romania and their ability to speak the workers' native language. In some instances, agents work jointly with partners based in Germany that conclude the service provision contracts in the destination country. Mihai described the process as follows:

> They will see an engineer is efficient [and they will propose to them]: 'You will go to Romania and start a company on your behalf, you will recruit people, … 60–40% gain, I'm searching here, I have the people who are negotiating prices.' Then, [workers will remain under contract] with the same employers; they have about four or five companies. *(Mihai, construction worker)*

Some workers under this type of arrangement remain employed in the destination country for a longer period than stipulated by the regulatory framework on posting (i.e., more than 24 months). However, because their contracts alternate and are registered with different companies, their posting appears to be legal.

The previous examples illustrate the dynamics between the actors involved in the migration process and show, in agreement with Lindquist et al. (2012), that the analytical distinction between legal and illegal (formal and informal) is difficult to define when it comes to the posting infrastructure and the manner in which the recruitment process unfolds in practice. Therefore, one can argue that formal and informal arrangements often blur (Williams and Round 2014).

The role of migration networks in the recruitment process for posted employment

If some companies turn to agents in order to recruit workers, others resort to migration networks of employees. In the construction industry, characterised by short-term employment opportunities, this type of recruitment was particularly common amongst my informants. Some companies use networks of construction engineers who manage projects carried out abroad. In the following quote, Mihai describes how, taking into account workers' skills and abilities, engineers contact either people with whom they had previously worked or people recommended to them. He also claims that engineers are, in some instances, mediators between companies and future employees. Thus, they set the starting wages, whilst workers further negotiate with employers based on their skills and experience:

> The employer allows every engineer to choose his people: 'I have worked there with someone who is good at balconies, someone else knows the stairs, another one is good at the masonry.' All engineers have a sort of agenda, and the employer says: '… gather your team, I have a job for you.' Then, the engineer negotiates: 'What is my salary, €2500–3000.' That's what it's like on the construction site. And then he [the engineer] grabs his phone [and contacts the workers]. *(Mihai, construction worker)*

Iulian, a construction engineer who worked for several years with Romanian sub-contractors in Austria and Germany, explained that, by hiring known or recommended workers, employers are confident that future employees will be skilful and committed:

> People continue to be recruited through acquaintances, not through recruitment firms. … I heard that, 'I know him, I've worked with him, he's a serious man, he has a team, he knows this, he knows that.' *(Iulian, construction engineer)*

For posted workers, being hired through migration networks may bring security in an uncertain labour market. However, it may be bounded to constraints. Mihai describes the context in which Romanian construction companies post workers in Germany as a 'closed circle'—that is, with employers who have the advantage of being able to check the history and reputation of potential employees. Beyond information about their skills, they might be interested in finding out whether workers are obedient or unionised or not. Mihai explains:

> 'Have you been to Germany before?'' 'Yes, I worked there for eight months.' 'Where did you work, with what engineer?' And this circle is a closed circle. They know each other. … And I, if I was there [in Germany] before, [what they might say is,] 'I'm going to ask the engineer: "Does he have a long

history in Germany, doesn't he know things too well, isn't he affiliated with trade unions, doesn't he know too much?"' *(Mihai, construction worker)*

In other instances, companies recruit the acquaintances of employees who are already in the destination country. This is how Andrei found some of his posted jobs. During my fieldwork, I observed Andrei receiving calls from Romania enquiring about employment opportunities in Germany. For Gigi, who has been working in Germany for many years, acquaintances are just as important. Over time, he has developed social connections that he relies on every time he seeks a job abroad. The relationships between him and his colleagues rely on reciprocity. Here, he explains how the company that was going to post him abroad asked him to serve as an intermediary, at very short notice, so that two other workers would join the same project:

> So I was at this company. I went, I registered, and Mr [name] said: '…[Gigi], I need two more boys.' And I took these boys, Cristian and George. We went to the firm on Thursday, we talked and on Friday we were on the bus [to Germany]. *(Gigi, construction worker)*

The case of Alin is also interesting. After being posted for several years in the German and French meat-processing sector, he received a standard job as a team leader in France. He was then able to start a team consisting of former Romanian colleagues in a meat-processing factory in Germany (one more example showing how roles within recruitment infrastructures might change). As time passes, workers enlarge their migration networks. In the meat-processing industry, this serves as one of the factors that increase workers' possibilities of finding a standard job abroad, as illustrated by Lari's case. He previously worked in a meat-processing factory in Romania and held two posted jobs in that sector in Germany. After 2014, when Romanians obtained free access to the German labour market, through former colleagues, he found standard employment in the German meat-processing industry. He explains how networks are used by workers within the same economic sector:

> In our branch, we let each other know. Now, for example, I know people all over Germany and we keep in touch: '… Look, a new work station will open somewhere. Are you interested? These are the conditions.' *(Lari, meat-processing industry worker)*

A slightly different situation existed for most of the construction workers I interviewed. Although many had connections in the field, they were unable to find regular jobs in the destination country. This might be a consequence of the highly flexible labour market in that sector; however, further systematic research is needed here.

Given the high turnover rates and the insecurity related to short-term postings, both companies and agents strategically rely on employees' social networks

for a constant supply of cheap labour. Important for job seekers as well since they might provide (better) employment arrangements, these connections also reproduce power dynamics possibly leading to worker exploitation (Turaeva 2016).

Conclusions

This chapter uses the examples of posted work from Romania to Germany to discuss both recruitment in posting as well as the informalisation of transnational labour markets and transnational economic networks.

Posted work is governed by supranational and national entities (institutions of the European Union and the sending and recipient states), as well as by companies (Wagner 2015; Mense-Petermann 2018), agents and migrants. Given the wide range of actors with different roles, practices and interests actively shaping its regulatory setting, I analysed the recruitment infrastructure (Lindquist et al. 2012; Xiang and Lindquist 2014) of posted employment using the concept of 'transnational governance' (Djelic and Andresson 2006). Moving beyond state-centred views, this novel perspective considers non-state actors who participate in rule making, acknowledging that regulatory boundaries do not always correspond with national borders.

Furthermore, I showed that the actors involved in posted work illustrate different types of transnational involvement (Guarnizo and Smith 1998). Companies experience transnationalism form above (generated by European Union regulations). Agents experience transnationalism from below. Workers experience transnationalism both from above (generated by European Union regulations) and from below (generated by the transnational practices of agents).

Moreover, I argued that, in the context of the current European regulatory framework, the social fields created through posting are filled with informal norms and structures through which the actors involved negotiate across borders, thereby extending the literature on transnational informality (Cieslewska 2013; Turaeva 2013; Urinboyev 2017). Within recruitment for this type of employment, formal actors (companies) rely on informal actors and practices to recruit workers. A first indication of informal practices is that, even if posted workers should have an employment history with firms, many are hired only for the short periods of time when they work abroad. Throughout the recruitment process, some companies and agents strategically resort to employees' migration networks, which provide a constant supply of cheap labour. For the same purpose, other companies resort to agents, similar to findings from Lindquist (2010), who explained that recruitment agencies in Indonesia operate in similar ways. Arrangements involving agents and/or networks might be beneficial for migrants, since they could bring (better) employment opportunities, whilst also possibly reproducing power dynamics favouring actors who control the recruitment process, thereby possibly leading to worker exploitation (Turaeva 2016).

The examples and case studies on posting detailed in this chapter reveal that the boundaries between formal and informal often blur (William and Round 2014). In

other words, looking closely at the entire migration process, where diverse actors develop both formal and informal relationships and practices, it becomes difficult at times to differentiate between formal and informal arrangements amongst companies, agents and migrants (Lindquist et al. 2012).

Notes

1 The freedom to provide services allows companies based in the European Union to pursue economic activities in other member-states.
2 This will change at least at the official level with the introduction of European Directive 2018/957. This document stipulates that, beginning in July 2020, posted workers will be entitled to the same remuneration as workers in standard employment contracts.
3 In 2017, the German construction sector hired approximately 757,000 workers (Statista .com, https://goo.gl/AAuiNa, accessed on 15 September 2019). In that same year, the Paritarian Social Fund, SOKA-BAU, officially registered 98,214 posted workers (European Commission 2016).
4 The total number of posted workers is measured by the number of A1 forms issued by all member-states. This document proves that workers pay social security contributions in their country of origin. However, for several reasons, this offers only an indication of the number of postings. First, some employers do not comply with the regulations related to issuing A1 forms for each of their employees. Second, the statistics concern the number of postings, but not the number of posted workers (if a worker is posted in two different countries within a year, two A1 forms will be issued). Third, the data do not distinguish between the types of postings and will, for example, include the number of intracorporate postings.
5 Letter-box companies are established in one member-state usually with no more than a postal address, whilst their activity is carried out in another country. The aim is usually to avoid taxation and circumvent social contributions. In the particular case of posting, letter-box companies have no economic activity in the country of origin and, therefore, no legal capacity to post workers.
6 In order to protect workers' identities, pseudonyms are used throughout the article.
7 Here, I reproduce an ad used by one of the companies posting workers abroad: 'We are recruiting unskilled butchers aged 18–55, able to work, with no medical problems and a clean criminal record, skilled or unskilled in bovine and pig butchering, with experience in slaughtering, slicing, boning, packing and stamping. The net monthly wage is €1900, working Monday through Friday 8h / day, respectively, 40h / week, with optional overtime paid at the end of the week. Contract period of three months with a possibility of extension by the foreign employer. Medical insurance, accommodation, allowances and a daily meal are provided throughout the contractual period. Seriousness is required! WE DO NOT CHARGE A COMMISSION FEE!!!'
8 Full name in English: 'Counselling office for posted workers, EU citizens exercising their right to free labour movement and self-employed people with an unclear labour status'.

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Part II

Mobility as blurring national, transnational and digital boundaries

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5 Smartphone transnationalism in non-Western migration regimes

Transnational ethnography of Uzbek migrant workers in Russia

Rustamjon Urinboyev

Introduction

Much research has explored the reproduction of transnational communities and relations, with a particular focus on locality, identity and culture. However, the existing research emanates from case studies of immigrant communities in Western-type democracies, whilst we know little about migrant transnationalism in non-Western migration regimes, such as those in the Russian Federation (or Russia) where migrant workers are subjected to numerous human rights abuses and have limited possibilities for transnational activism and collective mobilisation. Moreover, the role of new media, such as smartphones and social media, in migrant transnationalism remains under-researched. Given the historical, sociopolitical and cultural differences between Western and post-Soviet societies, we cannot assume that the methodological tools and theoretical perspectives developed in Western contexts are necessarily applicable to Russia, where the repressive sociopolitical environment, lack of democratic culture and arbitrary law enforcement leave little room for migrant legalisation and transnational activism.

The above considerations inform my position in this chapter, which aims to contribute to debates within the migrant transnationalism literature in two distinct ways. First, I present the results of extensive multisited ethnographic fieldwork undertaken in Moscow, Russia and the Ferghana region of Uzbekistan. My case study examines Uzbek migrants in Moscow and their families and communities in the Shabboda village in Ferghana. Unlike in Western countries, where migrants establish relatively functional transnational communities, there is little in the way of an 'Uzbek transnational community' in Russia given the restrictive legal environment and antimigrant sentiments. Whilst Uzbek migrants' transnational activism is hardly visible in public places, I argue that rapid improvements in communications technologies (e.g., smartphones and social media) have enabled Uzbek migrants to remain in touch with their home societies, as well as create permanent, smartphone-based translocal communities in Moscow, typically centred around migrants hailing from the same *mahalla* or village in Uzbekistan. Like all transnational communities engaged in the production of locality and identity, Uzbek migrants based in Moscow maintain daily interactions with their village. What makes this community distinct is that they reproduce and rely on their

village-level identities, social norms and relations (e.g., reciprocity, trust, obligation, age hierarchies, gossip and social sanctions) as a form of law and governance when regulating their contractual obligations and relations in the informal migrant labour market.

The existence of this smartphone-based transnational environment helps migrants cope with the challenges of *musofirchilik* (being alien) and avoid or manoeuvre around structural constraints such as complicated residence registration and work permit rules, social exclusion, racism and the lack of social security. Based on a 'thick' ethnography, here I advance the notion of 'smartphone-based migrant transnational communities' as a subset of the migrant transnationalism literature that describes hidden and low-profile transnational practices, relations, identities and networks in nondemocratic political regimes. Such communities emerge as a necessity to cope with the repressive political environment, xenophobia, weak rule of law, lack of social security and risks associated with informal employment.

Conceptualising smartphone transnationalism in nondemocratic migration locales

Transnationalism has undoubtedly become a fashionable research topic within migration studies (e.g., Schiller et al. 1992; Portes et al. 1999; Vertovec 1999; Levitt 2001; Mazzucato et al. 2017). The initial view confined the study of migratory processes to the territory of a single nation-state (Park 1964; Lieberson 1980; Williams 1989). That view appears to have lost validity given the explosive growth of new communications and transportation technologies allowing individuals to maintain daily cross-border connections more affordably and more easily accessible than ever before (Ito and Okabe 2005; Hamel 2009; Hunter 2015; Ryan et al. 2015). Whilst acknowledging long-standing forms of migrants' connections to their homelands, current studies argue that today's linkages differ from these earlier forms given rapid developments in new media, such as smartphones and social media. Thus, migrants can be 'simultaneously situated' in multiple geographically and culturally distinct worlds, thereby blurring the distinction between 'here' and 'there' (Portes et al. 1999; Levitt and Schiller 2004; Licoppe 2004; Vertovec 2004; Nedelcu 2012).

Accordingly, transnational practices represent a part of everyday life for a growing proportion of migrants worldwide (Warf 2013). These global trends are especially visible in the scholarly literature on migration and technology, where information and communications technologies (ICTs) are viewed as central drivers of migrant transnationalism (Licoppe 2004; Vertovec 2004; Horst 2006). Initially limited to a number of case studies and review articles (Vertovec 2004; Wilding 2006) focused on cheap telephone calls and emails, research on migration and ICT is increasingly gaining ground. Scholars have not only explored the range of ICTs used and their role in increasing the frequency and intensity of transnational practices (Bacigalupe and Cámara 2012; Perkins and Neumayer 2013) but have also attempted to explain their empowering effects related to forging closer

emotional bonds within transnational families (Benítez 2012). As such, studies have demonstrated that ICTs provide new possibilities for transnational care-giving (Baldassar 2008), long-distance relationships (Aguila 2009) and 'mobile-phone parenting' (Madianou 2012). This leads to the construction of co-presence through constant and real-time exposure to one's home (Estévez 2009).

Another line of scholarly work focuses on diasporic websites, online fora and hometown websites, suggesting that ICTs enable migrants to maintain cultural practices across borders and to construct the feeling of a home away from home (Nedelcu 2012). This, in turn, creates new forms of transnational identities, networks and imagined communities (Hiller and Franz 2004; Mallapragada 2006; Castro and Gonzalez 2009).

However, critical views, often from anthropology and cultural studies, have also shown that the availability of ICTs can accentuate social pressures on migrants by left-behind family members as well as exert control by home coun-tries' governments. Examples include the extensive surveillance of migrants by their home-country governments through the monitoring of their online postings, blogs and newsgroups (Bozzini 2015); family tensions and conflicts between migrants and their left-behind families (Baldassar 2008); increasing financial pressure on migrants (Hunter 2015); and jealousy within transnational couples (Hannaford 2015) triggering high levels of emotional strain on relationships (Wilding 2006).

Despite this extensive and diverse scholarship on the relationship between migrant transnationalism and technology, one pattern emerges as consistent across studies: they primarily focus on 'old' forms of ICTs such as emails, diasporic websites, online fora, cheap international calling cards and mobile phones. Within this literature, relatively few investigations exist document-ing the impact of new media, such as smartphones and social media platforms, on migrant transnationalism (cf. Aricat 2015; Madianou 2016; Yoon 2016; Urinboyev 2017). This oversight persists despite new media's emergence as part and parcel of the everyday lives of migrants and their left-behind families and communities in many parts of the world. Undoubtedly, continuity exists between 'older' and new media, but the questions remain as to whether and how these new technologies shape the nature of transnational practices. That is, how do these processes manifest themselves in the everyday lives of migrants and their left-behind communities? And, what implications do they have for existing frameworks of migrant transnationalism?

Another factor adding to this lacuna is that much of the scholarly literature on transnational migration relies on case studies of immigrant communities living in Western democracies such as Australia, Canada, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States (e.g., Barbero 2013; McLaughlin 2010; Charsley and Liversage 2013). Yet much less has been said about migrants' transnational practices in non-Western locales, including, for example, Central Asian migrant workers in Russia. Russia is one of the five largest recipients of migrants worldwide, with the Central Asian republics representing some of the most remittance-dependent economies globally (UNPD 2017). Given the sociopolitical and cultural differences between

Western democracies and post-Soviet countries, methodological tools and theoretical perspectives developed in Western contexts may not necessarily translate well to illiberal political regimes such as that in Russia. In this context, the repressive sociopolitical environment and lack of democratic culture leave little room for transnational activism and diasporic mobilisation. Armed with the 'varied geographies of transnationalism' perspective (Dunn 2010), it is reasonable to assume that migrant transnationalism is not the same everywhere, holding different meanings, forms and functional roles depending upon the sociopolitical context, legal environment, economic system and cultural factors. Addressing this research gap is particularly important when considering the growing use of smartphones and social media tools amongst Central Asian migrants in Russia. Such a study may provide new insights on transnational practices within undemocratic and repressive contexts. Thus, the question becomes: What are the implications of the Russian migration context, combined with a focus on smartphones and social media, for migrant transnationalism and technology scholarship, as well as for broader debates within migration studies?

This chapter contributes to debates on migrant transnationalism and technology and, more generally, to migration studies in three distinct ways. First, unlike Western democracies, where a strong culture of the rule of law exists, Russia is characterised by a weak rule of law, corruption, a poor human rights record, a weak civil society and widespread xenophobia (Ledeneva 2013; Abashin 2016). This implies that Central Asian migrants in Russia can hardly engage in collective action or transnational activism, given the structural constraints and widespread antimigrant sentiments. Nonetheless, Central Asian migrants do engage in transnational practices and reproduce their cultural repertoires and norms in their host country, but their transnational practices, networking and place-making primarily occur in a virtual environment. This results from the restrictive sociopolitical environment, corrupt legal system and widespread xenophobia compelling migrants to limit their visibility in public places (e.g., parks, streets, shopping malls and public transportation) and carry out their transnational practices and relationships via smartphones and social media. The role of ICTs in shaping everyday transnationalism is well researched within migration studies. Yet, within the Russian context, smartphones and social media are not merely tools for being 'here' and 'there'. More importantly, such tools are also crucial to migrants' daily survival and livelihoods in a repressive and xenophobic environment. In this sense, they provide a virtual platform for various risk-stretching activities and social safety nets unavailable from the migrants' home and host countries. I investigate these processes through multisited ethnographic fieldwork in Moscow, Russia and the Ferghana region of Uzbekistan.

Second, I use the aforementioned 'thick' ethnography to advance the notion of 'smartphone-based migrant transnational communities' to describe smartphone-based transnational practices in the context of undemocratic political regimes. Like all other transnational communities engaged in the production of culture, networks, locality and identity, Uzbek migrants in Moscow maintain

daily interactions amongst themselves and with their left-behind communities in Uzbekistan. However, their transnational practices, relationships, identities and networks are primarily conducted via smartphones and social media applications. Furthermore, such practices emerged as a way to cope with Russia's repressive political environment, xenophobia, weak rule of law, lack of social security and risky shadow economy employment. Due to these risks and uncertainties, Uzbek migrants increasingly rely on smartphones to organise their precarious livelihoods. Thus, smartphones and social media serve as the everyday technologies of transnational place-making, enabling Uzbek migrants to reproduce their village-level identities, social norms and relationships across vast distances. These smartphone-based transnational interactions also serve as a 'legal order', regulating contractual relationships and obligations amongst migrants, exerting an identifiable impact on the outcomes of many practices Uzbek migrants (and other actors) engage in whilst in Moscow.

Third, within the post-Soviet migration literature, few scholarly investigations have focused on Central Asian migrants' transnational practices within the Russian context. Despite a growing interest on migratory flows and processes in the post-Soviet context, the literature on migrant transnationalism, particularly with regard to Central Asian migrants in Russia, remains limited to a few review articles and empirical studies (Atabaki and Mehendale 2004; Laruelle 2007; Ruget and Usmanalieva 2011; Schröder and Stephan-Emmrich 2016; Turaeva 2019). Existing research focuses on push-and-pull factors (Schmidt and Sagynbekova 2008) as well as the economic and political impact of labour migration (Laruelle 2013), discrimination, xenophobia and difficult working conditions (Round and Kuznetsova 2016), sexual risks (Weine et al. 2013) and migrant strategies for dealing with the repressive legal environment in the host country (Reeves 2013). In addition, a growing body of anthropological literature has examined the effects of migration and remittances on the ritual economy, gender-based power relationships, traditions, social norms, status and hierarchies within the sending communities (Reeves 2012; Kikuta 2016). One common thread across these studies lies in their focus on social processes and events occurring in either the migrant-sending or recipient society, but not both. Drawing upon multisited ethnographic fieldwork in Moscow and Ferghana, this chapter represents one of the first 'thick' descriptions of migrant transnationalism (with a combined focus on new media) in the Russian context.

I proceed in this chapter as follows. In the next section, I describe the methodology and ethnographic fieldwork I conducted in Moscow, Russia and Ferghana, Uzbekistan. I, then, provide an examination of the sociopolitical and legal context of the migrant labour market in Russia, allowing for an understanding of the nuances of the Russian context as well as the basic characteristics of the case study group, Uzbek migrants. Finally, I present the empirical material and analysis, and outline the implications of the ethnographic material for migrant transnationalism and technology debates, and, more broadly for migration studies. I conclude by highlighting the study's theoretical and empirical contributions.

Methodological considerations

Rather than a specific ethnographic project on migration and technology, the research presented here stems from a project examining migration and legal cultures in post-Soviet societies. Thus, the research aims and questions explored can be described as an unexpected but intriguing discovery made during fieldwork. The ethnographic material presented relies on 13 months of fieldwork in Moscow and Ferghana conducted between January 2014 and May 2017. These field sites were chosen because Moscow has Russia's largest number of Uzbek migrants, whereas Ferghana is the primary migrant-sending region in Uzbekistan given its population density and high unemployment rate. I collected a rich stock of ethnographic material primarily through observations and informal interviews. Due to my Uzbek ethnicity, village origin and cultural competence, I was well connected to the Uzbek migrant worker community in Moscow and their left-behind families and communities in Ferghana. These factors enabled me to participate in the daily life of migrants, thereby becoming '*svoi*' ('one of us, those who belong to our circle'), a term widely used in the post-Soviet context to refer to a person who has internalised the norms and values of a particular social group. In addition to traditional ethnography, I conducted a digital ethnography between January 2014 and June 2020 by following Uzbek migrants' daily discussion pages on social media platforms (Facebook, Odnoklassniki and Telegram Messenger), such as '*My migranty*' (We are migrants), '*Migrant*', '*Musofirlar taqdiri'* (Migrants' fate) and Radio Free Europe's '*Sizdan Telegram'* (Telegram from you).

All informants were asked for their consent to participate in this study. Given the sensitive nature of the data, I have changed the names and locations of all informants and omitted any information that could identify the individuals concerned. Because I collected ethnographic materials in two different locations, I present the data separately for each locale. This allows me to provide a detailed and clear description of my fieldwork, including data collection strategies and the selection of informants and fieldwork sites.

First, in Moscow, I conducted observations at construction sites, bazaars, cottages, farms, dormitories, shared apartments, Uzbek cafes, railway stations and on the streets where Uzbek migrants worked, lived and socialised. My observations frequently turned into informal chats and interviews due to the numerous questions that arose on the spur of the moment. Thus, I applied various strategies during my fieldwork. These strategies included, for example, renting mattress space in shared apartments where migrants lived, participating in migrants' daily construction work activities, accompanying migrants on the streets and public transport where they are often stopped and frisked by police officers, inviting migrants for lunch or dinner to cafes and 'hanging out' with migrants in bars. In addition, I maintained regular contact with informants via social media–based 'village groups', where they share various news items, videos and photos, update one another with Moscow and village news and spread gossip and rumours when someone acts unfairly towards other co-villagers. These experiences convinced me of the centrality of smartphones to Uzbek migrants' daily

survival and livelihoods, which eventually became a key focus of my fieldwork. My observations and informal interviews generated first-hand information on migrants' smartphone-based transnational environments, the various collective and individual coping strategies they employed within that environment, the ways in which they managed and maintained transnational relationships with their left-behind communities and the ways in which they reproduced and enacted their village-level practices, norms and identities in their daily lives in Moscow.

Second, and simultaneously, to keep up with the pace of developments in Uzbek migrants' lives in Moscow, I conducted observations and informal interviews in the Ferghana region, in a village I call Shabboda, from whence most informants/migrants originated. I aimed to explore the processes of everyday material, emotional, social and symbolic exchanges between Shabboda and Moscow and how these transnational interactions shaped the lives of Uzbek migrants in Moscow. Given my *svoi* status, I had direct access to all social spaces within the village, enabling me to gather first-hand information about Uzbek migrants' and their left-behind families' and communities' daily transnational interactions. Again, the role of smartphones was crucial in transnational relationships. Many villagers I met possessed smartphones thanks to remittances sent from Moscow. During my fieldwork, I regularly visited migrants' left-behind families and carried out observations and informal interviews at the village's 'gossip hotspots' such as the *guzar* (community socialising space), *choyxona* (teahouse), *gaps* (regular get-togethers) and life-cycle events (e.g., weddings and funerals) where many villagers, including women, children and religious leaders, came together on a daily basis and conducted the bulk of the village's information exchanges. Because I typically met more than ten villagers on a daily basis during various social events, situations and spaces, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact number of individuals with whom I chatted during these site visits. Instead, the narrative I provide in the empirical section can be understood as a composite of the voices of the hundreds of villagers I encountered during daily visits to the *guzar*, *choyxona*, *gaps*, wedding feasts, circumcision ceremonies and funerals.

In addition to the ethnographic study, between July and August of 2015, I also conducted 100 semi-structured (in-depth) interviews with Central Asian (Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek) migrant workers. I aimed to investigate the extent to which the findings from this ethnographic study (observations and informal interviews) are common amongst Central Asian migrants more broadly in Russia, so as to add more depth and detailed information to the ethnographic material and allow for some degree of generalisation. I, thus, conducted face-to-face interviews, through a conversational process, which lasted from 35 minutes to one hour. The interview questionnaire consisted of 91 open-ended questions and covered 15 different themes: (1) background and demographic questions; (2) the migrant labour market and working conditions; (3) immigration laws, actors and legal protection; (4) work permits and residence registration; (5) reentry ban and deportations; (6) street institutions, such as racketeers; (7) middlemen; (8) relations between migrant workers and the police; (9) corruption and bribes; (10) relations between migrant workers and immigration officials; (11) migrant

workers' legal culture and their knowledge and experiences with immigration and labour laws; (12) migrant workers' informal coping strategies; (13) discrimination and racism; (14) migrants' social networks; and (15) migrants' transnational ties and practices. In selecting migrants for the in-depth interviews, I paid particular attention to diversity across ethnicity, country of origin, citizenship, age, gender, social status, occupation, educational background, Russian-language skills, legal status and migration experiences (experienced or newly arrived migrant).

Briefly, the basic characteristics of my informants were as follows: 92% were male, given the reality of the gendered constitution of Central Asian migrants (approximately 80% of all Central Asian migrants are male). In addition, the majority of the interviewees were young, ranging in age from 21 to 45 years (92%), married (62%) and had completed upper secondary school or vocational education (84%). In terms of employment, they worked in construction (55%), at a supermarket (10%), as a cleaner and in housing maintenance (8%), in a warehouse (5%), as a domestic worker (4%), as a taxi driver (4%), in a bakery (3%) and in other sectors (11%). Only one-third of the informants (31%) could easily communicate in the Russian language. In terms of sampling, I used random, snowball and purposive sampling techniques to increase the diversity of my informants. I conducted interviews at 15 different locations in Moscow city and the Moscow province, in diverse settings and situations such as Uzbek cafés and *choyxonas,* bazaars, shared apartments, construction sites, *dachas (summer cottage),* parking garages, auto service centres, dormitories, furniture workshops and random street interviews in localities known for high migrant clustering. In this chapter, I present only a small portion of the interview data, which specifically focuses on the transnational ties and practices of Central Asian migrants. A more comprehensive description of the interview data and accompanying results can be found in both previous and forthcoming publications (Urinboyev 2016; Urinboyev 2017; Urinboyev 2018; Urinboyev 2020).

Uzbek migrant workers in Russia

Labour migration from Uzbekistan to Russia began only in the mid-2000s (Abashin 2013). According to statistics from June 2019, nearly 2.2 million Uzbek citizens were present within the territory of the Russian Federation (RANEPA 2019). The majority of Uzbek migrants in Russia are male, young, low skilled with a vocational college education and originate from rural areas or small towns (Abashin 2014). Most Uzbek migrants originate from the densely populated Ferghana Valley, where unemployment remains high (Laruelle 2007), and primarily work in the construction sector, agriculture, retail trade, service industry or transportation (Chikadze and Brednikova 2012). Because of the high cost of accommodation and precarious working conditions, migrants rarely bring their family members with them to Russia (Abashin 2014). Thus, migrants typically send their earnings home to provide for their families' daily needs and other expenses (e.g., building a new house or buying a car, life-cycle rituals, medical treatment and education) that cannot be met locally given the economic realities in Uzbekistan (Ilkhamov

2013). For the majority of Uzbek migrants, permanent settlement in Russia is not the primary goal. Instead, they remain in Russia for two to three years on average (Urinboyev and Polese 2016). Whilst Uzbek migrants spend most of their time in Russia and rarely visit home, they regard their situation as 'temporary', and maintain close ties with their family and *mahalla* (neighbourhood community), assuming that they will eventually return to their homeland (Abashin 2014).

Under a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) agreement between Russia and other post-Soviet countries, citizens of Uzbekistan are allowed to stay in Russia without a visa for up to 90 days. However, despite this visa-free regime, Uzbek migrants must obtain residence registration and a work permit in order to legally work in Russia. Precious few comply with these requirements given their low salaries, language test requirements and the prohibitively expensive work permit fees (Reeves 2015). This situation is further exacerbated by the notoriously corrupt Russian legal environment (Ledeneva 2013). Furthermore, even those migrants in possession of all of the necessary paperwork are not exempt from experiencing problems when they interact with law enforcement institutions (Round and Kuznetsova 2016). Under such circumstances, the status of 'legal' or 'illegal' hinges upon migrants' knowledge of 'street life' and their ability to adapt to the weak rule of law (Urinboyev 2016). As such, many Uzbek migrants work in the shadow economy, where they can survive without language skills and documents (Urinboyev 2018). This trend is supported by Russian authorities' statistics showing that nearly three million foreign nationals in Russia have violated their legal terms of stay (Pochuev 2015). Some experts estimate that the number of undocumented migrants in Russia could be much higher than official statistics, reaching around five million (Ryazantsev 2008; Chikadze and Brednikova 2012).

Since the majority of Uzbek migrants remain undocumented and work in the shadow economy, Russian employers have a strong incentive to exploit migrants and withhold or delay payment of their salaries. This results from the fact that claims related to transactions that take place within the shadow economy— outside labour regulations and tax codes—cannot be heard in state courts according to the Russian Civil Code. Moreover, migrants might be reluctant to approach state institutions, since doing so would reveal their undocumented status and invite punishment by the state. Even those migrants who possess all of the required permits and work legally cannot be certain that they will receive payment for their work. Human rights groups and civil society institutions have documented that Uzbek migrants (and migrants from other post-Soviet republics) experience numerous abuses, such as exploitation, discrimination, unsafe working conditions, wage theft and physical violence (Human Rights Watch 2009). In addition, Uzbek migrants must deal with corrupt police officers who view migrants as a source of *kormushka* ('feeding trough') (Urinboyev 2020). Even when documented, migrants are often asked for bribes when stopped by the police on the street or in the metro (Round and Kuznetsova 2016). Furthermore, Uzbek migrants experience racism on a daily basis. A 2016 survey conducted by the Levada Centre showed that the majority of Russians (52%) agreed with

the statement 'Russia for ethnic Russians' and nearly 70% of respondents felt that the government should restrict the influx of Central Asian migrants and undocumented migrants should be expelled from Russia (Pipia 2016). Thus, the everyday lives of Uzbek migrants feature a constant sense of insecurity threatened by exploitation, deportation, police corruption, racism, physical violence and even death.

Accordingly, given their semilegal status and involvement in the shadow economy, Uzbek migrants maintain a low profile and do not gather in public places. Today, anyone walking on the streets of Moscow can easily spot police officers checking the documents of Central Asian migrants. Therefore, Uzbek migrants try to make themselves as invisible as possible in order to avoid the attention of hungry police officers who often seek reasons to extort money from them (Urinboyev 2017). Consequently, Uzbek or other Central Asian migrants have few opportunities to publicly express and enact their transnational practices and diasporic identities in Russia (Urinboyev 2018).

Despite these challenges, rapid improvements in communications technologies (e.g., smartphones and social media) have enabled Uzbek migrants to create smartphone-mediated transnational identities, communities and activities in Moscow. These typically involve migrants from the same *mahalla*, village or town in Uzbekistan. Furthermore, these transnational practices are distinct in the sense that they are conducted exclusively in a virtual environment, without involving frequent physical, face-to-face interactions amongst migrants. That is, Uzbek migrants' transnational place-making practices occur via smartphones and social media. Such smartphone-based transnational communities are crucial to migrants' survival and provide alternative avenues to adapt in an otherwise repressive sociopolitical environment, by, amongst other things, devising specific survival strategies, creating intragroup solidarity, distributing information about jobs and building an informal social safety net to share livelihood risks and deal with emergency situations (e.g., medical treatment or repatriation of a deceased individual to their home country). Thus, an important feature of the Russian migrant labour market is the presence of a smartphone-based transnational world of migrants based on its own economy, legal order and welfare infrastructure.

In the next section, I present a 'thick' description of these processes. This description relies on ethnographic material from the everyday lives and experiences of Uzbek migrants in Moscow and their family members and communities in the Shabboda village in Ferghana.

The Uzbek context: village-level social norms and cultural codes

The village of Shabboda, located in the Ferghana region of Uzbekistan, is one of the most densely populated villages in the region, with approximately 18,000 inhabitants. Administratively, the Shabboda village is divided into 28 *mahallas* (neighbourhood communities). Each *mahalla* consists of 150 to 300 households (*oila*), consisting of around 20 to 30 kinship groups (*urug*). Many village residents work in the agricultural sector, primarily specialising in cucumber and grape

production. However, for the past ten years, remittances sent from Russia have become the primary source of survival (*tirikchilik*) for many households.

At the time of my fieldwork, most village residents had sons or close relatives working in Russia. The proportion of women migrating to Russia was also increasing in the village. Daily conversations in Shabboda revolved around the adventures of village migrants in Moscow, the amount of remittances, deportations and entry bans. Most villagers owned smartphones with internet access, enabling them to exchange daily news with co-villagers residing in Moscow. In this way, absent migrants were 'present' in the village through smartphone-mediated daily information exchanges between Shabboda and Moscow. During my fieldwork, someone was always leaving for Moscow, where someone else was always waiting to receive that person, and someone was always returning to the village to attend a wedding or funeral ceremony. Shabboda, in the words of villagers, was a 'Moscow village', with most male villagers working in Moscow given the village networks existing there. Several villagers worked as middlemen in Moscow's construction sector serving as gatekeepers to villagers seeking access to the Russian migrant labour market. Thus, Shabboda was a truly transnational village, since everyday material, family and social exchanges directly connected it to and with Moscow.

Viewed from the macro-level perspective, these migratory processes represent the manifestation of broader social changes taking place in Uzbek society. Given the Uzbek state's failure to provide employment opportunities, today, in both urban and rural Uzbekistan, migration has become a widely accepted livelihood strategy used by millions of households to secure their basic needs (Ilkhamov 2013). As Salim (65, male), one village member, put it:

The state no longer exists in Uzbekistan and died shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union. So, we (Uzbek people) must choose between sending our children to clean the streets of Moscow or staying at home and waiting for the promised great future that will never come.

Given the 'absent state', villagers frequently rely on social safety nets and mutual aid practices that take place within the realm of their family, kinship group and *mahalla*. Villagers meet one another on a daily basis at the *guzar* and *choyxona* to discuss and arrange mutual aid practices, which, in turn, produce reciprocity, affection, shared responsibilities and obligations amongst villagers. These reciprocal relationships produce economic and social interdependency amongst villagers, generating an expectation that villagers should help and support one another, especially when they are in a vulnerable situation. Thus, social pressure and sanctions can be applied to a village member or her/his family and kinship group if s/he (or they) is (are) not acting fairly or not helping neighbours or village members who face a critical situation. Not wanting to encounter social pressures, villagers often try to help members of their family, kinship group or *mahalla*. These village-level norms, identities and mutual aid practices continue to shape the villagers' livelihoods even when they are in Russia. More interestingly, these processes are mediated by smartphones and social media.

The Russian context: reproducing Uzbek village practices and norms via smartphones

Similar to Mexicans in the United States (Castro and Gonzalez 2009) and Indians in Singapore (Velayutham and Wise 2005), Uzbek/Shabboda migrants capitalise on their village-based identities and norms in their daily lives in Moscow. This is clearly illustrated by Halil (45, male), a village member who recently returned to his village for a short period to visit his family:

> Even if we move to Russia, a foreign country, and stay there for five to six years, we (Shabboda migrants) continue to follow our old habits, religion and way of life. If one of us gets into trouble, we quickly inform our village members both there (in Russia) and here (in Uzbekistan) via Telegram (a smartphone app) or an ordinary phone call. We, the migrants in Moscow, quickly collect money and try to help our fellow villagers. If you turn away and do not help your co-villagers, information about your egoistic behaviour will quickly spread amongst migrants and also travel to the village via the internet (e.g., Telegram Messenger).

Accordingly, the existence of such village-based identities creates a sense of social responsibility amongst villagers that they must care for one another during their time in Russia. When talking to Shabboda migrants, it became apparent that their decision to migrate to Moscow not only stems from economic considerations but is also connected to kinship relationships between migrants, return migrants and non-migrants. Villagers believe that going to Moscow means joining the *mahalla* and village acquaintances there. Once they arrive at Moscow's Domodedovo or Vnukovo airport, they are quickly picked up by fellow villagers. Thus, villagers imagine their future migrant life as integrated into their village and *mahalla* networks which already extend to Moscow. Even those few Shabboda migrants who received Russian citizenship continue to actively engage in transnational practices since they believe that they will eventually return to Shabboda. This is particularly visible in the words of Ozoda (40, female) and her husband Akbar (42, male) who, despite holding Russian citizenship, are building a rather posh house in Shabboda. They obtained Russian citizenship not to permanently settle in Russia, but to navigate around the structural barriers and repressive legal environment.

Whilst most Shabboda migrants did not share communal accommodation or worked in different places in Moscow, they maintained daily contact with villagers in Moscow. They did so through smartphones, which they used to stay in touch with one another in Moscow, as well as to check the latest news, view photographs of Russian and Uzbek girls and make video calls to their families and village networks in Shabboda. Only a small group of migrants I encountered used social media to discuss Uzbek politics since most were afraid that doing so would invite unnecessary surveillance and punishment by their home country's government. Some migrants even speculated that they accidentally met several members of the Uzbek security services in Moscow who were trying to collect

information about politically active or religious migrants. Due to these fears and suspicions, many Shabboda migrants were reluctant to talk about politics or religion in public settings. Instead, migrants primarily used smartphones to organise their precarious livelihoods and reproduce their village-level practices in a virtual environment.

The state is 'absent' not only in Shabboda, where villagers use *mahalla*-driven solidarity to create alternative public goods and services but also in Moscow, where solidarity with and support from *mahalla* networks compensated for the complete lack of security from Russian state institutions. Shabboda migrants were completely unaware of the existence of Uzbek diasporan organisations or migrant rights organisations that could provide some form of support. Additionally, they received little to no support from the Embassy of Uzbekistan in Moscow when experiencing problems with dishonest employers or corrupt police officers.

Given this complete lack of security, Shabboda migrants reproduced most of their village-level mutual aid activities in Moscow to compensate for the absence of formal protection mechanisms. Smartphones and social media applications served as platforms for carrying out such activities. Shabboda migrants, for example, quickly informed each other and mobilised resources when someone fell ill, was caught by the police, needed to send something home or desperately needed money. These smartphone-based transnational interactions were crucial to the migrants' survival and served as an alternative social safety net, as explained by Abduvali (38, male), a construction worker from the Shabboda village:

> We usually avoid public places because there are hundreds of police officers on the streets, seeking to extort money from us (migrants). Instead, we use smartphones and social media to resolve problems, socialise with our co-villagers in Moscow as well as to maintain daily contact with our families, *mahalla* and village friends in Shabboda. It is Moscow, and things are unpredictable here; we rely on our village connections when we get into trouble. We are all migrants here, so we cannot turn our backs when our fellow villagers are in trouble. But, in order to reach your co-villagers, you must always have a mobile phone with you, and you must memorise their phone numbers. For example, let's assume that you are a migrant worker who is caught by a police officer and brought to the police station. Normally, police officers keep you in the cell for a few hours and check your documents very carefully, a thing usually do to further scare migrants. After finishing the check, police officers give you two options: (1) you can pay a bribe immediately and go home or (2) if you have no money, police officers allow you to phone your friends so that they can bring money and secure your release. The second scenario is more common, and you need to call your co-villagers for help. Therefore, you must always have your mobile phone with you. A police officer might allow you to use their mobile phone to contact your co-villagers, but not all police officers are nice. If you do not have a phone with you and are caught by the police, there is a high risk that the police officers will transfer your case to court for deportation.

The repatriation of the deceased from Russia to Uzbekistan provides another relevant example of smartphone transnationalism. Shabboda migrants, like other Central Asian migrants (Reeves 2015; Round and Kuznetsova 2016), experience difficult living and working conditions in Moscow, including discrimination, hazardous working conditions and physical violence. They are, therefore, aware that the threat of death is ever present in their daily lives in Moscow. As one Shabboda migrant said, 'Death can be the fate of any migrant in Russia since we are working in a *bespredel* [limitlessness, lawless] country where anything can happen.' Aware of their own precarious livelihoods, migrants voluntarily contribute to repatriation expenses if someone from their *mahalla* or village dies from a work-related accident, disease or a neo-Nazi skinhead attack. Given these risks, Shabboda migrants tended to capitalise on their *mahalla* traditions (such as norms of reciprocity and solidarity, as well as good neighbourliness) as a means to cope with the challenges of being an alien in Russia. When someone was killed, news spread swiftly amongst villagers as migrants immediately contacted their *mahalla* networks via smartphones and social media. There was no standard amount for contributions, and migrants determined how much to contribute based on their financial situation and income level. Because the threat of death was ever present in migrants' lives, news of a death deeply affected everyone, and many migrants stepped forward to assist with the repatriation expenses. As such, Shabboda migrants viewed their contribution to body repatriation as a form of insurance in the case of their own death, as illustrated in the following:

> I always make a contribution to body repatriation, because I know my co-villagers would do the same favour for me if I were to suddenly die from a work-related accident or disease. Body repatriation is a *hashar*—a collective *mahalla* project where everyone is expected to contribute. If you are greedy and do not contribute, there is a high likelihood that your body will not be taken care of if you die. Nobody wants his body to remain in Russia. We all want to be buried in our homeland. (Nodir, 26, male, migrant worker from Shabboda village)

Accordingly, smartphones and social media serve as the everyday technologies of transnationalism, reproducing and maintaining village-level identities, social norms and relationships across distances. Other studies have similarly shown that mobile phones do not 'fracture' localities, but extend and reproduce them in migrant-receiving societies (Pertierra et al. 2002; Vertovec 2004; McKay 2006; Nakamura 2013). However, the literature on ICTs and transnationalism tends to focus on their functional role, primarily exploring how ICT availability increases the frequency and magnitude of transnational interactions and blurs the distinction between 'here' and 'there'. The case of the Shabboda village demonstrates that smartphones and social media not only facilitate the intensity of everyday exchanges between Moscow and Shabboda, but, also, and more importantly, reproduce a virtual transnational community. This virtual community, then,

regulates the daily practices and behaviour of village residents both locally and transnationally.

One episode I witnessed in Moscow illustrates how Shabboda-level norms and practices extend to Moscow through smartphones. One Wednesday afternoon—on 30 July 2014—'Zaur' and I were in the car heading towards a construction site in Balashikha, a small city in Moscow province where the majority of Shabboda migrants work. Unlike his co-villagers who work in the construction sector, Zaur works as a clerk at a grocery store in Moscow. This position granted him the nickname *Russkiy* (Russian) amongst his co-villagers given that he received a higher salary and was not obligated to engage in *chornaia rabota* ('black work' such as construction, agriculture or janitorial services). Because Zaur was considered more successful and better connected than other migrants, individuals from the Shabboda village often contacted him with requests.

As we neared the construction site, Zaur received a call on Viber (a smartphone-based free phone application) from Uzbekistan. He usually picks up calls from Uzbekistan and immediately answers them. It was Zaur's neighbour, 'Ozoda', who had an urgent request. From their phone conversation, I learned that Ozoda's husband, 'Ulugbek', who worked on a greenhouse farm in Vologda city, recently underwent an appendectomy and was on a train to Moscow. Ozoda was quite worried about her husband since he was physically unable to work and had no money to purchase a train ticket back to Uzbekistan. It was clear that Ozoda asked Zaur to help her husband return to Uzbekistan. After finishing the conversation, Zaur said that we needed to return to Moscow and meet Ulugbek at the Kazanskaya railway station when he arrived from Vologda. On our way to the station, Zaur told me that he was obliged to help Ulugbek and buy him a train ticket to Uzbekistan using his own resources. Zaur also made it clear that he would not be reimbursed because his assistance would be treated as a '*mahalladoshlik*' (shared *mahalla* origin) obligation. This would not be the case if Zaur and Ulugbek did not live in the same *mahalla*.

Rather than travelling all the way to Moscow and then to Tashkent, Ulugbek could have taken a train directly to Tashkent if he had waited in Vologda for a further ten days. However, Ulugbek knew that he would be taken care of by his *mahalla* network if he travelled first to Moscow, where many Shabboda migrants are based, a reality that guided his decision. Ulugbek was also aware that Zaur would have difficulty refusing to help if his family members from Shabboda were involved in the process. Zaur told me that if he refused to help Ulugbek and other *mahalla* acquaintances, *mahalla* members would spread gossip about him. Of course, Zaur was in Moscow and could just ignore the gossip. But, he had to consider his family members' situation, since they would bear the consequences of his decision. Zaur hoped that at least Ulugbek would appreciate his help and tell fellow *mahalla* members about his *odamgarchilik* (good deeds). Therefore, to preserve his family's good reputation and prevent possible *mahalla* pressure and gossip, Zaur decided to help Ulugbek, even though doing so would cost him money and time.

In addition to the train ticket, Zaur also had to cover other costs and concerns. For instance, he had to drive from Balashikha to the Kazanskaya railway station. By taxi, this trip typically costs at least 3000 roubles (approximately US$50). Moreover, it is quite difficult to secure a train ticket for the next day since tickets typically sell out, requiring one to buy them at least three days in advance. Thus, Zaur had to bribe the train *provodnik* (conductor) and arrange a place (without a valid ticket) for Ulugbek. Many thieves and racketeers extort money from migrants at the Kazanskaya railway station. Given his many years of work in Moscow, Zaur took advantage of his multiple established connections at the railway station, ensuring that Ulugbek safely boarded the train and reached home without any problems.

Events unfolded exactly as Zaur described. We arrived at the Kazanskaya station at 4 PM. Ulugbek's train arrived one hour later. After meeting Ulugbek at the station, we all headed towards a small fast-food cafe, where migrants could secure fake work permits and residence registrations. There, we met an Uzbek woman who was well connected with the train *provodniks*. Zaur paid her 7500 roubles, and she then guided us through the station and quickly arranged a special seat for Ulugbek on a Moscow–Tashkent train. After a short conversation with the *provodnik*, she assured us that Ulugbek was now in safe hands and would be in Uzbekistan in five days' time. Zaur gave an additional 1000 roubles to Ulugbek and told him to use it for food expenses during the long trip. We shook hands with Ulugbek and watched as the train departed for Uzbekistan.

At the time of writing, the role of these smartphone-based transnational practices proved especially pivotal during the COVID-19 pandemic, which had dramatic and unprecedented effects on migrants' everyday lives in Russia and beyond. As the number of coronavirus cases drastically increased, Russia, in parallel with many other countries around the world, introduced strict lockdown measures to prevent the spread of the virus. Whilst Russian regions had some degree of autonomy in defining the level of COVID-related restrictions, in Moscow, where the majority of Shabboda migrants work, the city government introduced strict lockdown measures. As a result, a considerable number of Shabboda migrants, especially those working in the service industry, factories and bazaars, lost their jobs. This led to a 'catch-22' situation, whereby migrants neither had the savings necessary to cover their living expenses nor the possibility of returning to their home country due to travel restrictions introduced by the Russian government on 18 March 2020. Despite the COVID-related restrictions, some sectors of the Russian economy, notably, the construction sector, continued to operate. Since the majority of Shabboda migrants worked in the construction sector, they quickly assisted their unemployed co-villagers, providing them with temporary jobs and accommodation at construction sites. In cases when it was not possible to find jobs, villagers collected money, pooled their resources and provided food products to their members who needed it. These mutual aid practices were possible owing to the extension of village-level social norms, expectations and obligations that create a strong intragroup solidarity amongst migrants.

In reality, such smartphone-based transnational practices can also be observed within various migrant communities in Russia. During my fieldwork, I also conducted in-depth (semi-structured) interviews with 100 Central Asian migrants (Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek migrants) in Moscow between July and August 2015. Here, I provide some empirical findings from these interview data, focusing on their transnational ties, identities and practices and the role of smartphones and social media in these processes.

As Table 5.1 shows, more than half of migrants rely on their relatives and co-villagers (*zemlyaki*) when they need urgent help. This illustrates the importance of a shared territorial origin and kinship relations in migrants' everyday lives in Russia. Thus, I argue that the mutual aid and social safety nets described in the Shabboda migrants' example also extend to other migrant communities.

Table 5.2 shows that it has become a norm amongst Central Asian migrants to collect money for body repatriation expenses. This practice even transcends village-level practices, whereby many migrants are willing to contribute to the repatriation costs even if the deceased migrant is not from their village or district in their home country.

The use of smartphones is also quite common amongst migrants, as shown in Table 5.3, testifying to the shift from the mobile phone to the smartphone era amongst migrant communities. Smartphone use, in turn, leads to a higher level of internet use and social media activism amongst migrants.

Table 5.1 Source of help when migrants are in need of urgent help

Q. Imagine yourself in a situation facing problems (e.g., if you are very ill or injured, short of money or cannot find accommodation) and you need urgent help. In such a case, who would you rely on?	
My relatives and co-villagers (*zemlyaki*) also work in Russia, so I would rely on them.	58%
I would rely on my new friends that I have met in Russia.	14%
I would rely on my employer.	13%
I would rely on colleagues in my workplace.	12%
I would try to solve my problems independently. All migrants have problems, so I don't want to be a burden to others.	2%
I would pray to and rely on Allah (God) during hardships.	1%

Table 5.2 Body repatriation and the collective pooling of resources

Q. Imagine a situation in which one of the migrant workers dies and migrants are collecting money in order to transport the deceased by airplane to Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan or Uzbekistan). How would you react if you are requested/invited to make financial contribution to the transportation expenses?	
Yes, I would contribute financially even if the deceased migrant is not my acquaintance.	89%
I would contribute if the deceased migrant is my friend or acquaintance.	11%
No, I would not contribute.	0%

Table 5.3 The use of mobile phones amongst migrants

Q. Do you have a mobile phone? If yes, what type of mobile phone do you use?	
Smartphone (Android/iPhone/Windows phone)	69%
Basic mobile phone (without any smartphone functions)	31%
I don't use a mobile phone	0%

Table 5.4 The frequency of internet use amongst migrants

Q. On average, how frequently do you access the internet?	
Daily	73%
Weekly	10%
I don't use the internet	17%

Table 5.5 Social media use amongst migrants

Do you use social media (e.g., Whatsapp, Telegram, Skype, Facebook, Odnoklassniki, VKontakte, DrugVokrug)?	
Yes	81%
No	19%

Due to the widespread use of smartphones, 73% of the migrants I interviewed stated that they use the internet on a daily basis (Table 5.4).

Accordingly, as shown in Table 5.5, 81% of interviewees regularly use social media applications, which I infer to mean that smartphone-based transnational practices are common not only amongst Shabboda migrants but also amongst the various migrant groups I interviewed.

Overall, a brief snapshot from the semi-structured interviews indicates that smartphone-based transnational practices and identities seem to be common amongst various migrant communities in Russia. Although the empirical material presented in this chapter focuses largely on Uzbek migrants' smartphone-based transnational practices, it is important to emphasise that these experiences are common to all Central Asian migrants in Russia and resonate with the experiences of other migrants from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Syria and Ukraine given their exposure to similar sociolegal environments and structural constraints.

Discussion and concluding remarks on smartphone transnationalism

I have argued that much of the migrant transnationalism literature emanates from case studies of immigrant communities in Western democracies. As such, few studies have investigated these issues within non-Western migration contexts such as Russia, where a repressive and xenophobic environment leaves little room

for (overt) transnational activism and the public expression of cultural identities. Referring to the sociopolitical and cultural differences between Western and post-Soviet societies, I argue that migrant transnationalism may carry different meanings, forms and functional roles in the Russian context. Furthermore, I contend that the bulk of the 'migration and technology' literature focuses on 'older' forms of ICT, such as email, mobile phones and diasporic websites. Thus, here, I update this scholarship by examining recent technological developments, including smartphones and social media, which provide almost unlimited opportunities for transnational interactions. I have described these processes by ethnographically attending to the everyday transnational lives of Uzbek migrants in Russia and their left-behind communities in Uzbekistan. As the results indicate, unlike Western democracies, where migrants established relatively functional (also 'physically' visible) transnational communities and diasporic groups, very little in the way of an 'Uzbek transnational community' has been established in Russia given its repressive environment and antimigrant sentiments. Whilst Uzbek migrants' transnational activism remains primarily invisible in public places, I demonstrated that smartphones and social media platforms enable Uzbek migrants to remain in touch with their societies of origin. Such technology has also allowed migrants to create smartphone-based transnational community in Moscow, typically centred around migrants who hail from the same *mahalla* or village in Uzbekistan. The existence of a smartphone-based transnational environment helps migrants cope with the hardships of being alien, allowing them to avoid or manoeuvre around structural constraints. Thus, by exploring the interplay between migrant transnationalism and smartphones in a non-Western migration context, this chapter moves the migrant transnationalism literature beyond a Western-centric paradigm, providing new insights into the role of new media in migratory processes.

Through my ethnographic study of the Shabboda village and its smartphone-based transnational form in Moscow, I explored the ways in which the home village is maintained in Moscow as a social association through smartphones and social media. As I have shown, rapid improvements in ICTs enabled Shabboda migrants to remain in touch with their home village and to create a smartphone-based translocal community in Moscow. Whilst most Shabboda migrants in Moscow do not share communal accommodation and meet infrequently due to the punitive sociolegal environment, they are actively engaged in transnational place-making owing to smartphones and social media. It is this virtual space that I call the 'smartphone-based transnational community'. Whilst the Shabboda migrants' smartphone-based transnational community does not take on a material or physical form, their daily practices are clearly linked to a physical place and the maintenance of village-level social norms and relations. That is, their daily actions and decisions are determined by the norms of their home village. Thus, the migrants' smartphone-based transnational community orients towards the physical village—in this case, to Shabboda.

Empirically, this chapter adds to the post-Soviet migration literature (e.g., Atabaki and Mehendale 2004; Laruelle 2007; Ruget and Usmanalieva 2011; Round and Kuznetsova 2016; Reeves 2013, 2015). Most studies on post-Soviet

migration, particularly those concerned with the Russian migration context, primarily focus on social processes occurring in either the sending or recipient society. By ethnographically exploring everyday transnational interactions *between* Moscow and the Shabboda village, this chapter moves beyond methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). Furthermore, it provides unique empirical material and insights on migrant transnationalism in post-Soviet societies (that may not be collected by other researchers). This results from my position—that is, my ethnicity, village background and language skills as well as through my extensive contacts—and my access to such practices.

Furthermore, this chapter offers important implications for the overall study of international migration. Through an ethnographic study of migrant transnationalism in Russia, I provide new empirical material on and comparative insights into migration studies in general. As previously mentioned, much of the migration literature relies on case studies of immigrant communities in Western democracies. This focus can be partly explained by the ongoing legacies of the 'three worlds division' of social scientific labour (Pletsch 1981; Chari and Verdery 2009), which continues to overlook the role and contribution of non-Western migrant-receiving contexts in the comparative and theoretical debates about contemporary migration systems. Simultaneously, non-Western societies have traditionally been viewed as 'exporting' migrants to Western Europe, North America and Australia (Castles and Miller 2009). Their role as magnets for labour migrants from other countries has, thus, been obscured. Addressing this research gap is particularly important when considering the fact that non-Western countries, such as Russia as well as Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, have become 'migration hotspots' worldwide resulting from their improved economic conditions (e.g., Gülçür and İlkkaracan 2002; Garcés-Mascareñas 2010; Anderson and Hancilová 2011; Gardner et al. 2013). Given these global trends, here I argue for the need to move beyond Western-centric paradigms and developing alternative frameworks for understanding migratory processes and social change in non-Western migration contexts.

As an aside, I should emphasise that this study carries some limitations in terms of gender dynamics and its overall generalisability. First, my fieldwork primarily focuses on male migrants. Ideally, I would have included the experiences of female migrants. However, this was a conscious choice dictated by the reality of the gendered constitution of Shabboda migrants in Moscow—90% of such migrants were male. Another factor that led me to focus on male migrants had to do with my own gender (male). According to the cultural and religious norms in the Shabboda village, it is inappropriate for men to approach women when their spouses are not present. Not wanting to cause any inconvenience to female migrants, I decided to focus primarily on male migrants. Thus, this chapter highlights the need for further research covering the transnational experiences of female migrants in Russia. Another limitation to my research relates to the generalisability of my findings. Since I conducted an ethnographic study amongst Shabboda migrants in Moscow and their left-behind families in Ferghana, it remains to be seen how much and

whether my findings can be extrapolated to other migrant communities in Russia. However, because both Central Asian and Caucasian migrants experience a similar sociopolitical environment in Russia and given that the use of smartphones is common amongst various migrant groups, we can assume that the findings here may prove relevant to understanding the general environment within the Russian context. That said, clearly, further research is needed in order to develop a deeper understanding of migrant transnationalism in Russia.

Note on Transliteration

Throughout this chapter, Russian and Uzbek terms are spelled according to the standard literary form based on the following two criteria: (1) whether a Russian/Uzbek word or phenomenon is central to the study and (2) if an English translation does not fully capture the meaning of the Russian/Uzbek word or phenomenon. Russian and Uzbek words are presented in italics.

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6 Central Asian female migrants' transnational social spaces

Straddling illegality and tradition

Sherzod Eraliev and Anna-Liisa Heusala

Introduction

This chapter employs the concept of transnational social space to examine Central Asian female migrants' relationship with the law in the Russian Federation (or Russia), where labour migration primarily reflects (temporary) rotations. Much of the existing research on migrants' legal experiences in the Russian context tends to focus on the case of male migrants and their relationship with the Russian legal system and law. However, less attention has been paid to the social circumstances or transnational practices and thoughts relevant to understanding Central Asian female migrants' experiences within this system. This chapter contributes to 'migrant legality–illegality' (Coutin 2000; De Genova 2004; Menjívar 2006) debates through the perspective of gender. We also contribute to the migration and legal transnationalism scholarship, in which the Russian case has received increasing attention in recent years (e.g., Kubal 2016; Urinboyev 2018). However, we argue that vulnerable migrant groups such as women often do not fit into transnationalism, informality or legal culture narratives without taking into account the specificities of the female experience.

In 2001, Kivisto analysed the dominant perspectives on the study of migrant transnationalism, underlining the importance of immigrant communities for understanding the manifestations of transnationalism from below (Kivisto 2001: 561). His conclusions echoed Basch, Schiller and Blanc-Szanton (1994: 1), who examined transnational processes in which immigrants built social fields connecting their countries of residence and origin. Faist defined these as social spaces which

> not only refer to physical features, but also to larger opportunity structures, the social life and the subjective images, values and meanings that the specific and limited place represents to migrants. Space is thus different from place in that it encompasses or spans various territorial locations.
>
> (Faist 2000: 45–46)

Along a similar vein, Vertovec (2001: 578) underlined the significance of multilocal spaces as 'a complex set of conditions that affect the construction, negotiation

and reproduction of social identities. These identities play out and position individuals in the course of their everyday lives within and across each of their places of attachment or perceived belonging.'

In line with Faist's definition and Vertovec's (2001: 576) critical appraisal of a single theory of transnationalism for all migrant groups, we examine some aspects of transnational social spaces relevant to understanding the legal choices made by Central Asian migrant women in the Russian Federation. We also consider criticisms. These include those lobbed at the role of migrant agency in transnationalism research for emphasising the free decision-making role of migrants and, thus, overlooking power relations, politics and conflicts amongst different actors and at different levels in transnational mobility (Koser 2007; Pries 2008). The unevenness, instability and inequality of transnational social spaces represent topics deserving further attention (De Jong and Dannekker 2018: 493). These discussions are relevant to research on migrant legal cultures, in which agency is often underlined as an important and positive factor. Writing about legal pluralistic outlooks, Kubal (2013b) describes how its proponents view legal cultures as needing to be established and upheld by the state, as well as an integral part of the overall culture of a people. Furthermore, in his study on Central Asian migrants in Russia, Urinboyev (2020) characterises migrants' legal adaptation as a combination of skills in manoeuvring around official structures alongside an ability to construct unofficial rules within migrant communities, which facilitate living under few legal protections. Framed in this way, an informal legal culture underlines actors' rational choices and individualism, and creates a borderline legal-nihilistic outlook on formal law and state structures, possibly becoming a hindrance to self-determination and a 'fluid existence.'

Migrant communities in Russia are primarily dominated by a younger generation of male workers, resulting in overlooking the female experience. Although the literature on migrant transnationalism in the Russian context has recently expanded, the female experience continues to attract less attention. In this regard, previous studies have specifically focused on family and kinship relations across borders (Rahmonova-Schwartz 2012), social hierarchies in translocal livelihoods (Schroder and Stephan-Emmrich 2014), remittances and gender-based power relations in sending countries (Reeves 2012) and migrants' political remittances to their home countries (Ruget and Usmanalieva 2011). Urinboyev (2018) found that Uzbeks' traditional village and *mahalla*-level legal orders, such as trust, obligation, shame and neighbourliness, extend across borders through telephone-based translocal communities and exert a considerable impact on the lives of migrants in Russia. However, his work examines the experiences of male Uzbek migrants, whereas the same conclusions may not automatically apply to female migrant experiences.

Migrant illegality has been widely studied in many Western immigrant-receiving contexts. More likely, it is linked to informality and the absence of strong legal protections, which Coutin (2000) referred to as a state of legal absence in a society. Such categories and concepts as liminal legality (Menjívar 2006), legal illegality (Rigo 2010), semi-legality (Kubal 2013a), quasi-legality (Düvell 2008)

and a-legality (Lindahl 2010) are used to describe the complexities of migration legality. Scholars have even dubbed the process legal violence (Menjívar and Abrego 2012) or the legal production of illegality (De Genova 2004). Writing about the US experience, Ngai stated that illegal or undocumented immigrants are 'at once welcome and unwelcome' in the US: excluded as citizens, but 'woven into the economic fabric of the nation' as cheap and disposable labour (Ngai 2004: 2). Critical observers, such as Menjívar (2006: 1002), argue that the contemporary immigration laws of migrant-receiving countries 'create and recreate an excluded population and ensure its vulnerability and precariousness by blurring the boundaries of legality and illegality to create gray areas of incertitude'.

On a global level, these frameworks have covered both male and female experiences (see, for example, Boyd and Grieco 2003; Carling 2005; Lutz 2010; Boehm 2012). This reflects the fact that almost half of the world's migrant population consists of women.[1] However, research on legality and transnationalism focused specifically on female experiences in Russia remains fragmentary, if not entirely nonexistent. Gorina, Agadjanian and Zotova (2018) explored the effects of their legal status on migrant women's economic success in Russia. In doing so, they found a significant gap in the perception of pay equality between temporary-status and permanent-status migrants, illustrating the importance of legal status in mitigating adverse experiences within the labour market. In addition, Tyuryukanova (2011) analysed the process of the feminisation of migration flows, describing various models of female migration behaviour, along with individual and family migration strategies, including migration with children. Scrutinising the dynamics and structure of spheres of employment amongst Kyrgyz and Tajik female migrants, Poletaev (2018) shed light on their formal and informal employment practices and strategies in defending their infringed labour rights. Male and female migrants exhibited no differences in complying with laws, their vulnerability during interactions with the state or in relations with employers and landlords as well as during transnational practices (Rocheva and Varshaver 2017).

To examine the transnational social spaces of Central Asian female migrants in Russia, we ask the following questions: What are the peculiarities of female migrant experiences within the Russian legal system? Moreover, how do national traditions in the home society influence the choices of female migrants in the host society? To answer these questions, we utilise the life stories of four female migrants[2] originating from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, all residing in Moscow. These cases share the experience of childbirth in Russia and acquiring sometimes fake documents in order to prove that they are the legal guardians of their children born in Russia. We argue that Central Asian female migrants' legal culture in the Russian Federation should be understood as a part of such transnational social spaces and that they are shaped by the collective circumstances of women in their countries and communities of origin. We chose these cases on the basis that they represent theoretically relevant examples of the life experiences of the most vulnerable groups in the migrant communities and reveal important dynamics in female transnational social spaces. In addition to taking into account the absence of strong institutions and legal protections in Russia, we aim to understand how

practices and ways of thinking related to the lives of women in their countries and communities of origin affect their agency in decision-making related to family and migration law in Russia.

The research material consists of expert interviews with migration lawyers and informal discussions with labour migrants, which took place in Moscow in 2017 and 2019.[3] We selected four female case studies for closer analysis to identify what might lie behind the female experiences of legality–illegality in Russia and how perceptions of local culture and traditions in the sending societies affect migrants' coping strategies in the recipient society. In the material we collected, two case studies of migrant women, Farida and Nazira, stood out as examples of particularly troublesome cases from both the legal and human rights perspectives. At the time of data collection in 2019, it was clear that it might take at least several months, if successful, to find a legal solution. Therefore, following our fieldwork, we remained in touch with our informants' lawyers to follow up on these and other issues related to our fieldwork. The third story emerged through the Uzbek media. A migrant woman, who travelled to Russia as the 'second', unofficial wife of a migrant, was left in a difficult situation and chose to share her story in the media.[4] Because the story resulted in a discussion in an Uzbek-language group on Facebook, we followed the issue with the woman's pro bono lawyer, an informant from our fieldwork, who then facilitated our introduction to the migrant. The story of Lobar was later introduced as a separate case study.

Russian migration policy and Central Asian female migration

Russia is one of the main destinations for migrants in the world. In 2019, it stood fourth globally both as a destination (around ten million migrants) and as the country of origin for immigrants (IOM 2019: 26). Migrants from Central Asia constitute the largest portion of the migrant workforce, mostly employed in unskilled jobs. Given the varying methods and purposes of registering foreigners, Russia's responsible agencies provide a range of figures on the number of economic migrants.[5] Labour migrants' economic output is estimated as representing 10.5% of the Russian economy (Ryazantsev 2016).

Russia's immigration and citizenship legislation underwent significant transformations following the collapse of the Soviet Union (Ivahnyuk 2009; Malakhov 2014; Abashin 2017). Whilst the citizenship regimes and immigration laws changed and evolved across the entire post-Soviet space, a historically determined attachment to documents persisted. Documents were viewed not just as identity documents, but also as guarantors of authority, a mechanism for the production of political subjectivity (Reeves 2013a: 154) and a means to population control in which 'national security' was an essential component of policy developments (Heusala 2018).

Currently, Russia maintains a visa-free regime with members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS); thus, almost all migrants from Central Asia can enter Russia legally. Central Asian labour migrants must obtain several documents, however, to remain legal in Russia. These include, but are

not limited to, a migration card, a temporary residence registration and a *patent* (work permit), which necessitates health, Russian-language and Russian history/ law certificates, all acquired at a significant expense. Citizens of Kyrgyzstan, a member of the Moscow-led Eurasian Economic Union, are theoretically on equal footing in terms of labour rights with the local population. Furthermore, since 1995, Russia and Tajikistan have agreed upon dual citizenship, allowing many Tajiks to obtain Russian citizenship simultaneously.

Complex and constantly changing rules also render retaining legal permits an arduous task for migrants. Moreover, a large number of migrants are employed in the informal sector. Researchers have often critically assessed the development of Russian migration policy. For instance, Kubal (2016) argues that Russian migration policies produce insecure and legally ambiguous migration statuses through inconsistent and arbitrary law enforcement. Moreover, the less-than-complete implementation of these rules by Russian authorities discourages migrants from becoming 'legal'. Abashin (2014) states that even migrants who do not violate any law are often perceived as having done so since migrant status typically connotes illegality.

The informal document market amongst migrant workers continued to thrive in the mid-2010s, the period when our cases evolved. This market enabled migrants to adapt to the restrictive legal environment through the production of 'clean fake' Russian, Kyrgyz and Tajik passports, residency documents, various certificates and work permits (Reeves 2013b; Dave 2014). In order to become 'legal', migrants resort to various semi-legal and outright illegal practices of legalisation through middlemen (*posredniki*) (Dave 2014). In 2015 and 2016, Russian authorities introduced new rules regarding work permits for everyone, which amongst others meant that migrants needed to provide fingerprints. Whilst these and other steps limited the possibilities of forging documents, the informal document market nevertheless continues to survive and operate, albeit more cautiously and at higher prices.[6]

Complicated legalisation procedures and high fees for work permits push migrants further into the shadow economy (Heusala and Aitamurto 2017). Experiences with the Russian system of labour migration led researchers to question its unintentionality. For instance, Schenk (2018) argued that these legal ambiguities should be viewed as a key feature of migration governance since they keep the number of documented migrants low so that Russian officials can deploy the population's antimigrant sentiments and generate informal benefits (*kormushka*). Attention has also been paid to the characteristics of the globalised economic conditions, where the Russian shadow economy and pathologies in the migration regime are linked to questions regarding global economic competitiveness and to foreign policy goals in the Eurasian space (Heusala 2017: 1).

Since the early 2000s, labour migration from Central Asia has been primarily male dominated.[7] However, tendencies in recent years reveal a growing share of female migrants. Women constitute at least 38% of migrants from Kyrgyzstan; this figure stands at 15% to 20% amongst migrants from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan

(Rocheva and Varshaver 2017). Whilst construction sites, farms and similar areas where physical strength is required primarily employ men, female migrants can find jobs predominantly in trade (supermarkets and shops), catering (restaurants, hotels and food factories) and domestic (care) and cleaning services.

In her study on the implications of migration for Russian social policy, Linda Cook provides an account of both de jure rights and de facto access amongst migrants to social services, including healthcare access for migrant women and the rights of migrant children to schooling. She points out that reliance on informal health documentation plays a prominent role in migrants' lives (Cook 2017: 137–139; see also Kashnitsky and Demintseva 2018).

Women from Central Asia represent the most vulnerable group. They endure the worst living conditions and face major problems in terms of accessing medical services (Tyuryukanova 2011). Gorina, Agadjanian and Zotova (2018) found that female migrants from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan earn lower salaries compared with male migrants. Amongst Central Asian migrants in Russia, there are consistently more divorced and widowed women and fewer single women than men (Rocheva and Varshaver 2017). From existing research, it seems that (both male and female) migrants' sexual and reproductive behaviour is characterised by limited access to information about risks (Weine et al. 2013; Rocheva and Varshaver 2017). Kazenin et al. (2019) found no significant differences in the reproductive strategies of female migrants from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, a member state of the Eurasian Economic Union and a non-member, respectively. Agadjanian and Zotova (2011) explored sexual risks amongst Central Asian women associated with migration. In a survey conducted in 2011 amongst Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek female migrants, around 19% had a partner or lived in a civil marriage (Agadjanian and Zotova 2011). We may assume that a significant number of female migrants accompany their spouses in migration.

The overwhelming majority of migrants, regardless of gender, rent so-called *koiko-mesto* (a single bed-sized space) in shared flats. Often, women and men share separate rooms in apartments. High housing prices in large cities do not allow couples to rent a separate flat. At best, a couple can rent a room of their own (in a flat) if both are working and can afford the extra expense. Children typically remain in the home countries with extended family members, unless the parents plan to stay in Russia for an extended period of time. Although this might have changed recently, only in very rare cases have parents brought their children with them (Alexandrov et al. 2012).

Whilst local Russians treat migrants from the Slavic countries of Belarus and Ukraine either neutrally or positively, individuals from the non-Slavic Muslim-majority countries of Central Asia with a poor command of the Russian language are perceived as alien and unwanted in Russian society. Periodic polls indicate consistently high rates of dislike and xenophobia against Central Asian migrants (Levada 2019). Racism specifically targeting Central Asians is rampant in today's Russia (e.g., Reeves 2013a; Round and Kuznetsova 2016; Mukomel 2013). Simultaneously, we must note that Central Asian migrants, especially female migrants, are mistreated not only by the local population but also at times by

fellow migrants (Agadjanian et al. 2017), including experiencing sexual harassment (Agadjanian and Zotova 2011). Three out of the four women we interviewed also faced abuse from other labour migrants.

Occasional cases emerge in the Russian media of Central Asian women abandoning their toddlers or authorities taking custody of children from presumably careless parents. This gives the impression to many locals that female migrants come to Russia to give birth to 'anchor babies' in order to claim welfare benefits for their children, and resulting in possible abandonment when faced with financial or other difficulties.[8] As Rocheva's (2014) study of Kyrgyz women's reproductive choices demonstrates, a child born on Russian soil is not automatically eligible for future citizenship and migrant parents cannot claim welfare benefits (so-called maternal capital, a lump sum of money provided by the Russian government to stimulate childbirth) unless one or both parents are Russian citizens. Furthermore, the difficulties migrants face in using Russian public healthcare services have led them to develop their own medical infrastructure (Kashnitsky and Demintseva 2018).

Case studies of female experiences

Our first case study documents the story of Nazira, a woman with dual Russian and Tajik citizenship. As a native of Tajikistan, she obtained Russian citizenship whilst living in Dushanbe. Early in the 2010s, Nazira moved to Russia for work. She met another labour migrant, a citizen of Uzbekistan, with whom she began living in a civil partnership and with whom she had two children who were born in Russia. In 2015, the police stopped her civil partner and fined him for 'a lack of proper documents', a typical charge the police frequently use to extort money from Central Asian migrants. This led to a court decision and his subsequent deportation from Russia. Now, left on her own, Nazira tried to obtain Russian citizenship for her children. But, to do so, she needed to have, amongst others, registration at her place of residence, which she did not possess. Although Nazira held Russian citizenship, she was using a temporary registration, which she had to extend every three months.

She received advice from her friends to return to Tajikistan, obtain Tajik foreign travel passports for her children and then with those apply for Russian citizenship. Nazira returned to Dushanbe, convinced her civil partner (who travelled to Tajikistan following Nazira's urging) to sign a statement that he was abandoning the children and received passports for her children. She obtained passports for her children using her own surname, although the children's Russian birth certificates listed the surname of their father. Back in Russia, she now had two children officially unrecognised by any birth certificates. Not only could she not claim Russian citizenship for her children, but, more importantly, she could not prove that the children actually belonged to her.

Another woman, Munira Usmonova[9], originated from Andijan, Uzbekistan. Brought up as an orphan by impoverished grandparents, she was unable to marry by the time she reached her early 20s, a situation considered shameful by many

traditional families in Central Asia. She agreed to become a 'second wife' to Umid, who was already in an official marriage with another woman with whom he had a child. Faced with financial difficulties, Umid left to work in Moscow and brought Munira there in 2013. Before the birth of her first child, Munira lost her passport. Umid persuaded her to present herself at the hospital staff using his surname, Razzakova, and later brought a fake certificate to the hospital confirming the loss of 'Munira Razzakova's' identity documents, including her passport and work permit. That document had the seal of Ryazan police department, a city 200 km away from Moscow, and a stamp from Moscow's Chertanovo district police department. Moreover, the document stated that 'Munira Razzakova' was a citizen of Morocco. As expected, the maternity ward issued a birth certificate stating not that the child was born to Munira Usmonova, a citizen of Uzbekistan, but to 'Munira Razzakova', a Moroccan citizen. Munira and Umid continued to live together, not paying much attention to recovering the document. In the meantime, their second child was born. In 2018, police stopped Umid for an ID check and discovered that he had overstayed in Russia without proper documents, leading to his deportation. At first, Umid promised that he would send money to Munira so that she could recover her documents and return to Uzbekistan. However, he later stopped corresponding with Munira, who was now in Russia without the proper means to support herself or her children.

Initially, some friends and sympathisers in a shared flat helped with the housing rental and food expenses, but gradually she was left with nothing. Because she was kicked out of several rental flats, her case gained Uzbek-language media attention. This led to heated discussions in an Uzbek segment of social media. With the Uzbek Women's Committee[10] endorsement and the Uzbek Embassy's support, Munira was able to, first, recover her own identity documents and, later, her children's documents. This took her and her pro bono lawyer visiting many organisations in Russia and several months. Ultimately, Munira was able to leave Russia with her children (with money raised via social media) in mid-March 2020, just before the pandemic-induced lockdowns began in Russia and Uzbekistan.

The third case study focuses on the story of Farida, a female migrant from Uzbekistan, who became a mother of two children at the age of 16 and was herself raised in a single-parent household by her mother. Desperate to find a job, her mother went to Russia, taking 11-year-old Farida with her. In Russia's Lipetsk city, because they were living in a shared apartment with other tenants, another migrant raped the then 12-year-old Farida when her mother was at work. The rapist was sentenced to jail, but Farida became pregnant and decided not to abort, thus giving birth to a child at the age of 13. Since Farida herself was a minor, her mother was listed as the mother of the newborn child on the Russian birth certificate. Farida's mother juggled temporary low-paid jobs and, when Farida turned 15, she decided that her daughter should marry someone who could sustain her. Because Farida was still a minor, her mother decided that a *nikah,* a religious marriage ceremony not recognised by state authorities, was sufficient in order for her and another 35-year-old migrant to live together. Farida was 16 when she gave birth to her second child. At this point, both her mother and her husband had

abandoned her. Farida now found herself in a trap: she had neither a place to live nor documents to return to Uzbekistan. First, it would be extremely difficult without her mother's presence to obtain a passport from the Embassy of Uzbekistan in Moscow. Second, even if she managed to leave, she would not be able to travel with her older child, who is legally her mother's daughter. Technically, it would be possible to obtain travel documents if Farida's mother applies for her passport and signs a power of attorney for the child to travel with Farida. But Farida does not know her mother's whereabouts.

Lobar came to Russia with her husband very soon after their marriage. Late in her pregnancy, she was working as an assistant in a grocery shop, whilst her husband worked in a car service station, both in a town outside Moscow. Determined to return the debt they had accrued to cover their wedding expenses, both took extra hours and saved as much money as possible. This worsened Lobar's health, and she gave birth during the eighth month of pregnancy. The premature baby was admitted to the intensive care unit for several weeks. Later, the hospital staff demanded that the parents pay for the child's stay in intensive care, stating that foreigners are eligible for free medical care for only five days. Lobar, who was discharged from the hospital by then, and her husband did not have the requested money. As the days passed and the hospital bill kept climbing, the parents were not allowed to see their child. The child's health improved by the fifth week, and the hospital staff were preparing documents to send her to an orphanage. Desperate for the return of their own child, Lobar and her husband sought help from friends, which led to them becoming acquainted with rights activists. It was only through a petition from the Russian Red Cross Society that the parents were able to reunite with their baby and officially register their parenthood.

Tradition in the transnational social spaces of Central Asian female migrants

Central Asian societies represent an interesting blend of modernity and religious traditions. For centuries, Islam has played an important and deciding role in the organisation of societies' lives (Khalid 2007; Louw 2007). Whilst the Russian empire, which conquered the Central Asian *khanates* in the late nineteenth century, did not interfere much in the internal structure of these states, the Soviets carried out intensive modernisation projects impacting all aspects of life. Along with economic modernisation, Soviets' atheism and women's emancipation policies deeply affected the social organisation of the Central Asian republics (Edgar 2006; Northrop 2004). However, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, nation-building policies in each Central Asian country to some degree were accompanied by the partial reestablishment of traditional Islamic norms, influencing the social structure of society, especially the position of women (Alimova and Azimova 2000; Peshkova 2014).

Some claim that the post-Soviet period witnessed a rise in strong patriarchy, muting the voices of women alongside the re-Islamisation of Central Asian

societies (Tokhtakhodzhaeva 2008). Indeed, in some rural areas, domestic violence remains a serious issue (Haarr 2007; Childress, Panchanadeswaran and Joshi 2017). At the same time, we must note that the position of women in Central Asian societies is not homogenous and differs not only from country to country, from town to village, but also within communities. Akiner (1997) views contemporary Central Asian women as poised between two value systems of modernity and tradition, subscribing in part to both, but not entirely to either:

> Central Asian women themselves are caught between conflicting impulses: some feel the need to return to their 'authentic' roots, with a renewed emphasis on traditional domestic obligations; others, to continue along the road to greater personal independence and freedom of choice. The great majority, however, would like to retain the balance between tradition and modernity that was reached, slowly and sometimes painfully, during the Soviet period. (Akiner 1997: 263)

In other words, Central Asian societies have accommodated both the traditional and modern lifestyles of their populations, although the role of Islam has significantly grown in recent years. The level of a tradition's impact on people's lives varies territorially as well. Whilst individuals in urban locations are at ease choosing whether to strictly follow traditions, in rural areas traditions (mostly formed by Islamic norms) place intense pressure on determining an individual's behaviour.

At a community level, the *mahalla* (literally, neighbourhood) plays an important role as a unit of traditional self-governance in Tajik- and Uzbek-speaking communities across Central Asia. Whilst serving as an institution of mutual assistance and welfare, the *mahalla* also influences the attitudes of its residents through gossip as a powerful instrument of control (Urinboyev 2011; Dadabaev 2013). Therefore, people in their everyday activities attempt to refrain from actions that may yield disapproval from coresidents. In other words, in order to avoid gossip, one tries to behave in a way that is generally accepted as adhering with the rules of Islam and local traditions (which are mostly mixed and inseparable). Kane and Gorbenko (2015) also claim that it was the institution of the *mahalla* that was left intact by Soviet modernisation, which reinforced gender conservatism in post-Soviet Uzbekistan.

Hierarchies and social positions as well as gender roles in the family and community are largely defined by patriarchal and traditional values, where males are granted priority in making decisions (Cleuziou and Direnberger 2016). In a traditional family in Central Asia, men are considered the head of the family and, as such, are responsible for earning money, whilst women are viewed as homemakers and, thus, responsible for bearing children and taking care of household chores. The eldest male is delegated the authority to make most of the decisions, which become obligatory to other family members. Whilst cautious of fallacious generalisations, we must note that younger female family members in particular are expected to strictly obey the rules set by elder members. However,

this does not mean that women in Central Asia are passive followers of men's orders without any agency of their own. As Akiner (1997) puts it, women are able to negotiate a position acceptable to themselves, if not publicly, then within their families and their communities. Moreover, social disruptions associated with economic decline, high unemployment rates and population impoverishment in recent decades have altered gender roles within a significant share of families across the region. Initially, men became labour migrants, finding jobs mostly in Russia.[11] In many places across Central Asia, women—sometimes as the only breadwinner and sometimes together with a spouse—also became labour migrants.

As mentioned above, there are consistently more divorced and widowed women and fewer single women than men amongst Central Asian labour migrants in Russia (Rocheva and Varshaver 2017). Our own previous fieldwork also confirmed this tendency. Divorce in most traditional families across Central Asia is stigmatised, especially for women. A divorced woman may sometimes find herself unwelcome in her parents' home since she might bring shame to the family. This is especially true for rural areas. The need to sustain children independently, to buy one's own housing, to escape possible harassment or to simply start a new life may push divorced women to seek employment in Russia, where salaries are higher and one's marital status does not result in gossip. This also supports the notion that migration may not always derive from economic reasons alone.

According to transnationalism studies, migrants remain connected to several places—both to their sending and recipient societies—simultaneously. These connections are carried out through ideas, values and practices amongst others. Central Asian migrants more or less constantly live and work in Russia for a long time—sometimes for up to 15 years; but, they also maintain quite diverse, regular and intense relationships with their countries of origin, and the rhetoric of 'returning home' remains predominant for the overwhelming majority of Central Asians (Abashin 2016). This tells us how migrants—both male and female— carry their values and understandings of traditions. As Kubal (2013b: 68) notes, migrants respond to the legal environment of a host society in a plurality of ways, reflecting differences in values and attitudes towards law, different understandings and interpretations of it and, finally, different patterns of behaviour vis-à-vis law at the level of their respective societies. Moreover, as Mahler and Pessar put it, 'gender operates simultaneously on multiple spatial and social scales (e.g., the body, the family, the state) across transnational terrains' (2001: 445). We see this in the actions of the women in our case studies through the 'traces' of their cultural baggage, which they carried from their home societies.

For instance, it may seem odd that Farida chose to keep her child when she became pregnant following being raped. Islam importantly influences women's and men's decisions related to multiple aspects of reproductive, as well as maternal and child health, in the Uzbek context (Barrett 2009). Given that Islam prohibits abortions, it is quite possible that religious norms might have played a rather important role (whilst not ignoring the combination of other factors known only to Farida and her mother) when she decided to continue her pregnancy.

Traditional and patriarchal norms appear to have played a significant role in Munira's choices as well. In the interview to BBC, she explained that she knew Umid already had an official family. Nevertheless, she accepted becoming a 'second wife' (someone from another context might use the word 'mistress'). 'First, I was afraid; but since he was sincere and persistent [in his courtship], I agreed', she explained.[12] Several times she justified her decision 'because I had devoted myself', an expression in societies with predominant Islamic traditions used to indicate a wife's adherence to her husband's choices. Her complete reliance and dependence upon Umid's decisions crossed borders and continued in Russia as well, where both men and women are responsible for their own actions. Furthermore, it may seem strange that Munira did not care much about 'recovering the proper documents' even after the birth of her second child in Moscow. Yet, she relied on Umid and thought it would be fine because of his assurances. This may be partly due to the fact that men are primarily expected to take care of official documents in rural Central Asia.

The issue of single women living as civil partners with male migrants in Russia also deserves attention. A 2011 survey found that around 19% of Central Asian female migrants had a partner or lived in a civil marriage (Agadjanian and Zotova 2011). This number was the smallest amongst Kyrgyz women (8%), whilst Tajik (25.6%) and Uzbek (22.5%) women exhibited higher rates of civil partnerships. However, when these figures were examined for a 'second wife' status (i.e., when asked if she knew the partner had an official wife or another partner in their home country), the percentage was lower amongst Kyrgyz (5.5%), Tajik (22.5%) and especially amongst Uzbek (14.3%) women (Agadjanian and Zotova 2011). Interviews with both migrants and migration experts we conducted in 2017 and 2019 also confirmed that a certain proportion of single (divorced or unmarried) female migrants agree to live as civil partners with other male migrants. Whilst a relatively free environment in a large city (such as Moscow) allows room for individual lifestyle choices, the interviewees also insisted on economic justifications for this: male partners agree to cover some of the expenses of female migrants (e.g., rent, work permit fees and board).

Our case studies also partially confirm this idea. At least in Farida's case, her mother decided that Farida's 'marriage' formalised by a *nikah* (she could not officially marry, since she was still a minor) would relieve her of increasing expenses (renting a separate room and feeding a toddler). Whilst illegal and not widespread, having a civil partner in addition to an official marriage—or in other words, a man marrying, religiously, several women—has somehow become indicative of prosperity and success amongst a certain proportion of the male population in Central Asia. The great majority of women who accept becoming second wives were formerly married, but were either repudiated, divorced or widowed[13] (Cleuziou and Commercio 2016). It is unsurprising then that a number of female migrants in Russia, if they are not young, unmarried women or accompanying their spouses, are divorced or widowed. In this regard, accepting the role of 'second wife' may also become 'normal' for those who make such choices.

Conclusions

This chapter examined the specificities of the formation of transnational social spaces for labour migrants in Russia from the female perspective. Because most labour migrants are younger males, research has focused on their agency in male-dominated transnational social spaces, characterised by technological mobility and networks based on informality. Our case studies show that, although the reasons behind labour migration might be similar for both men and women, the consequences of migration can be drastically different for more vulnerable immigrant groups in migrant communities, particularly for women.

Our case studies demonstrate the significance of the tradition and practices of the sending countries in the formation of Central Asian female migrants' transnational social spaces and subsequent legal choices in Russia. Examining the legal culture (Kubal 2013b) that female migrants bring with them in connection with family structures and gender roles which shape their transnational social spaces in Russia help us understand how female migrants relate to their host country's laws and regulations.

Through our research, we raise the question regarding agency-focused transnationalism as an overarching perspective in the study of labour migrants in Russia. We found that transnational social spaces in our case studies did not include informed or equal choices for women. The female migrant case studies we present as representatives of vulnerable groups demonstrate limited opportunities of such migrants to endure the precarious migrant life. They were not in a position to manoeuvre around official state structures with individualistic strategies. The revolving door migration between Central Asia and Russia, a lack of social capital and financial resources, their dependent position within migrant communities and strict family traditions limit the real agency of many female migrants, which the concept of transnational social space assumes. Simultaneously, we note that migration can widen the transnational space of some female migrants who can utilise new opportunities in Russia.

Further studies should focus more on the structural and cultural circumstances of female migrant groups in relation to legal matters. Informality, which includes multiple types of actors and reasons, currently sustains a transnational social space wherein the relatively well-connected migrants—that is, typically, men—acquire rights and exercise these rights, whilst leaving other groups such as women and children in highly dependent positions. Instead of serving as an empowering source of survival for female migrants, the current transnational social space in which Central Asian migrant women live recycles the organisational pathologies of Russian authorities and the inequalities of the sending countries. Thus, the decisions female migrants take regarding legal matters in Russia often remain random, unpredictable and dependent upon informal networks.

Our examination suggests a need for further systematic investigation on the impact of the revolving door migration between Russian and Central Asia, specifically examining both the legal culture and transnationalism frameworks. In addition, more attention should be devoted to the impact of family structures and

the roles of family members in the lives of female migrants, as well as on the sending country strategies in cross-border migration regimes amongst various migrant groups.

Notes

1 Globally in 2019, 52% of international migrants were male; 48% were female (IOM 2019: 22).
2 We strictly adhered to the principles of confidentiality and anonymity in order to protect the identities of the migrants we spoke with during our fieldwork.
3 The empirical data collection was conducted under the research project 'Migration, shadow economy and parallel legal orders in Russia', by Anna-Liisa Heusala, Kaarina Aitamurto and Rustamjon Urinboyev in 2017, and Sherzod Eraliev in 2019.
4 BBC Uzbek Service, 'A migrant who became a second wife is kicked out with two children' (in Uzbek), 20 December 2019. Accessed 25 May 2020, https://www.bbc.com/uzbek/uzbekistan-50872438.
5 The Russian Ministry of Interior reported that there were 2.1 million people from Uzbekistan, 1.2 million from Tajikistan and 700,000 from Kyrgyzstan in late 2019. Selected indicators of the migration situation in the Russian Federation for January–December 2019 with a distribution by countries and regions (in Russian), 22 January 2020. Accessed 25 May 2020, https://xn--b1aew.xn--p1ai/Deljatelnost/statistics/migracionnaya/item/19365693/.
6 When one co-author of this chapter visited Moscow in the autumn of 2019, he was approached several times by *posredniki* (middlemen) or *qog'ozchilar* (literally, papermen in Uzbek) in and around Kazansky railway station, with offers of different types of 'clean' documents.
7 According to Russian officials, one-third of migrants are employed in retail, 16% in construction, 14% in transportation and communications, 7% in the hotel industry and 8% in domestic services (such as cleaning and caring for the elderly). Sputniknews, Trudovye migranty v samoizolyatsii, 6 April 2020. Accessed 25 May 2020, https://tj.sputniknews.ru/columnists/20200406/1031017523/trudovye-migranty-samoizolyaciya-perevody-koronavirus.html.
8 Fergananews, *Podkidyshi i tishina* (in Russian, Foundling and silence), 25 February 2020. Accessed 25 May 2020, https://fergana.ru/articles/115439/.
9 BBC Uzbek, 'A migrant who became a second wife is kicked out with two children (in Uzbek)', 20 December 2019. Accessed 25 May 2020, https://www.bbc.com/uzbek/uzbekistan-50872438.
10 A government agency in Uzbekistan inherited from the Soviet period that dealt with women's issues until its incorporation into the newly established Ministry of *Mahalla* and Family Affairs in February 2020.

11 One of the social consequences of this migration is that many male migrants found new families and divorced their wives. One study found that, each year, 14,000 Tajik migrants established new families in Russia and abandoned their wives (Malyuchenko 2015).

12 BBC Uzbek, 'A migrant who became a second wife is kicked out with two children (in Uzbek)', 20 December 2019. Accessed 25 May 2020, https://www.bbc.com/uzbek/uzbekistan-50872438.

13 As Cleuziou and Commercio (2016) note, women agree to a second wife status 1) to acquire economic resources in economically challenging times; 2) to acquire marital status in what remains a traditional society that dismisses an 'old maid', single or divorced woman and 3) to acquire biological resources, that is, to have children.

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7 Spiritual mobility

Alternative healing practices amongst Central Asian migrants in Moscow

Anna Cieślewska

Introduction

Central Asia is known for various forms of magical and healing practices. Folk medicine represents a part of cultural traditions based on plants, rituals, charms and prayers. Along with the collapse of public services and the deterioration of medical care following the fall of the Soviet Union, folk healing became increasingly popular. Currently, some people combine the methods of folk medicine with official healthcare to provide 'double protection'. Services from local healers are also attractive given their modest price in comparison with the cost of services from professional medical doctors. Furthermore, folk medicine is available almost everywhere and is accessible to everyone (Tursunova et al. 2014; Penkala-Gawęcka 2006, 2014).

Migrants from Central Asia in the Russian Federation (or Russia) represent every social layer, including spiritual leaders such as *mulla*s, clairvoyants, *kinachi* (a person who removes charms), *Ismaeli khalifa, bibi otun*s (female religious leaders), *tabib*s (healers) and others. Spiritual professionals offer various methods of healing and spiritual services to Central Asians and other Muslims as well as non-Muslim populations (see Oparin 2017; Cieślewska, Błajet 2020). Hüwelmeier and Krause (2010: 1–10) called this movement of people and religious entities 'the travelling spirit', referring to the circulation of imaginaries, money and ideas. The 'travelling spirit' involves channelling and transformative rituals related to prayers, musical performances, poetry recitation, amulet making and ritual foods as well as the development of newly emerging formal and informal spiritual places for the diaspora.

In this chapter, I examine how the mobility of migrants from Central Asia contributes to the transfer of alternative healing practices to Russia. In particular, I am interested in how migrants create informal and formal spaces for expanding spiritual healing and the way in which these practices function in the local alternative medicine market. Specifically, my research is guided by the following questions: Does a specific type of healing contribute to its formalisation? Does the migrant healer's position in Russia and/or her/his relationship to the Russian state or to a certain spiritual/religious institution determine the informal or formal character of the activity? How have healing practices from Central Asia been adapted to, and

absorbed by the local market of spiritual services, both informally and formally? Are traditional healing services an alternative to official medicine (biomedicine/ Western medicine, also other terms) due to cultural factors or because many migrants have limited access to medical services in Russia resulting from a lack of registration documents, funds or medical insurance amongst other reasons?

To address these questions, I present three case studies of migrant spiritual healers and/or religious leaders from Central Asia who provide spiritual services in Moscow. Each case depicts different aspects related to the mobility of healing services, migration and informality. First, I present the case of a woman from Tajikistan named Niso who works at a bazaar in *Tioplyi Stan* providing *hijama* to migrants in precarious situations. Niso's clients primarily work illegally and have no access to formal medical health services. Her informal activity is mostly determined by her personal situation since she also functions at the bottom tier of the Moscow migrant world.

The next case details the activity of *khalifa* Sultanbek, officially registered at the Ismailli 'Nur' centre (Regional Public Organisation NUR*)*, an official organisation for the Ismailli community in Russia based in Moscow. Stultabek provides religious services to Ismailli migrants, and informally writes talismans, a practice transferred from Pamir to Moscow. His case illustrates how the informality of spiritual service is determined by a formal institution such as the Nur centre, and how migrants cultivate their culture as part of their identity construction under the conditions of Moscow.

Lastly, I present Jamila, a clairvoyant from Kyrgyzstan who works at a registered medical facility in Moscow. She moved to Russia several years ago and began offering spiritual healing services to people not only from Central Asia but also to Russians and others. Her activity provides an example of how mobile spirituality becomes formalised and adapted to the local conditions. Simultaneously, however, she still exists on the verge of formal recognition, since the traditional Kyrgyz methods of healing she uses are mostly rejected by traditional biomedicine/ Western medicine and treated with scepticism by many people.

I argue that the informal nature of healing practices is related to the migrants' status in Moscow. This informality also reflects the role and function of these methods within a particular spiritual tradition. Various healing practices have come to Russia with migrants from Central Asia as part of their religiosity, and have, thus, become services offered on the 'spiritual market' to migrants and nonmigrants. This transfer takes place primarily informally through trust networks and is embedded in social relations. Some migrants use informal healing services as a coping strategy due to their limited access to medical care in Russia. Migrants also view certain practices as part of their identity, which helps them in their experience as migrants by connecting them with their country of origin.

Materials and methods

The materials presented in this chapter consist of data collected during fieldwork conducted over two months in Moscow in 2017 and two-and-a-half months in 2018.

I conducted the research together with Zuzanna Blajet (MA from Jagiellonian University), within the framework of the project 'Changes in the religious traditions of migrants from Tajikistan in the Russian Federation'.[1] The research methodology relies on participant observation and in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted in mosques, other religious facilities, in private flats and houses, in medical facilities, in cafes, at community events, in offices and marketplaces, as well as where Central Asian migrants frequented. Additionally, ethnographic material was collected during rituals and religious lessons we attended. In order to maintain their anonymity, the real names of the individuals we interviewed as well as the exact location of the research sites have been anonymised unless otherwise stated.

In Moscow—a large and multicultural agglomeration—migrants are dispersed, living and working in various places. Therefore, our research was conducted across multiple sites, and amongst people who are not always related to each other and belong to various networks (see Robben 2012). Migrants from Central Asia move to Moscow and travel to other cities or their countries of origin. Gupta and Ferguson (1992: 6–23) found that migrants belong to many places; hence, the nature of their relationship to a particular place is constantly reformulated. This relationship further influences the activities they undertake, including the spiritual and healing services attached to those locations. With regard to spiritual activities, some are performed at official Islamic institutions and medical facilities, whilst others take place in places such as the flats of clients or spiritual professionals, cafes and private businesses. In some cases, spiritual leaders contact their clients online or over the phone, creating an additional space of interaction. Therefore, the concept of 'translocal ethnography' is also relevant to this research, since various actors and activities are interconnected and interact with each other across multiple sites simultaneously (see Hannerz 2012).

Informality, migrants and spiritual services

Following Ledeneva (2018: 1–5), and Morris and Polese (2014), I consider informality as including various unregulated activities aimed at solving specific problems in circumstances when formal institutions and practices limit or prevent effective actions. Informality can be described as 'ways of getting things done'. In most cases, informal practices are related to economic and market mechanisms, although the ways in which they are exercised are determined by sociocultural factors.

Alternative forms of healing have always occupied spaces between formal and informal spheres given their uncertain status vis-à-vis biomedicine. In Central Asia, complementary and spiritual healing is mostly provided informally by spiritual leaders. Spiritual leaders have always been highly esteemed, and their formal status is much less important than their personal charisma, family origin and/or healing abilities. In addition, various alternative methods of healing are legitimised by Islam and traditions passed from generation to generation. Other forms of alternative medical practices recently emerged, and have been absorbed and adjusted to local conditions. Moreover, since the 1990s, attempts have been

made to formalise some folk medicine practices, especially in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, in order to regulate the industry of alternative healing and prevent quackery. These attempts also stem from the pragmatism of local authorities aware of the difficulties faced by official healthcare services. Alternative medicine, to some extent, represents a substitute for public services. As a result, a number of facilities for alternative medicine or associations of healers have been registered (see Penkala-Gawęcka 2006, 2018).

Regardless of the status of healing services in the countries of origin, traditional practices are channelled abroad mostly informally through various networks and flows. The process of their mobility is associated not only with the movement of people but also with other kinds of circulation, such as the transfer of money, images, information, technologies and ideas. Some healing and spiritual activities are moving from Central Asia to Russia. Other religious practices are absorbed by migrants in other regions (i.e.: Europe, the Middle East, the Gulf states and Pakistan) and, then, transferred to Russia or to their countries of origin. This process is fluid and depends on a particular practice and/or spiritual leader. Most migrant healers modify their activities, adapting them to the conditions of migration (see Rosenberg and Shannon 2018).

Following Wong and Levitt (2014: 1–2), I consider the transfer of religious ideas not as a homogeneous process, but as producing different levels of contact with their potential recipients in the places they reach. Similar to other travellers, migrants transfer faith and spiritual practices in various ways and for various purposes. Moreover, the spiritual dimensions of religious practices do not exclude their commercial functions. Consequently, healing services represent a part of the spiritual industry operating within the mechanisms of capitalism. Religious symbols, ideas and practices can represent 'goods' or 'commodities' in relation to their production, promotion, distribution and appropriation (Obadia and Wood 2011: xix). Those religious practices are redistributed in an open and competitive market (Obadia and Wood 2003, cited in Obadia 2011: xx). In the context of the 'travelling spirit' and the circulation of spiritual services, Central Asian migrants are relatively new suppliers. Their popularity resulted from the increasing demand for such practices in Russia not only amongst Muslims but also amongst non-Muslims. Various spiritual figures from Central Asia occupy a specific niche in Moscow, competing with each other as well as with other practitioners.

Krasheninova (2015: 110) found that the demand for alternative healing services in Russia has dynamically developed. Various forms of alternative medicine have gained popularity amongst people. In particular, this appears to stem from the failures of the Russian healthcare system as well as the cultural and ideological attitudes of people who do not trust official medicine. Informal healthcare includes alternative healing practices as well as some activities associated with biomedicine/Western medicine that escape official records. Some alternative healing practices function legally within the medical services market. Despite the specific nature of alternative medicine and spiritual or healing practices, they also take on forms similar to other informal practices, such as tax evasion and the lack of accounting and reporting business activities amongst others.

Barsukova and Ledeneva (2018: 487–488) point out, however, that legal rules in Russia are often ambiguous across various spheres, such that alternative healing is not exceptional. There is no clearly defined border between formal rules and informal practices. In fact, some informal practices are connected to formal rules and institutions. As a result, in many cases, informality is not an option, but a necessity, forming part of the system of governance. In terms of healing services, their status can be described as what Polese et al. (2017) call informality 'beyond the state' since they are not effectively regulated, managed or recognised by state institutions. Thus, the state is unable to work out the proper mechanisms of identifying and formalising such informal practices.

According to Kashnitsky and Demintseva (2017: 11), given an uncertain financial and legal status, poor knowledge of the mechanisms of healthcare as well as unclear rules for receiving medical assistance in Russia, many migrants seek formal healthcare only in extreme situations. Galeazzi (2017), who conducted research amongst African migrants in Calabria (Italy), argued that indigenous practices of healing brought by migrants become part of their coping mechanisms stemming from the lack of other alternatives to medical care. Thus, migrants create their own informal networks to disseminate traditional healing practices, adjusting them to new conditions.

In Russia, many migrants are pushed into the informal sphere, obtaining false residence registrations (*propiska*), working without work certificates (*patent*) or operating informally in other ways (see also Turaeva 2018). In Moscow, it is possible to buy a false *patent*, registration or even an ID card if one knows the right people and places. Therefore, not infrequently, informality dominates over formal actions and institutions, such that healing practices are not exceptional. Even if migrants follow all of the legal rules and have the right to use formal healthcare services, it is not guaranteed that they will receive appropriate treatment. One solution available to them is to seek assistance within their networks of migrants and use alternative methods of healing such as 'emergency assistance'. Only when health-related issues become serious will individuals do everything they can to secure the funds necessary to seek formal medical care. Others decide to return to their country of origin where they have a network of family and friends they can rely on for assistance.

In most of the cases I observed, spiritual healing services were provided informally based on networks of friends, co-workers and family with the exception of a few officially registered alternative medicine centres. Healers or spiritual professionals work without a *patent* and do not attempt to formalise their activities. Notwithstanding this reality, most of them have been legitimised by religious or cultural institutions, such as mosques or religious centres.

Spiritual mobility and its practices

Case study 1: Hijama at the Tioplyj Stan bazaar

One of the popular practices amongst migrants and other Muslims in Russia is *hijama* (cupping therapy). Believed to be a form of healing recommended by

the Prophet Muhammad, *hijama* is an example of a practice brought from the Middle East and other Muslim regions and popularised in Russia and Central Asia following the collapse of the Soviet Union.[2] Some believe that *hijama* can remedy almost all ailments, and can even replace traditional medical treatment. It is performed by various categories of people including *mulla*s, healers and others. As a rule, *hijama* therapy should be provided by a man to male clients and by a woman to female clients. In Russia, *hijama* is widely advertised on the internet by various specialists, with some practitioners claiming to hold a medical degree. Places also offer courses on *hijama* and issue certificates, although no formal medical education is required to enter a course. Practically anyone can learn how to perform *hijama*, and cupping therapy equipment sets are available in most stores that sell Muslim devotional items and literature. A few specialists offer this form of healing in registered facilities; in most cases, however, it is offered informally in private flats, mosques and other locations. *Hijama* is available to everyone for a low price, which, according to Islamic tradition, represents a voluntary gift to the therapist (Krasheninnikova 2016: 328–329; Cieślewska, Błajet 2020).

I met Niso (52 years old) through my male friend who offers *hijama* to men. Niso is from Dushanbe (Tajikistan) and, at the time of my research in 2017, she had been working in Moscow for 15 years. For several years, she had also sold jackets at a market near the *Tioplyj Stan* metro station. Prior to coming to Russia, Niso had a husband, but he was drug dependent and she left him. Eventually, she became the second wife to another man. Her current husband comes from the Gharm region of southern Tajikistan, where he lived with his first wife and four children. Whilst working for years in Russia, Niso met her husband only on rare occasions during her visits to Tajikistan.

Whilst living in Dushanbe, Niso worked in a shopping centre. She also performed the tasks of a *kinachi* (charm remover). In her own words, people called her *tabib* (healer). She inherited the art of removing *kina*[3] from her ancestors: her grandmother, great-grandmother and her former mother-in-law were all *kinachi*. Her mother did not accept the gift (*nasiba*) and, as a result, was punished by the spirits—her children were sick, such that a few died. Niso could not become pregnant for 15 years and finally decided to adopt her sister's daughter.[4] Someone told Niso that she also has a gift, which should be used to heal people and remove the evil eye. Niso said that she had a *pari*[5] spirit which helps her during rituals. In Moscow, however, she rarely removes spells, because she sometimes drinks wine. Since alcohol is *haram* (forbidden in Islam), she considers herself ritually impure. Thus, she could not deal with removing charms. Furthermore, at *Tioplyj Stan*, activities related to removing spells were performed by the *Luli* women of Samarkand,[6] who typically stood on the street to attract potential clients. Niso likes the *Luli* because one of them saved her life during childhood. Therefore, she sometimes sent clients to them.[7]

Five years ago, Niso was working at another market in Moscow selling vegetables. She met a Chinese woman there who taught her massage techniques and the cupping therapy. Later, Niso began performing *hijama*. In her opinion, *hijama* helps with a variety of afflictions such as rheumatism, high blood

pressure, gout (arthritis), allergies, headaches, diabetes and even black magic. During the process of *hijama,* the Quran should be read. Niso, however, does not know the *sura*s from the Quran, so she uses YouTube-recorded *sura*s whilst performing cupping*.* Despite the religious recommendation that a woman cannot provide *hijama* to men, occasionally Niso does, for which she has been criticised by other religious individuals. Nevertheless, others respected her for her skills and knowledge. Since she is also a *kinachi*, her knowledge is associated with a centuries-long tradition of Central Asian spirituality. This grants Niso legitimacy to perform *hijama*, despite the fact that she does not have any medical qualifications or scriptural knowledge of Islam.

Niso provides *hijama* services primarily to migrants from Central Asia and the Caucasus, but also to Vietnamese working in the bazaar and only rarely to Russians. She is recommended by friends to other people and, in this way, gains new clients. This provides her with a relatively high status within the hierarchy of migrants at *Tioplyj Stan,* although does not change her general situation in Moscow. Like many migrants, she balances between formal and informal activities. She is in Russia legally, although she does not have a work permit *(patent).* She lives illegally in a small flat with ten other migrants. Yet, Niso does not attempt to change her situation or formalise some of her activities.

Legalising all activities as a poor migrant in Moscow is difficult, involving deal-ing with the authorities and bureaucracy with no guarantee of a positive outcome. Many migrants work informally through networks connecting them with employers who run formal businesses. Niso's Azerbaijani employer has a legal business at *Tioplyj Stan*, although Niso is employed informally. If the police raid her workplace, she walks between stalls and pretends to be a client. If caught by the police, she could be deported to Tajikistan unless she or her employer pay a bribe. Despite this unstable situation, Niso never considered formalising her activities by, for example, opening a massage and *hijama* salon. All of her activities rely on informal rela-tions: the place in her flat (Russian, *koyka*), 'permanent' work at the bazaar, *hijama* and massages. Niso viewed her stay in Moscow as a temporary stage in her life, despite lasting 15 years. Finally, at the beginning of 2018, Niso decided to return to Tajikistan.[8] In 2019, she returned to Moscow once again for a short period of time. Niso said that she currently performs *hijama* in Dushanbe for family and friends.[9]

The *Tioplyi Stan* bazaar in Moscow is a popular place, not only amongst Central Asia migrants but also amongst other Muslims. Apart from stands with ordinary goods, there are *halal* food stands, stores selling Asian goods, shops with Muslim devotional accessories, small restaurants with regional food from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, bakeries selling Central Asian pastries, hairdressing salons and beauty salons, as well as tailoring shops and other services mostly targeting migrants. Most of the clientele are involved in trade, whilst some find other types of employment. Migrants tend to be employed informally, perform-ing various tasks within formally registered businesses. Apart from this visible (although semiformal) layer to *Tioplyi Stan*, there is also its 'invisible', 'hidden' part associated with spiritual services such as informal healing or divination and religious activities.

Many migrants do not have insurance. Therefore, they cannot use formal medical facilities. Whilst several low-cost clinics for migrants operate in Moscow, mostly run by the Kyrgyz, many migrants cannot afford even such treatment. In addition, patients are often unable to afford the costs of medicines and transportation. Thus, some migrants opt to begin treatment only in emergency situations (Kashnitsky and Demintseva 2017; Cieślewska, Błajet 2020). *Hijama,* by contrast*,* represents an easy-to-access, low-cost treatment option, and many migrants do not have other alternatives. Sometimes *hijama* healers such as Niso provide advice regarding health issues, recommending other methods of healing such as herbs and pills that can be used on an ad hoc basis by the migrant in need. The *hijama* service can be performed at home or in other places. This form of healing does not require any official procedures, insurance or registration with a formal medical facility where one can be asked to present documents.

Both of the interlocutors who practise *hijama* in this study, as well as their clients, believe that it can help to restore balance to the body. This view corresponds with the original Arabic name of the practice (*Al-hijama*), which means 'to reduce in size', 'to return the body back to its natural state' or 'to balance the bodily humours' (Qureshi et al. 2017: 174). As previously mentioned, Central Asians tend to believe in alternative forms of healing as much as in biomedicine/Western medicine. One reason for this stems from their limited access to good quality medical services. However, such beliefs are also rooted in a specific understanding of health in Islam based on the assumption that the body and mind represent a single integrated unit. Thus, using healing methods perceived as 'Islamic' (i.e., *hijama*) is considered appropriate in healing various afflictions (see Majed 1999). In Moscow, where the migrants' situation remains uncertain, *hijama,* as well as other religious practices, may also offer psychological support. Thus, it gives people a sense of belonging to the spiritual community of Muslims. Although some of my interlocutors, for various reasons, do not pray or attend a mosque regularly, all of them consider themselves Muslims. They view performing or using the *hijama* as part of the religious practices belonging to the Islamic spiritual system. In a sense, this is also viewed as a way to express their piousness and devotion to Islam. Some people perceived *hijama* as a complementary form of healing, whilst others believed it could help them to resolve most health problems.

Migrants adapted their attitude towards healing to the local conditions in Russia, transforming it and absorbing new practices. This process is well illustrated in the case of Niso, a traditional healer (*kinachi*) who learnt to perform *hijama* in Moscow and offers her services to migrants, whilst also transferring this practice to Tajikistan. This practice provides her with an additional income as well as raises her prestige since she is considered a *tabib* at *Tioplyi Stan*, a 'bazaar doctor' who helps people in need. In Dushanbe, she also uses her new skills to heal people and to earn an income.

Case study 2: Talismans and teshtobs

Another popular spiritual practice is writing talismans (*tamor* or *tumor*) and *teshtob*s, prepared by Ismaili *khalifa*s. *Tumor*s are amulets made of paper aimed

at securing good health, success and love, and getting rid of fear as well as helping with other life problems. The *tumor* is wrapped in a piece of cloth, hung on a string and worn around the sick part of the body or close to the body. It is both curative and preventive in nature. The writing comes from the Quran, Hadith or other spiritual books (Koen 2003: 157–158; Cieślewska, Błajet 2020). A *teshtob* is a piece of paper with a spiritual writing. In the case of an illness or other adversity, a *teshtob* is dissolved in water and drunk. As a rule, a *khalifa* or *mulla* acquire knowledge regarding preparing talismans and *teshtob*s within a family network, learning from special books and tables (Cieślewska, Błajet 2020).[10] Amulets and talismans represent popular forms of protection against misfortune throughout Asia. Talismans are prepared by spiritual professionals but can also be made by a person in need or bought at bazaars or other places (Penkala-Gawęcka 2006: 157).

Sultanbek (40 years old) is a *khalifa* officially registered at the Nur centre within the Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board (ITREB), a unit responsible for religious education. He graduated from the Institute of Oriental Studies in Khorog (the Tajik Badakhshan), where he learnt the Arabic and Persian languages. Shortly after completing his education, he worked as a journalist and interpreter in Tajikistan but struggled to make ends meet. As a result, in 2002, he and his wife moved to Russia. Initially, Sultanbek did not speak Russian well and took many odd jobs to survive. Afterwards, he enrolled at the Moscow Islamic University, where he learnt to recite the Quran and the principles of Islam. In 2007, he became an official *khalifa* registered at the Nur centre. He is, thus, eligible to conduct rituals such as weddings and funeral ceremonies as well as other rituals. In addition, he writes talismans and *teshtob*s. Officially, all *khalifa*s working in Moscow should be registered at the Nur centre in order to obtain a certificate. However, there are also folk *mulla*s who provide similar services without being registered at Nur. Some enjoy a great deal of respect and popularity in their respective circles.

Nur's authorities do not openly support the use of talismans and *teshtob*s. They believe that such practices are not in line with the vision of 'modern' Islam promoted by Aga Khan. Furthermore, they explain that those healing methods are based on old spiritual wisdom, which served people in the past. Since medicine has advanced, they view these old methods as no longer useful.

However, people still order talismans and *teshtob*s from *mulla*s and *khalifa*s, believing that charms and prayers written within a talisman have the power to heal, protect them from evil or harm, bring good luck or provide hope to solve their problems. Some migrants order talismans from the 'Moscow' *mulla*s or *khalifa*s, whilst others bring or order them from their trusted *mulla*s who live in Pamir.

In this context, Sultanbek's activities can be regarded as psychological assistance. The complex set of challenges migrants face trigger psychological strains. Most migrants from Central Asia are quite reluctant to seek professional psychological help. Even if some agree to do so, seeking psychological support is complicated and expensive, such that only a few well-established migrants can afford such a luxury. Nevertheless, most migrants would prefer to ask for advice

from a respected person from within their network or from a spiritual figure rather than a professional psychologist. Not infrequently, religious leaders provide migrants with counselling for emotional problems or moral dilemmas. Therefore, the role of the *khalifa* can be understood as a link between the world of Pamir, for which migrants long, and Russia. His religious activity, as well as talismans and *teshtob*s, can be regarded as a coping strategy to which migrants resort whilst looking for relief from everyday problems.

According to tradition, the *khalifa*s' work represents a community service and is unpaid. They only receive some informal remuneration from their clients in return for performing certain services. Sultanbek receives his income by working for a transportation company. In addition, he writes talismans and *teshtob*s mostly for Ismailis but for others as well. Despite the fact that Sultanbek is an officially registered *khalifa,* and the Nur centre does not encourage writing talismans, given the existing demand, he provides such services. In some measure, the informal nature of his activity is determined by tradition, but also by Nur's rules since his work is based on discretionary donations from people, and channelled through the network of Pamiri migrants. Sultanbek's education, religious upbringing and work with the Nur centre grant him legitimacy to act as a spiritual leader. On this basis, he has been able to establish a group of followers in Moscow.[11]

Marquardt et al. (cited in Knott 2016: 80) argue that, in addition to facilitating the migrants' adaptation, religious practices, narratives and symbols help people to accept and understand the dislocation process as well as shape their new identities and realities. Gordy (2018: 217–220) points out that a shared identity within a certain group functions as a source of solidarity between migrants who possess the same values and recognisable symbols. Informal activities performed within the group can act as support for its members, especially in difficult situations. Pamiris in Moscow form quite a hermetic circle: they do not attend a mosque, since their religious practices are treated with distrust by some Sunni migrants. The Nur centre brings together the Ismailis from Pamir, organising various activities, some of which are of a religious nature. Yet, in the case of the practice of writing talismans and *teshtob*s, people transfer the practice through informal channels within their ethnic network. The social capital based on their spiritual practices helps Pamiri migrants to cultivate their identity abroad as well as to reconstruct their social world and continue their relationships with other compatriots abroad. At present, Ismaili talismans are mostly circulated within the Pamiri network, representing something new on the local 'spiritual market'. It remains to be seen if these practices move beyond the Pamiri network to become yet another product for the wider public in the spiritual industry in Moscow.

Case study 3: A Kyrgyz psychologist

Jamila (55 years old) is a clairvoyant and healer, who removes charms and heals people. She also graduated from medical college. Jamila performs divination by reading stones. She inherited her profession from her grandmother, but

her grandfather also cast stones. This means of divination is popular amongst Kazakhs and Kyrgyz. The clairvoyant casts 41 stones, grains or dried balls of sheep dung. People believe that their arrangement allows one to see the past, clarify the present, predict the future or diagnose and predict the course of various ailments or the effects of charms (Penkala-Gawęcka 2006: 157). In addition, Jamila performs rituals to remove an evil spirit or to open someone's path.

Jamila is from Jalalabad in Kyrgyzstan but has worked in Moscow for several years. Previously, she worked in Bishkek and Almaty. In both cities, she was employed in alternative medicine centres. She came to Moscow at the invitation of a wealthy Kazakh, who had experienced persistent sleeping problems. Because she managed to cure him, he introduced her to several influential people, who also became her patients. Finally, she moved to Moscow, and together with a medical doctor of Russian origin, opened a medical facility which fuses Western medical therapies with alternative healing methods. Today, four people work in the clinic: Jamila, a Ukrainian masseur, a Chinese acupuncturist and the above-mentioned Russian who runs the business. The facility is located in the centre of Moscow and has a number of patients. The director of the clinic presents Jamila as a 'psychologist'. Following my question about her profession, she called herself *közüachik,* a term used for a clairvoyant in Kyrgyzstan.

Jamila earned her reputation as a solid specialist and accepted a wide array of people from different backgrounds: Russians, Kazakhs, Caucasians, Tatars and others. Migrants from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan or Uzbekistan rarely come to the clinic, since most of them cannot afford to pay for the visit. Jamila shares her income with the medical facility and, thus, she cannot lower the price of her services even for her compatriots. In most cases, she provides them with advice only over the phone. In this way, she also casts stones to look into the situations of her clients.

Since Jamila's patients belong to various nationalities and religions, she must adapt her communication methods to different worldviews and beliefs. Endres (2010: 119–123), writing about spirit mediumship in Vietnam, found that masters of rituals adapt their performance to a particular situation, absorbing new ideas and transforming old practices. That is, they tailor some services to the demands of the clients. Jamila also adapts Kyrgyz practices and rituals to the local conditions. She developed new methods of work for her practice with people in Moscow. For example, she advises her Christian patients to visit the church as part of the healing process. People who do not belong to any denomination are told to visit a place with strong energy. Amongst her Muslim clients, Jamila sends them to the mosque to pray and perform rituals.

Krasheninova (2015: 107, 110), describing informal medical services in Russia, pointed out that a sceptical attitude towards alternative forms of healing lowers their status on the medical services market, despite some practices representing a part of the formal scheme of healthcare, balancing between medicine and healing services. In the case of Jamila, regardless of her status and the terms describing her profession, her practices extend beyond what is considered medicine, since

casting stones or removing charms is not recognised by official psychotherapy, nor it is supported by many Muslim religious leaders. At the same time, she has a legally registered business activity and pays taxes. Thus, she has formalised and professionalised her practices, which were traditionally performed informally.

At the beginning of her life in Moscow, Jamila conducted various forms of healing informally for her clients. She registered her activity only at a later stage. She also needed time to convince her non-Asian clientele that her methods of healing were appropriate to them. At present, she holds a well-established position as a healer given her years of experience, knowledge and extensive personal contacts. Nevertheless, Jamila should not be considered a typical economic migrant, since her decision to move to Russia was not forced by an urgent economic need, as in the cases of Niso or Sultanbek. Jamila, by contrast, arrived in Moscow at the invitation of her rich client, sizing the opportunity to develop professionally and to change her life.[12] In this way, Kyrgyz traditional practices have become part of the spiritual mobility influencing the Moscow alternative medicine industry.

Conclusions

Alternative healing services are brought to new locations by migrants, where such practices are transformed and adapted. Whether these practices are performed informally or registered officially depends on cultural factors and the rules of a specific institution, but also depends on the status of the migrant healer. Migrants use informal healing services because of their wide availability and low cost, and because they trust alternative methods related to their spiritual system.

Varshaver and Rocheva (2018) argue that those migrants who came to Moscow long ago have managed to obtain a certain status and are 'growing old'. They are established in Russia, often live with their families, have properties, own businesses and work legally. Thus, they are not interested in functioning informally (from the point of view of the Russian legal system), such as the case of Jamila who has a legally registered business and a wide circle of friends and patients. Yet, the traditional Kyrgyz spiritual practices she performs are not fully recognised neither by practitioners of biomedicine/Western medicine nor by some religious leaders from the Central Asian diaspora.

Khalifa Sultanbek, who arrived in Moscow 15 years ago, functions on the verge of formal and informal activities when providing spiritual services, although he also has a stable job in a transportation company, which grants him a formal and regular income. *Khalifa*s in Moscow perform various services for the community, which are officially supported by the Nur centre. Yet, the remuneration they receive is informal, not only owing to their legal status but in accordance with tradition as well. Officially, the Nur centre does not support writing talismans and *teshtob*s, although people order them for themselves or their relatives. Even if talismans and *teshstob*s function on the margins of what is formally accepted, they carry a cultural legitimacy. These practices are part of a phenomenon van Dijk (2011: 102) describes as creating a 'home away from home'. He applies this term to religious groups which welcome newcomers; here, I borrow it to describe

all elements which pave the way for migrants to build material and spiritual bonds in a new place.

With regard to *hijama,* although it is performed in some registered places in Moscow, migrants such as Niso provide it mostly informally to other migrants. Despite living in Russia for a long time, she never established herself sufficiently to leave the informal sphere. This reality reflects a consequence of circumstances as well as her attitude towards her work in Moscow, which she always treated as an interim stage of her life. Many of her clients cannot afford alternative treatment beyond informal practices. Others use *hijama* to supplement official medicine.

To conclude, migrants create multiple networks of informal connections; spiritual services are transferred from their countries of origin, where they are not always officially recognised, whilst holding social legitimacy. In Moscow, spiritual or healing practices serve as a source of support for people as well as a means of improving one's social position and increasing their income. Migrants find a niche amongst various alternative forms of healing, gradually transforming the spiritual market in Russia. Furthermore, migrants' social and geographical dislocation also triggers their transformation, since they adapt to the local conditions and reformulate the meanings of their practices. Some of these meanings are transferred back to their countries of origin, influencing the local market for alternative healing practices.

Notes

1 The article was written as a part of the project no. 2016/21/DHS1/03403 financed by The National Science Centre in Poland within the programme 'Sonata 11'.
2 According to some of my interlocutors, the hijama was previously little known. Some claimed that traditionally Central Asian gypsies performed cupping, and the entire process was carried out using the horn of an animal. Nevertheless, further research is needed to explore this topic.
3 According to beliefs, *kina* (the evil eye) can be cast unintentionally or by a person who has bad intentions towards someone. *Kina* could result in headaches, depression, various diseases as well as failures in life; *kina* is negative, but it is not a curse (in Tajik, *jodu*) the removal of which is more difficult and requires very specific skills (see, for example, Cieślewska 2017: 108; Snesarev 1969: 35; Tursunova et al. 2014: 52–56).
4 According to Central Asian practices, if a couple or a person cannot have children, their relatives can give away one of their children to a childless couple/individual.
5 *Pari* is a spirit present in various legends and beliefs in Central Asia, probably derived from Avesta or earlier beliefs.
6 Roma (Gypsies) who live in Central Asia; they are known by the common name *'Luli'*.
7 In Moscow, the *Luli* from Central Asia practise fortune telling, remove charms and sell Islamic accessories. They work in various bazaars as well as around the main mosque (author's field data 2017, 2018; see Bessonov 2008).
8 All of the information about Niso and her activities were collected in October and November 2017 in Moscow during interviews and meetings with her as well as through observing the *hijama* she performed.
9 We met Niso during Ramadan in 2019 at *Tioplyia Stan* when she returned to Moscow for three months.

10 They are labelled tables of correspondence, which include magic formulas as well as various columns and indices to prepare talismans, *teshtob*s and the like.

11 All of the information about Sultanbek and his activities were collected during interviews and meetings with him in 2017 and 2018, as part of the collection of ethnographic material completed together with Zuzanna Blayet. She also collected information on the functioning of the Nur centre and the work of *khalifa*s in Moscow.

12 All of the information about Jamila and her activities were collected during my visit to Moscow in 2014 as well as through research completed in 2017 and 2018. This research involved interviews and meetings with Jamila and observations of the rituals she performs.

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8   Roadsides of mobility

Informal socioeconomic strategies in suburban western Poland

Agata Stanisz

Introduction

This chapter explores the significance of infrastructure modernisation in the postsocialist transformation. In doing so, I examine the impact of the A2 motorway in parts of western Poland, focusing specifically on the people, communities and businesses located along its corridor and the roadway it replaced—national roadway 92 (DK92)—previously the primary east–west route running through central Poland. The A2 is a concrete belt with acoustic barriers and a high fence running parallel to it. Parking spaces, service centres, toll stations, intersecting bridges, overpasses and trestles accompany the A2. The motorway can be perceived as a material object, yet I primarily view it here as a co-inhabitant whereby people and animals reside in the same local universe with it bordering the Wielkopolskie and Lubuskie provinces. The motorway, supported by European funding and supplanting an incomplete communist-era roadway-construction endeavour, serves as a perfect symbol of infrastructure modernisation. Furthermore, I recognise its connection to the geopolitical reconfiguration accompanying the postsocialist shift in Poland. I argue here, however, that the actual function, meaning and impact of this project—and others like it—cannot be understood without reference to social practices and meaning making in communities. Thus, the emic perspective on infrastructure, modernisation and transformations adopted here and the focus on informality allow us to move away from a focus on the success stories of Poland's supposed 'return to Europe' and instead gain insight on the less visible aspects of emerging entrepreneurialism and poverty obscured by the concrete walls and neon lights of the motorway.

Informality is applied here to a broad constellation of phenomena: some obviously illegal, others exploiting loopholes, but primarily representing daily acts of simply getting by. Informality is then understood as being co-constitutive of modernisation and the postsocialist transition of the economy, social relations, life chances and migration patterns in a borderland region. Informality is something that transforms the functions of an object as monumental as a motorway. My central question, then, becomes how is the infrastructure that forms a key part of Poland's postsocialist modernisation interpreted, used and transformed by the people living and working within its vicinity? And, what role does informality

play in these processes? I also explore the multiple shades of informality, transecting the spectrum of illegality to legality, criminality to kinship. The local region of Lubusz–Greater Poland and the Polish–German borderlands are situated within the broader context of globalisation, global crises and migration patterns, as well as in the context of shifting conceptions of Eastness and Westness in Europe.

I argue that modernisation represents an uncompleted process, but that developing a large roadway infrastructure has been ideologically employed to mark Poland's transition to a modern and Western European country as complete. However, the impact of the A2, like many infrastructure projects, is multidirectional, resulting both in emerging forms of entrepreneurship and in new forms of poverty. Thus, my analysis primarily focuses on other grassroots economic practices taking place in local roadside communities. That is, I focus on the activities of the people who create them, and, thus, the activities undertaken within the conditions of increased mobility and flows. By doing so, I reveal the rarely perceived mechanisms and effects of modernisation, a concept synonymous with the postsocialist transformation.

Some impacts are paradoxical. The apparent democratisation of mobility after 1989, including easier access to motor vehicles and an expanding roadway infrastructure, resulted in decreased immobility for some alongside significant and wide-ranging changes. Public transportation cuts took place, whilst opportunities to shop became increasingly concentrated in larger centres. Simultaneously, informality helped individuals navigate around these new inequalities. As I show below, informality emerged through increases in door-to-door trade, neighbours assisting one another with transportation or through private often unlicensed minibus services moving labour migrants to the region from farther east or onwards to Germany. Mobilities associated with labour migration reflect the broader region, increasingly representing a transit zone marked by temporary settlement. Yet this also mirrors a historical pattern given the region's recent history, thereby effecting population transfers. Local German populations were removed and replaced by Poles, either as voluntary settlers from central Poland or as forced migrants from Poland's eastern borderlands, becoming part of the USSR after 1945. In general, the area is marked by a certain tension, such that the area is geopolitically isolated with several generations feeling 'at home'. The opportunities—or the necessity—of labour migration, however, also disrupt and unsettle populations.

My ethnographic research, therefore, traces the attitudes and practices of the population and those using this borderland space which, whilst particular in its history and location, could also offer insight into broader debates on modernisation and the areas affected by deindustrialisation or the loss of key industries.

Here, I present my research conducted over a three-year period from 2013 to 2016, which formed a part of a larger project 'Moving modernisations: The influence of the A2 motorway on local cultural landscapes'[1]. As a part of this project, my approach predominantly concentrated on speaking with people. However, reality at times cannot be expressed with words alone. With this in mind, I also observed automobile traffic as well as customers at roadside pubs

and bars, and read announcements placed at bus stops and on posts. Our research team archived thousands of internet websites, studied police and fire department reports and analysed private and official chronicles stored in libraries and public administration and forestry district offices. Many of us on the larger project team lived onsite during our fieldwork, thereby experiencing the paradoxes of just how difficult it is to move around this space marked by a roadway infrastructure project without a private car at our disposal. We used bikes, hitchhiked and took journeys offered by local residents. I worked in the spirit of multisite ethnography, following people, objects and problems. Often, I returned to places I previously visited.

The research area ultimately encompasses the 170-km motorway connecting the Polish–German border in Słubice with Poznań. The most intensive research was conducted around the area with towns varying in population size (from Świebodzin with 22,000 inhabitants to Jarosławiec with about 12 inhabitants), social structures, institutional and cultural settings and quality of public infrastructure. Despite these differences, the specific roadside aesthetics and economy remained a shared feature. The landscape amongst these primarily small villages is littered with establishments catering to long-distance transportation and tourist industries (motels, hotels, petrol stations, bars, restaurants and nightclubs) and service points, the operation of which revolves around automobility (purchasing pallets[2], lorries, satellite-navigation device repair shops, tyre retreading services, service stations and car washes), warehouses or shipping and logistical centres. The visual aesthetics hardly reflect urban landscapes.

Additionally, during the period of our research, these visual aesthetics were undergoing changes. Small local shops began disappearing from the landscape of most towns. This also happened to wayside bars, petrol stations and even motels and hotels. Instead, large real estate 'for sale' signs appeared, new service centres for long-distance transportation opened and new discount stores quite popular in Poland were added to the scenery. Here, then, I provide some flavour to the postsocialist transformation, as an open-ended process connected to global processes, complete with changes to migration patterns and labour markets, as well as regional shifts in the dynamics of relationships between East and West. These features clearly emerge in the 100-km section between Nowy Tomyśl and the Polish–German border crossing in Świecko, the focus of this chapter.

In what follows, I begin by outlining emic definitions and practices of informality, focusing specifically on their significance for understanding postsocialist modernisation efforts. Then, I present information related to the A2 motorway project and the region under investigation, in particular, the economic and social conditions in the vicinity of the A2 and DK92 corridor. I, next, examine specific informal practices and economies that span spectrum continuum, from illegality and criminality to everyday practices of just getting by. Drawing upon my ethnographic research, I analyse the illegal fuel trade specifically, then cuts to public transportation and innovative neighbourhood informal transit solutions— that is, some of the paradoxes of (im)mobilities. Next, I turn to the sex trade in the region, also impacted to some degree by the A2 bypass of DK92, whilst also

highlighting the connection between sex work and international migration. This leads to a presentation of international transit and labour migration, followed by an outline of the informality involved in clientelism, or securing passing trade from tour buses or the hospitality industries' bypassing of regulations to secure customers. Next, I explore what Tomasz Rakowski (2016) called the 'art of informality', with a particular focus on the (de)stabilisation of the population in this Polish–German borderland resulting from the broader socioeconomic impact of the postsocialist transformation. I conclude by offering reflections on how the impact of informality in this space is typical of other localities affected by infrastructure modernisation in the postsocialist space and beyond.

In keeping with my view of the roadway infrastructure as an actor and co-inhabitant of the spaces it occupies, I also view human actors as capable of transforming this infrastructure. Thus, I argue that informal practices and conceptions of it remain crucial to modernisation and the postsocialist transformation.

Emic definitions of informality

Obvious differences exist between emic and etic understandings of informality. For a scholarly analysis, we must find the most fitting interpretation or analysis of local understandings of the concept of informality and related ideas.

In this section, I present local definitions of informality that emerged in my research and as practised in the context of roadside communities. The following quote from the owner of a nightclub offers one such illustration of ways of getting by:

> You were always up to something, right? This area is like this: you always have to be up to something. There are times for such activities, now there are times for others. … Nothing's changed, only the name, right? People don't change. Only the system has changed, but what about it? There's always some issue, something's happening, so the people stuff their pockets, right?

Here, the informant suggests that, whilst social and political systems might change, and infrastructure may be transformed, ordinary members of the community get by only through informality and rule bending. Inherent in this is the idea of *kombinowanie* or 'being up to something'.

Informality, which I present as a response to the roadside living conditions, has been more broadly influenced by the postsocialist condition of Polish society as a whole (see Bernhard and Karakoç 2007; Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2013). Although difficult to identify precisely for various reasons, we can treat informality as normative. The category of informality that I use cannot be interpreted in one specific way, since my conception was grounded in what my interlocutors said and did as I observed them. Informality, thus, emerged in this context as a coping mechanism, enabling individuals to get by in the ongoing transformation of the local area and Poland more broadly. The direction and

dynamics of this transformation are conditioned, I argue, primarily by increased flows and mobility. I, therefore, treat informality as a socioeconomic category, which, on the one hand, permeates everyday practices, whilst, on the other hand, also exists as imagined in situations where any success is perceived by the local community as illegal. This imagined construction is driven by a lack of social trust that denies the possibility of success through legitimate means, a lasting effect of the transformation unlikely to dissipate in the near future (Sik 2012; Rakowski 2016).

Local concepts concerning the economy (especially, the informal economy) are never straightforward or easy to identify (Misztal 2000; Sindzingre 2006). This is because informal activities are often hidden within formal economic connections and chains of services, whilst their grassroots perceptions remain context dependent. Thus, differences persist across various situations and amongst the individuals or groups involved (Galemba 2008). In academic research, informality usually relies on an economic perspective. Although analyses attempting to focus instead on the social aspect are becoming increasingly common, many continue to apply a binary approach with a definite division between formal and informal, complemented by notions of legal and illegal (Guha-Khasnobis, Kanbur and Ostrom 2006).

Social researchers' interest in post-communist economic practices has grown over the past two decades or so (Alexeev and Pyle 2003; Gel'man 2004; Ledeneva 2006; Smith and Stenning 2006; Grødeland 2007; Hale 2011; Aasland et al. 2012; Abdih and Leandro 2013). Yet, the majority of those studying post-communist informality concentrate more on institutions rather than the informal sociocultural context (Ledeneva 1998; Misztal 2000; Morris and Polese 2014). This concentration first appeared in the works of Julius H. Boeke (1942), Arthur W. Lewis (1954) and Keith Hart (1973), who attempted to describe the dual economic models functioning in the market economy, distinguishing between the formal and the informal spheres. For the last 20 years, informality as a term has become more established in studies on institutional micro- and macroeconomics. Consequently, however, its definitions have broadened, and the formal–informal dichotomy has undergone further refinement. Most existing definitions situate informality as a synonym with concepts such as the informal sector, the informal sphere, informal unemployment and an informal economy (ILO 2012). Many interpretations and classifications of informality also encompass illegal organisations, groups of relatives, interpersonal networks and informal political and citizen structures (Granovetter 1973; Lomnitz 1988; Shelley et al. 2007; Thelen 2011). Thus, the concept of informality clearly refers to quite different phenomena. Rooted in sociology, it is becoming increasingly difficult to characterise. Informality, then, has lost some of its conceptual and analytical sharpness, serving instead as an umbrella term covering a vast array of phenomena falling outside formal and legal spheres. Effectively, then, informality encompasses what the nightclub owner described as 'being up to something' or perceived as being up to something.

In the post-communist world, depending upon informal contacts, connections and networks, or on exchange, mutuality, occasional gifts and meetings, is not

extraordinary. Such systems are (or have been) in place globally, although most are limited to specific contexts. The differences between informality in post-communist countries and informality in other parts of the world remain relatively unstudied. However, some existing research indicates that in post-communist countries informal practices are not only more widely spread and historically established, but also much more important than in capitalist or even developing countries (Sik 1994; Butler 1995; Rose 1995; Begg and Pickles 1998; Ledeneva 1998; Böröcz 2000; Grødeland 2007).

Informality and everything it entails is perceived as an effect of transition and an adaptation to a market economy, since informality becomes most pronounced during the turbulent conditions of change. Informal ways of dealing with both business and institutional ventures, or even in everyday life, characterise the more recent history of Central European countries undergoing postsocialist transformations. In this region, the 1990s featured new rules, laws, fiscal orders and economic freedom, but for many it also represented a time of sudden impoverishment (Humphrey 2010; Henig and Makovicky 2016; Kideckel 2002; Knudsen and Frederiksen 2015; Ledeneva 1998, 2006; Yurchak 2002). The notion of a transformation in sociological studies is sometimes defined as a process or an effect of socioeconomic and political changes (Wojtaszczyk 2009). Application of the term, however, is problematic primarily due to the eternal question of whether a given post-communist transformation is complete (Kozłowski 2004). The notion of a post-communist transition should be treated as an all-encompassing, directed social change, entailing a set of both planned and spontaneous changes related to moving away from a communist society. These processes have not resulted solely from more than 25 years of political democracy and the prevalence of private ownership in the economy. The causes of those changes vary, as revealed by my grassroots-level, bottom-up perspective on local economic strategies. Such causes can be endogenous (e.g., the impact of economic crises or changing political and economic visions) and exogenous (e.g., pressure from the international community, currently dominating trends concerning an effective economy and a proper political system, as well as the current geopolitical situation) (see Chałubiński 2010). The post-communist transformation also makes societies more open to cultural diffusions and external influences and, thus, intensifies globalisation processes, which, in turn, modify various institutions of communist provenance (Ziółkowski 1998; Wiatr 2006). I, thus, agree with Chałubiński, who argues that '[t]ransformation (or rather transformations) is history in the making, which comprises many fast, dynamic changes' (Chałubiński 2010).

The events of 1989 and their aftermath most importantly enabled the growth in the number of self-employed individuals who established family businesses or became private traders. Whilst a consequence of the political transformation, this expansion also served as a conducive factor in additional shifts, which I call modernisation. These shifts involved in the creation of the Polish middle class were significant to further economic, political and social changes (see Mielczarek-Żejmo 2010). Thus, I argue that informal activities can be viewed as one expression of modernity (see Morris and Polese 2014). It is quite telling

that, in Poland, particularly during the period when I conducted my research, 'the transformational discourse' was substituted in political and colloquial narratives with ideas that had no direct association with post-communism and postsocialism. These narratives specifically included modernisation, Poland's final accession to Europe and how the country regained its pride, all of which mark ongoing, open-ended processes (see Sztompka 1999).

The new A2 motorway

One symbol of Poland's transformation and its move away from communism and towards Europe—and modernisation—can be found in the A2 motorway. Short sections of the A2 were constructed in the 1980s, but the economic crisis and political turbulence left realising the dream of connecting Berlin and Moscow via a motorway impossible. Instead, those existing sections were upgraded or subject to 'modernisation' to use the Polish term and incorporated into an infrastructure project partially funded by the European Union (EU). The A2, thus, symbolises broader processes related to the socioeconomic transformation affecting the roadside communities I investigated, whilst also marking shifts in the trajectories of connections between Eastern and Western Europe.

The turning point for the Greater Poland region was the construction and commissioning of a new section of the A2 motorway on 1 December 2011. This investment carried multiple economic, cultural and social consequences at a time when political and media discourses on the end of Poland's modernisation process increased. Investments connected to the motorway construction were symbolically important (Stanisz and Kuligowski 2017). As a result, today's national roadway 92 (DK92) lost its place as the most important route between the East and the West across central Poland when the new section of the A2 motorway opened. Symbolically, this was expressed as depriving DK92 its status as an international route and resulted in a new name as 'the Old Two' (*Stara Dwójka,* referring to its former name as roadway no. 2). The towns and villages the Old Two crosses differ in terms of populations (ranging in population sizes from 12 to 22,000 inhabitants), social structures, cultural centres and available institutions, as well as in terms of the quality of public infrastructure. What they share, however, is their particular roadside aesthetics and economy. This landscape, filled mostly with small villages, consists of specific places where services are provided for long-haul transportation and the tourism industry (motels, hotels, petrol stations, bars, restaurants and nightclubs), service points with activities centred around automobility (pallet, lorries, lorry purchasing centres, satellite-navigation systems and CB radio repair points, tyre retreading centres, repair stations and car washes), warehouses or forwarding and logistical bases. The visual appearance of this space is hardly reminiscent of traditional notions of the countryside and rural communities.

The most important social, micropolitical and economic connector within those towns and villages is, of course, the roadway infrastructure. This connection stems from the roadway's presence and influence on localities, reducing the historical

differences stemming from the contrasting histories of the communes and districts, which now form a part of Greater Poland or Lubusz Voivodships. Many of my interlocutors have much in common, especially their memories of the communist period. Typical narratives refer to the closing of the state collective farms (PGR), a form of collective land ownership in Poland in place from 1949 until 1993. PGRs were an inherent part of the economic and social landscape for the majority of roadside towns and villages. Yet, remembering and referring to the communist and post-communist economic conditions did not leave my interlocutors nostalgic for the socialist era. Instead, such nostalgia was reserved for 'the golden 1990s, when there was no competition and you practically didn't even have to try', for 'the El Dorado of the 1990s' and for the 'freedom of the early days of the transformation'.

However, the memory of the old days proved volatile, with most of my interlocutors' narratives including overlapping events and situations from both the communist days and the initial years following the political shift or the more recent consequences of Poland's accession to the EU and the Schengen Area. The individuals with whom I spoke clearly could not locate in time most of the changes and turning points of the transformation, making it impossible to definitively pass judgement on the informal activities they undertook.

Mobility and informality: the economies on the peripheries of the A2 motorway

In order to understand roadside informality, we must emphasise that the villages and towns located along DK92 continue to experience heavy traffic despite the construction of the A2. Thus, there is a large flow of various types of goods carried on long-haul lorries as well as labour migrants and tourists, combined with the everyday micromobility of the inhabitants. Each type of movement along with its direction and intensity influence the economic status of the roadside communities. Everyday life forms overlapping zones of complex flows: transit and international, local (both public and private), tourist and migrant (internal and external), as well as the flow of capital and goods.

It is important to note that these flows take place in the context of the locality and on the peripheries, whilst also recognising that they form a part of cross-border movements. This context is significant for the economic strategies that, in many cases, can be described as informal. In an attempt to understand them, we must return to the 1990s and the initial period of political transformation, when the Old Two was infamous as a channel enabling the flow of illegal goods. This type of flow has now lost its significance since there is no longer any economic rationale for continuing an illegal tobacco and alcohol trade or need to smuggle clothes and cosmetics from Germany. At present, inhabitants enjoy unlimited access to such goods. Crime has also changed across these years. The political transformation and changes to the country's borders resulted in a significant increase in border crime rates at the beginning of the 1990s. According to my interlocutors' secret whispers, smuggling in this area was often a bespoke service, especially in terms of

cars, involving both individuals and organised crime groups (Polish and Russian). After Poland was accepted to the Schengen Area in 2007, the number of stolen cars and trucks (especially from Germany to Eastern European countries) grew and the flow of drugs intensified, although the overall number of cases decreased according to official statistics from the early 1990s. Indeed, Polish clients are no longer patted down in German supermarkets (which, in many cases, have set up shop in Poland), whilst smuggling gangs, based on the Polish side of the border, have also disappeared (Łada 2014). As one of my interlocutors stated, the notion that western Poland is 'the wild frontier of capitalism is totally outdated'.

The flows along today's DK92 have continued to be influenced by political changes, with most current dynamics most significantly affected by the Polish accession to the EU in 2004, the Schengen Area in 2007, the global economic crisis in 2008, the Ukrainian–Russian conflict since 2014 and even the Polish–Russian transport wars (Bereźnicki 2016; *Polska kontra Rosja* 2016). As a result of Poland's accession to the EU, Western European labour markets opened up. This did not cause an influx of people to Poland, but rather motivated Poles to migrate internally for economic reasons to places located along DK92. This migration is specifically seasonal and shuttle based.

Initially, the flow along this route intensified due to tourists, clients interested in local goods (e.g., garden gnomes, forest fruits or homemade preserves) and the systematic development of the Polish transportation network. However, in the wake of the economic crisis, these forms of mobility began declining. Many of my interlocutors—particularly businesspeople whose companies survived due to their ability to change the areas of business within which they operated, their ability to employ many informal methods and as a result of running multiple diversified companies—indicated that intranational as well as global fluctuations were responsible for this decline. They argued that it was not the A2 motorway that led to the downfall of petrol stations, roadside bars, hotels or restaurants. According to them, this recession was already felt by the time the new section of the motorway opened. The latter event simply 'finished off' local businesses. Yet, they believed in the potential of the motorway, specifically its ability to enhance the area's overall prosperity and quality of life.

Having conducted ethnographic studies in the area for many years, I have observed a variety of informalities. The roadside communities that are the protagonists here have been affected by a dramatic qualitative transition over the last decade. Clear changes have taken place in the communes the A2 motorway passes through and those located near DK92. The towns and villages near the transit route, profiting in various ways from automobile traffic, have been separated from the primary traffic flow by the motorway. What they experienced was a micro-scale version of a 'great change trauma' (Sztompka 2000)—that is, experiencing an unexpected, external and rapid degradation for which no one was specifically to blame. The towns and villages which had until recently been along the primary transit route, the Old Two, were forced to find new economic strategies and re-evaluate the idea of locality and, indeed, the idea of flow itself in the wake of infrastructure developments marking a set of delayed post-transformational

effects. The 'trauma' caused by these changes and the potential growth in mobility offered by the presence of the A2 motorway means that the overall socioeconomic processes defy any precise definitions. The significant role of informal economic practices in the shadow of the A2 motorway means that attempts to pinpoint the nature of the postsocialist transformation become even fuzzier.

The illegal fuel trade

One of the consequences of the increased transit traffic along both DK92 and the A2 motorway can be found in the illegal diesel trade, which continues despite technological developments making it more difficult. Both lorry drivers and local inhabitants are involved in this illegal business, with petrol station car park security employees, for example, turning a blind eye to such activities. Trade also takes place in car parks near large long-haul transportation service centres next to the Old Two and in service areas next to the motorway. I witnessed some dealings myself, with my interlocutors describing it and recognising it as illegal. In an age of fuel probe use, the process of extracting fuel from a fuel tank has become more difficult and requires greater ingenuity and knowledge of the latest digital solutions used to register diesel consumption. The illegal fuel trade usually takes place between lorry drivers when transporting goods (usually in car parks where they take their 24-hour or weekend breaks) or when they are driving their own passenger cars to the bases of the Western European transportation companies that employ them. It is also common to buy a smaller amount of fuel and include a larger amount in the invoice. The driver receives cash, and clients are sought through an anonymous associate from a specific station. The illegal fuel trade also operated in this region during the construction of a section of the A2 motorway, drawing diesel from construction and other smaller machinery. Leaving aside the lorry driver community itself and the reasons why they engage in such activities, this type of trade is also significant for local communities since specific individuals are involved in it and treat it as a way to earn additional income.

From the perspective of the local consumers of the stolen fuel, this trade allows them to lower the costs of their micromobility. It should be borne in mind that all of the inhabitants of roadside towns and villages are in some way involved in increasing the intensity of flows and mobility. Developments in infrastructure, enhancing transfers, service, localisation, integration and accelerating functions mean that inhabitants increasingly move between locations entirely by car. This has also created a specific local employment market focused on transportation, logistics, forwarding and all types of services connected with transport. Therefore, the opportunity to purchase cheaper fuel can serve the family economy well and prove decisive in whether small companies survive or not.

Public transportation cuts, private (im)mobility
and innovative informal infrastructures

The everyday to-and-fro flow of local inhabitants along the Old Two results from obvious needs: family relationships, attending schools and visiting shops,

healthcare institutions and public service offices. This area is characterised by an increasing decline in the public transportation network and services, contradicting its mobile nature.

Families typically own a few cars. Thus, the inhabitants of roadside towns and villages rarely travel by foot or bike, whilst surviving public transportation connections between locales are generally considered insufficient. This deficiency is complemented by an informal system of neighbourhood transportation, primarily used by the elderly, whose socioeconomic status does not permit full participation in the everyday micromobility—the elderly do not own cars nor possess a driving licence; yet, they are lonely or may not live close to their families. In order to travel from point A to point B or to a doctor's office, banks or public service offices, they must rely on the transportation offered by other inhabitants. This system is fee based and rarely results from bartering.

Another informal response to the declining bus connections is the development of door-to-door sales and trades. The social isolation of the elderly, people with disabilities and poor families is intensified by their immobility. However, with small local shops closing due to their unprofitability, mobile trade has visibly increased. This trade offers a wide range of products (clothes and footwear, all types of household appliances and cleaning agents from Germany or even layers). One specific example of this door-to-door trade can be found in a mobile shop (e.g., a camper van) owned by an elderly married couple, who receive a small, additional off-the-books income by delivering products directly to homes. Exemplifying how integral such innovative informal solutions are to the community becomes apparent from the fact that commune authorities rely on this service to distribute material social aid to the poorest families in the area.

An informal transport system is also used by shuttle-based labour migrants often involved in seasonal labour migration, typically to Germany or the Netherlands, during their commutes to factories in Brandenburg near Berlin. Many inhabitants of the towns and villages located closer to the Polish–German border commute to work each day (up to 300-km return), whilst others return at the weekends or upon receipt of their remuneration. Such shuttle migrants work for companies that offer mail-order clothes and footwear, recycle garbage or sort courier parcels, as well in the meat-processing industry. The employees of companies situated near Berlin typically carpool to work, thereby reducing their transportation costs.

A similar mechanism of informal transport is used by labour migrants from Bulgaria, Egypt, Russia, Turkey or Ukraine, who rent small rooms in the towns and villages located along the Old Two and commute to work in Germany. Here, we note that these small rooms are often illegally rented to foreigners. Such landlords do not have a legal business and likely evade paying taxes on rental income. Thus, information about available rooms to rent spread via word of mouth.

The increased flow of goods observed in the 1990s led to a boom in the used car trade, mostly those imported from Germany. This business played a significant role in the early, wild capitalism from Poland's accession to the EU. The flow of used, often stolen, cars was intensive and allowed many local families to earn a living. Today, the roads serve as conduits for this business, which now takes

place further to the east. The Old Two and the A2 are both used to transport cars primarily to Ukraine and Russia. This marks a symbolic shift in the border of Eastness in Europe, since this business was once focused on the Polish–German border.

However, this trade has also left a legacy, since it enabled the systematic development of small family businesses dealing with transportation and the automotive industry: car tyres, pallet purchasing centres, tyre retreading centres, car washes and petrol stations. With the increasingly transit-focused nature of the area, business survival depends on multiple informal strategies. The pallet purchasing centres feature the shadiest status. In Poland, contrary to general opinion, pallet purchasing centres are a legal business, offering an opportunity for less wealthy entrepreneurs. The pallet market has undergone multiple changes in Poland, caused by, amongst others, the introduction of the 2007 amendment to 'The Industrial Property Rights Act'. This legislative change increased the responsibility of pallet users to place pallets without a certificate of legality on the market. Despite this regulation, the illegal trade in pallets remains profitable. Lorry drivers use the fact that there is no information about a pallet being returned in the documents, declaring the pallet disqualified, whereby it then ends up in a purchasing centre and is sold. For years, pallet purchasing centres along the Old Two have remained one of its most prolific visual features. The legal regulation described here forced many to close, yet the illegal pallet trade still functions in surviving centres. According to an employee of one such centre, it is not the legal regulations that caused the biggest problem, but the lack of solidarity amongst lorry drivers taking part in the business.

The sex trade

Poland's political transformation has also led to the development of sex trade in rather broad terms. The transitory nature of the Old Two and its location close to a border resulted in the dynamic growth across a wide range of sexual services. Currently, the sex trade has two faces. Firstly, discreet services are provided by escort agencies. These usually involve nightclubs, which offer additional services apart from the company of women and guest rooms. Nightclubs are primarily staffed by Bulgarian and Ukrainian women who either live in flats provided by their employers or rent on their own in the towns and villages where the clubs are situated. These women are visible in public spaces in the towns and villages, both recognised and never negatively perceived by the inhabitants, who instead refer to them with respect and understanding—inhabitants label them 'our nice ladies'. This perception of the female employees of nightclubs stems from the clubs not causing disturbances to the public order. However, other reasons justify such perceptions as well. Such a high tolerance towards this side of the sex trade also stems from the fact that the nightclubs employ local inhabitants as security workers, technicians, cleaning staff or bartenders. Furthermore, the nightclubs also provide a source of additional income to nonprofessional drivers, who provide transportation services to the clubs' clients. Moreover, the owners

of these clubs often sponsor local events and co-finance local investments (e.g., by renovating the floors or repairing the roof of a parish church). Ultimately, the female employees of the clubs are also consumers who buy goods in local shops and use the services offered by small local businesses.

The second face of the sex trade focuses on lorry drivers, taking the form of roadside and car park sex work. This market is characterised by the lower earnings of the sex workers and the far-reaching involvement of organised criminal groups. Activities within this form of the sex trade take place primarily in vehicles and forests, reflected in such women being referred to as 'blackberry cakes', 'mushroom pickers' or 'forest mammals', as well as in motels and hotels. Such business is dominated by foreigners, whose national and ethnic origins remain difficult to identify given the complex organisational systems created by the groups involved. However, most sex workers employed here are Bulgarian. Of particular significance in terms of informality within this side of the sex trade is, firstly, that security employees at large car parks turn a blind eye to the sex workers, who are constantly monitored by their bosses and who allow women to seek out clients freely in car park areas. Secondly, oral agreements between hotel reception employees and representatives of these organised groups informally agree to allow sex workers to engage in their trade on the premises.

Treated as a form of sex work, another type of sex trade involves 'sponsorship', consisting of a longer, informal relationship with one person, often involving some emotional attachment. Here, one person offers sex primarily in exchange for financial or material benefits. In this case, romantic relationships may form between Eastern European lorry drivers who regularly traverse along the Old Two and some female inhabitants of the roadside towns and villages.

Clientelism, economic informality and international transit

Economic informality exists everywhere, extending even to businesses that operate entirely legally, such as into hotels and restaurants connected to the sex trade. Informality also extends to the sale of field, garden and forest products, the production of which is not registered on local markets. Including vegetables, fruits and preserves used in roadside bars and restaurants, their informal sale generates additional income and supplements family budgets. Another characteristic feature of informality lies in loyalty cards, ensuring a constant flow of clients into restaurants. Agreements are entered into informally and made with coach drivers who bring clients to restaurants in exchange for a free meal or a 50% discount (large coaches usually carry tourists or pilgrims, whilst smaller buses bring labour migrants). In addition, small roadside bars advertise on the CB radio. In such transmissions, advertisements—delivered in Russian or Ukrainian— simply describe their current offers directed exclusively at Eastern European lorry drivers. This type of advertising lacks a clear legal status in Poland.

Hotel owners use various strategies to attract clients. However, a persistent characteristic for this type of business is that it depends almost entirely on word-of-mouth recommendations and the opinions of regulars, including reviews and

comments posted to social media platforms. Maintaining a favourable reputation also means allowing clients some leeway by, for example, allowing them to bring in and consume their own alcohol in hotel restaurants during work-related parties and turning a blind eye to all-night boozy parties in rooms. Still, the hotel business has experienced a significant downturn in recent years, with some entities adapting by changing to motels or bed-and-breakfasts, types of businesses that pay lower taxes. The Old Two is used increasingly rarely by both Polish and foreign tourists, for various and complex reasons. Still, the near-complete disappearance of organised tourist transit has directly led to many roadside hotels and motels situated along DK92 closing as coaches use the A2 motorway. Such establishments have also lost their raison d'être as changes to travel patterns have diminished coach-based transit. It is now faster, safer, more convenient and cheaper to travel long distances by plane. This reality emerged in 2004 when the first low-cost airlines appeared in Poland (Gross and Schröder 2007). The development and popularity of such airlines have had a further consequence— namely, an increase in vans carrying the luggage of labour migrants who travelled to Western Europe by plane. Transporting their belongings separately enables migrants to lower their costs even further. The presence of such vans is evident in the region I investigated, with luggage loaded and unloaded in car parks, petrol stations and even roadside lay-bys.

A picture is emerging of the region around the Old Two and the A2 as a location increasingly marked by transit and international connections. This affects not only the lives of the area's inhabitants or the people passing through from further east but also local produce. The informal roadside sales of forest produce (mushrooms and berries abundant in this area), fruits, vegetables, eggs, honey and all types of preserves along the Old Two feeds into an international economy. Such roadside sales are typically associated with semilegal activities. Polish law clearly states that if a person wishes to sell goods along a roadway, they must acquire all of the necessary types of permits and pay various fees, the amount of which depends on the area and time the sales require. Administrative decisions in this respect are made by a road supervisor. Fines are levied for trading without a permit or in a way that inhibits road traffic. These limitations to the trade are bypassed by moving small stalls from the roadsides, pavement, crossroads and forest lay-bys to private properties such as yards, garages or simply houses. Selling such products is advertised on handwritten boards, typically displayed on property fences.

Picking up forest groundcover, especially mushrooms, is a common, unregistered and, thus, informal economic activity that the inhabitants of many towns and villages undertake. Their yield is immediately sold on the local market in accredited and, thus, entirely legal purchasing centres, which then distribute this produce to German and nationwide supermarket chains. The construction of the A2 motorway has fragmented forest areas, however, directly affecting how people move around. The local forest produce pickers use the motorway underpasses to move smaller animals across the road. Using these underpasses is forbidden, yet forestry employees do not interfere, treating such practices as harmless.

The art of informality in a postsocialist borderland

As many of the examples outlined above show, informality can operate in a legal grey zone, enjoying social acceptance whilst maintaining social coherence. Yet, some obviously illegal activities also shape the A2–Old Two corridor. Kinship relations within families and neighbourhoods are enmeshed in networks of informality, whilst they can also serve to exploit legal loopholes emerging in the postsocialist economy. One of the most common kinship relations lies in the rotation of small enterprises between relatives. Companies facing financial difficulties unable to pay taxes can, thus, continue in new forms, whilst holding on to tangible assets, equipment or goods. Such mechanisms are often applied when the preferential, lower social insurance contribution period ends. Here, I rely on the example of one entrepreneur who uses family relations to operate his widespread business in the area using family relations. This entrepreneur owns general stores, motels, hotels, restaurants, bars, car parks and rental properties, all of which may play a role in the informal activities outlined above. His businesses are officially registered to various family members, and he himself does not even hold a bank account, opting to always deal in cash. Owing to this, he finds numerous ways to evade various legal regulations whilst continuously investing.

Informal activities should not be perceived as ad hoc practices (Morris and Polese 2014), because they reflect a means of economic protection (Gërxhani 2004) and exchange mechanisms (Smith et al. 2012). In other words, informal activities represent a part of everyday life. An anthropological lens views such activities as spontaneous and complicated elements of social cooperation. Thus, they are particularly valuable in analysing the form of postsocialist modernity emerging in spaces like the A2–Old Two corridor. Tomasz Rakowski (2016) produced several particularly significant studies analysing the Polish context. In doing so, he developed the concept of the 'art of informality', which recognises the significance of both cultural conditions and socioeconomic cooperation. Informal activities located in legal grey zones (e.g., the grey market, illegal work and unofficial ways of coping with problems) are recognised by Polish (and other) researchers and publicists as an obstacle to proper social development. These activities are often hidden, closed and, to some extent, entangled in local games played by authorities, resulting in competition and status acquisition, all of which is more broadly connected to the unofficial art of acting informally. Rakowski (2016) interprets the mechanisms of this unofficial form of state existence as a form of grassroots-level agency and the spontaneous creation of a state by its citizens. Thus, rather than forming a barrier to social development, it seems that informality serves as a crucial driver of postsocialist development or transformation. Large-scale infrastructure projects alone cannot boost the surrounding economy but instead provide a conduit for productive informality (as well as illegal activities).

The concept of an informal economy, which Keith Hart (1973) defined as an unregulated, quiet, economic practice, can be applied to a situation where states relinquish control over the supervision of economic transactions during a

political transformation. Informal groups of activities can, thus, reveal both the mechanisms triggering the free market and those which provide a foundation for unregulated, illegal transactions. Various means of informal circulation, spheres of quiet favours, mutuality, agreements beyond the legal realm and institutional regulations reveal a certain type of solidarity, support for one's people and maximising the profits of one's team or a closed family circle. Alena Ledeneva (2011) classifies the activities stemming from social connections not only as areas of quiet and highly skilful control of economic transactions but also as a rich system of communicating the social and understandable often without words, expressed through the single blink of an eye. The sphere of informal activities is nothing other than a specific way of coping, getting by and building new communities (often with a sociological and historical continuity) within unfamiliar post-transformational conditions, where recognising the local and public also becomes possible (Rakowski 2013).

The idea of development, which ran through conversations with inhabitants across all of the roadside towns and villages, is similar everywhere. Here, I explored the effects of modernisation resulting from motorway construction and its impact on mobility. However, other factors lead to development in everyday life, features beyond the appearance of chain stores and discount shops, internet access, proper pavement, a well-functioning sewage system and traffic lights, decent-looking public utility buildings or new cycling paths. Development also refers to 'changes in mentality'. The consolidation of these geographic areas, which are, after all, an example of the 'Recovered Territories' or areas of post-war Poland formerly part of pre-war Germany, has never succeeded at the social level (see Dulczewski 1961; Labuda 1966; Markiewicz and Rybicki 1967; Kwilecki 1970; Jasiewicz 1973; 1999; Sakson 2006; Bazuń and Kwiatkowski 2015). It is only recently that social changes have become apparent, driven by a strengthened agency amongst younger generations. Consequently, managing the local identity, always collective and public, has shifted. National, religious and social differences appear not to affect local socioeconomic phenomena as much as they did amongst previous generations. These identifiers have become blurred, such that discussing common and shared features is much easier today. The most important elements affecting these areas are class diversification and social inequalities, ranging from poverty, pathology, dysfunction, post-PGR to the local millionaires.

In order to understand the dynamics of changes in the local cultural landscapes, we must take note of the transformation in the approach to private property and public spaces. New approaches emerged only after Poland joined the EU—not in the 1990s when the process of widely understood privatisation intensified most (see Fic and Fic 2005). The last decade specifically witnessed more community-level concern for private property, interest in the quality of public spaces and engagement in local issues. This new approach to locality was coupled with new settlements, altering the spatial, social and capital quality of roadside villages and towns and beyond. The specific nature of this approach in the area studied stems from the fact that the new 'settlers' were specifically internal migrants: families moving from smaller towns and villages, rather unappealing to the employment

market, to larger, more conveniently located places in terms of road infrastructure. Such settlers also include migrants returning from Germany, the Netherlands, England or Ireland, who usually settle temporarily—sometimes permanently— in their hometowns. Still, the new inhabitants do not solve the problem of rural depopulation, although the demographic decline explains why local businesses, such as general stores and various service points, are closing (see Gołdyka 2005).

However, the construction of the A2 between Nowy Tomyśl and Świecko should not be automatically deemed the primary reason for the decline in the profitability of businesses connected to transit, which lead to increasing poverty levels in roadside towns and amongst the areas' inhabitants, thereby intensifying migration. The reasons for the economic downturn are much more complex than they seem at first sight. The rapidly changing socioeconomic situation after 1989 was characterised by unpredictability and remains neither completed nor entirely local. Any collapse of previously successful businesses, such as the dynamic and mostly informal reactions to changing external conditions representing partial adjustments to new realities, are always linked to globalisation. Entrepreneurship, and the flexibility it entails, as well as the ability to implement something new quickly—something adequate for the new situation—is a skill the older Polish generation has not mastered. Alongside additional problems, such as changes in the mentality and the behaviours of the younger generation, life and the economic dimensions of satisfying one's daily needs have taken priority. Taken together, all of these factors contribute to the crisis resulting in the deterioration of local community life. Despite these issues, as a borderland region, both nation-states and along the Greater Poland and Lubusz Voivodship borders, the region has witnessed the creation of nongovernmental organisations and the promotion of skills building related to acquiring financial resources and developing human capital and grassroots democracy (see Żuk 2004; Nietschke and Flakowski 2009).

The economic flaws in the towns and villages I describe did not result solely from a combination of structural and historical factors. These flaws also cannot be simply explained by cultural differences, which theoretically could influence the 'entrepreneurial habitus' and effective economic strategies. Closing many roadside businesses and 'new poverty' typically result from the same infrastructure intended to boost the economy and expand opportunities. Poor public transportation, a gradual limitation to small-scale trade, competition from nearby developing cities as places to live and work, changes to the mindset leading individuals to seek comfort and ever-higher expectations concerning their standard of living, mismanagement of the requirements to a market economy and an inability to adjust to rapidly changing economic conditions, coupled with a decrease in births and the depopulation of the countryside, all lead towns and villages to slowly lose their attractiveness to inhabitants. Those who remain depend on small-scale informal strategies, more often than not bordering legality.

What influences the cultural, social and economic conditions in towns and villages located along the Old Two also leads to lifestyle changes that become most visible in the differences between generations. These are connected to a growing tendency to live comfortably, shifts in how children and teenagers are

raised (related to the abundance of available material goods and a more lenient attitude towards morality), resulting in less attention focusing on the needs of parents and grandparents. This pertains not only to local communities but also to those individuals flowing through the Old Two and the A2: that is, long-haul lorry drivers, tourists, labour migrants or road construction workers of all nationalities. In the face of the immensity of consumer goods, young people want to earn money easily, quickly and in large amounts, clashing with how their parents are accustomed to earning an income. Consequently, the changes in the morals and the ways of maintaining socioeconomic relationships within the nearest neighbourhood become undeniable.

Conclusions

The descriptions I presented here illustrate how informality has revived, continued or strengthened along with the infrastructure modernisation accompanying the continuing economic transformation (Stanisz and Kuligowski 2017). Although far from extraordinary and remaining hidden in everyday life, informal practices reveal the dynamics of encounters between large- and small-scale modernisation. That is, modernisation represents a transformative national practice with formal and informal strategies of adapting to the local (spatial and economic) possibilities depending on the availability of specific social actors.

Here, I have attempted to capture the grassroots quality of post-transformational modernisation processes in Poland, viewing informality as a category which can be observed given the conditions of the roadside stimulated by all types of mobilities and flows. This includes the flow of people—both local populations and international migrants—as well as the flow of local agricultural or forest products, finished goods and services. The construction of the new motorway resulted in the area increasingly becoming marked by transit, with impermanent residents settling in the area or locals engaging in seasonal or shuttle-based labour migration. Simultaneously, the area has become increasingly enmeshed in global processes. Thus, the region is characterised by an increasingly transitory nature not simply resulting from infrastructure modernisation, but also stemming from globalisation. The resulting overlapping and multiple changes are typical, then, of a postsocialist transformation. This localised study, therefore, contributes to a broader understanding of the longer-term social, cultural and economic consequences of the transformation from a socialist state.

A common shortcoming to expert and scientific discussions concerning Polish modernisation—and more broadly postsocialist modernisation in Central and Eastern Europe—lies, firstly, in that social issues are often overlooked and, secondly, such discussions are rarely connected to the broader debate on transformation. Indeed, it might be that transformation as a concept is too narrow (Wołodźko 2013), remaining 'utterly material and technocratic' (Rogaczewska 2013). Transformation as a concept is perceived by decision-makers and politicians solely in terms of infrastructure, including, for instance, motorway construction (Kucharczyk 2013). However, from the anthropological perspective, in order to understand

Polish postsocialist modernisation under the conditions of increased mobility, it is important to note the specific transfer of materialistically defined modernisation in terms of its meaning within Polish society. Thus, the anthropological perspective encompasses not only what is understood, but what is actually made and put into practice by the population. In this respect, modernisation and transformation cannot be explored without reference to the anthropological constant of informality. This focus on informality renders the Świecko–Nowy Tomyśl section of the A2 motorway even more interesting empirically, since it serves as an example of transforming Poland through a motorway. This infrastructure change is part of further shifts, including changes in technology, markets and marketing affecting more than just the roadside communities explored here. For instance, local entrepreneurs and the broader population have been forced to adapt their qualifications, skills and trade practices. Yet, the impact of infrastructure changes in postsocialist Poland can be fruitfully compared in future research to areas affected by deindustrialisation and losses of once-thriving and crucial industries.

The towns which, until recently, were situated along the primary transit route connecting East and West—benefiting from automobile traffic resulting from modernisation through the expansion of mobility infrastructure and which deferred the post-transformative consequences—were forced to establish new economic strategies and re-evaluate their approaches to locality in the new transit-centred setting. The 'trauma' caused by these changes and the theoretical growth in the potential of mobility provoked by the 'presence' of the A2 lead us to treat the socioeconomic processes, which we observed, as equivocal. That is, the regimes governing them, the discourses surrounding them and their manifestations as well as the manner of ascribing value to them, in addition to experiencing and utilising modernisation, all emerged as important to understanding the current socioeconomic conditions at the local level in Poland (Stanisz and Kuligowski 2015).

By focusing on the impact of infrastructure on modernisation and industrialisation, it is clear that the motorway's impact cannot be limited to how it enables the transit of people, goods and services. Instead, this piece of infrastructure becomes a part of a network, relating not only to other roads but also to the global economy—that is, a macro-level perspective. However, from an opposing analytical viewpoint and my own focus here, the motorway is linked to a host of social practices and shared emotions, ranging from fatalism to euphoria, all of which form a part of the road to postsocialist modernisation and transformation, processes and phenomena which are open-ended and ongoing. These large-scale processes, as I have shown here, must be thought through from the emic perspective, since they co-create and transform the nature of postsocialism.

Notes

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2   A pallet is a wooden flat transport structure, which supports goods in a stable fashion while being lifted by a forklift or a pallet jack.

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Part III

Informality as state practice dealing with mobility

9 Symbolic state imagery, informal state practice

Caress Schenk

Introduction

Immigration controls in the Russian Federation (hereafter, Russia) have evolved since 2002, when the government began taking seriously the issue of managing the population of temporary migrant workers entering the country. To manage the millions of Central Asian workers arriving each year, in 2007 the government instituted a quota, or a numerical cap, limiting the number of work permits available. This technocratic solution erected a symbol of immigration control that appealed to rationality. As it became clear that the immigration sphere was resilient to policy change, state actors changed their strategy, utilising more securitised measures of immigration control. During this era, deportation became a policy strategy that used emotive symbols of police raids and blacklists to signal effective immigration control. Persisting across both eras, however, was the widespread use of informal strategies by migrants and state actors alike.

The policies of quotas and subsequently deportations have met with myriad contradictions, gaps and inconsistencies during the implementation process. In this way, Russia's immigration policy sphere shares the seeming pathologies of immigration systems the world over, causing many scholars to render migration impossible to control or plagued by ineffective policy. When state actors are engaged in informal practices, the contradictions inherent in the immigration system seem particularly acute. This chapter, however, questions the ineffectiveness thesis, arguing that despite a cluttered field of immigration control practices, erecting a key symbol of immigration control is a strategy governments use to create a focal point of state activities and to drown out the noise of contradictions on the ground. These symbols become important legitimacy-seeking efforts by the state in order to justify the effectiveness of immigration control policy. Amid these macro-level strategies, state actors rely on readily available informal practices to navigate the nuances of everyday migration management.

Informality and effectiveness immigration control

Drawing upon a range of methods from ethnography to survey, this chapter interrogates the uses of official political power in the regulation of immigration

control—in other words, 'the state' and its efforts to manage flows and populations of migrant workers in Russia. However, instead of a reified state, distinct from society or the individuals that make it up, this chapter embraces a view of the state as a resilient and tireless manager of barely contained chaos given that power and decision-making is divided amongst a vast array of agents and institutions acting officially in the name of the state. By engaging the nexus of mobility and spaces of power, this chapter shows how the state is a complex and diverse field of power that pursues a variety of goals simultaneously.

Mainstream political and other social science approaches to the state often begin with a Weberian definition of the state, specifically with the ideal of a legal-rational variety. From this starting point, a normative vision of the state is constructed that uses a set of official written rules to produce clean and distinct boundaries between the state and society (Weber 1946: 78), between official and unofficial, written and unwritten, public and private, relational and impersonal, formal and informal activity (Weber 2019). Mainstream studies often further blur state and regime processes, or as Beissinger (2017) aptly notes, use a 'neo-Weberian yardstick' which merges the assumptions of the Weberian state, modernisation theory and state theory to assess modern states. Consequently, many approaches use informal practices as a measurement of state weakness and see informal processes as inimical to the rule of law (e.g., Taylor 2011; Mendras 2012; Sakwa 2011).

Based on this foundation, studies of Russia can come away with the perspective that the political system is weak, backwards or persistently underdeveloped because of informality and corruption; that it cannot modernise unless informal ways of conducting politics give way to formal institutional development (Gel'man 2004, 2012; Hanson 2007; Ledeneva 2013). Amid these predictions, it is important to address the puzzling reality 'that more states don't simply fall apart' (Migdal 2001, 135) despite their seeming dysfunctions. Instead of suggesting that state actors rely on manipulation and façade to legitimise themselves, this chapter argues that a selective (but authentic) picture of state activity is erected symbolically as a focal point for immigration control efforts. This symbolism can serve to smooth over the public image of a field of policy implementation that seems contradictory and can reveal the ways in which state actors who circumvent state regulation can use these unregulated activities to uphold state legitimacy.

Migdal's (2001) concept of the state as a two-sided 'field of power' involving image and practices is a helpful corrective to a Weberian framework. Image, according to Migdal, is the projection of the state as cohesive and in control, also encompassing peoples' perceptions of this projected image. Practices are the 'routine performance of state actors and agencies', which are not particularly cohesive (as the image is wont to represent), and can be contradictory because they are constantly arbitrating between different sets of laws and codes, both formal and informal. Migdal goes as far as saying that 'theories that do not incorporate the two sides of the paradoxical state end up either over-idealising its ability to turn rhetoric into effective policy or dismissing it as a grab-bag of

everyman-out-for-himself, corrupt officials'. This statement captures the limits of an essentialised picture of the state and informal activities.

Migdal's conceptualisation of the state allows for the analysis of the ways in which the image and the practices of states interact. In particular, those practices of state actors that are image-reinforcing, seeking to create and maintain the projection of a strong and effective state, are crucial for building legitimacy.[1] In this sense, it is the efforts to produce an image of a capable state that often become a focal point for official activity. Adopting this perspective, we can leave aside notions present in the state capacity and the rule of law literature that argue stronger state institutions result in less informality because they are capable of producing certain effects valued by and consistent with officially sanctioned procedures and laws. We can also move beyond the idea that the willingness to adopt and implement policies represents a linear process that seeks the same goal and that unimplemented or unenforced policies mark weak institutions (Levitsky and Murillo 2009). Rather, we can embrace the idea that policy (a part of image creation) and implementation (aspects of practice) might have different goals but are inherently legitimacy-seeking activities. Furthermore, the policies issued by state elites at the top and the ways in which policies are practised by street-level bureaucrats are mutually constitutive, because lower-level officials act as the face of the state at the micro level, mediating and interpreting policy vis-à-vis individual migrants (Fassin et al. 2015).

Using Migdal's perspective as a point of departure, it is possible to see that the image and practice of immigration control, and specifically labour mobility, in Russia are at times serving different, although equally essential, purposes. The image of the state is upheld through the rhetoric of officials, by passing of laws and policies and other attempts by officials to legitimise the state. This includes the production of official statistics. Practices refer to how immigration control is enacted or, more generally, how state actors interact with migrants. This chapter explores how a range of practices, both formal and informal, can serve to either uphold the image of immigration control or undermine it. In the following case studies, I survey the complex field of practices associated with two policy mechanisms: quotas and deportations. I demonstrate the ways in which formal and informal practices either uphold or contradict the image of immigration control (see Table 9.1). Both formal and informal practices play an essential role in the immigration sphere, either upholding or supporting official state policy or providing flexibility to migrants, employers and other interested actors who operate in a labour market with a structural need for foreign workers. I suggest that, from this field of varied practices, one practice or set of practices is elevated to the level of the symbol in order to counter any potential criticism that the policy is ineffective due to existing contradictions.

In the first case study, quotas regulated work permits for migrants originating from Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries from 2007 through 2014. In this case, the process of planning quotas served as a reinforcing practice that was further erected as a rational symbol of immigration control. In the second case of deportations and reentry bans, the coordinating practice of immigration

Table 9.1 Image and practice

IMAGE	Immigration policy is appropriate and effective
FORMAL PRACTICES	
Reinforcing practices	Reinforce the image of a particular mechanism of immigration control as effective
Contradictory practices	Undermine the image of a particular mechanism's effectiveness for immigration control
INFORMAL PRACTICES	
Compensating practices	Undermine the image of a mechanism's utility for effective immigration control, BUT address structural demands by giving migrants access to the labour market
Coordinating practices	Uphold the image of a mechanism's effectiveness (robustness) for immigration control despite the informal and/or illegal nature of the practice itself

raids and document checks were rendered symbolic, although the reinforcing role of official data was also crucial. While in each case symbols were put on public display, the rational appeal of quota planning and the uses of official data contrast with the emotive appeals of securitised actions by law enforcement.

Many migration analyses end with a discussion of contradictions created by a varied field such as this, but I argue in this chapter that if state officials can erect a primary symbol as a focal point, attention can be drawn away from the contradictions within the system. A symbol takes on an important function in mediating between image and practice since it serves to bolster the legitimacy of an image in light of a varied field of practice.[2] A symbol, in this exposition, is something that can be used to demonstrate the image of immigration control, encompassing several characteristics. In the two cases I discuss below, a symbol (1) highlights a genuine state activity that has a (2) ritualistic or repeated performative pattern with (3) a visible manifestation that is widely publicised, and which taken together are used to (4) uphold the image of immigration control. Symbols can evoke rational or emotive responses, either of which can be used to make legitimacy appeals. However, I suggest that the combination of rational *and* emotive appeals are important.

As a marker of genuine state activity, symbols are not erected as facades, but as representations. In other words, they are a type of map of state activity, which is an abstraction or simplification, yet represents something concrete and not fabricated (Korzybski 1958; Scott 1998). In this way, a symbol provides a simplified and selective picture of state activity, although it should not be relegated to window dressing. Symbols are not merely promises that fall short of reality. They are real and authentic aspects of state activity towards specific goals despite contradictions within the system. That is, symbols are more than mere promises because they both mobilise and utilise the state machinery to produce policy, data and activities to illustrate and defend the use of the symbols.

Symbols also involve ritual and performance. These activities may be spectacular and episodic (Cummings 2013; Wedeen 1999) or they can encompass everyday routines. Through the daily activities of state actors, such as the behaviours of judges or the interactions between law enforcement officials and migrants, rituals become embedded in institutions and serve as the raw material for producing outputs such as official statistics.

Work permit quotas

When the government instituted work permit quotas for migrants coming from CIS countries in 2007, they set the limit at six million, which experts estimated was sufficiently large to allow all migrants already in Russia at the time to become documented. Quotas were a part of a larger effort to develop a migration policy amid growing numbers of labour migrants. When quotas were instituted, the package of immigration reforms, which also included bans on foreign workers in certain economic sectors, received wide press coverage.

Following the expert-recommended quota in 2007, quotas were set by regional commissions based on employer requests and a number of other considerations. The 2008 quota of 1.8 million was erected as a symbol of technocratic, rational immigration control. When the quota for 2009 was set at four million based on these same criteria, however, there was an immediate backlash in the media as well as from regional governors and representatives of trade unions who questioned the increase in the quota in the wake of the global financial crisis. The issue entered the national stage during 'A Conversation with Vladimir Putin' in December 2008, when a woman asked Putin why migrant quotas should be so high during a financial crisis. Putin agreed, suggesting 'that the quota be reasonably reduced by no less than 50%'. These statements were widely covered in the press, heralding that the 'quota for migrants decreased twofold', to around two million.

Putin's statement stands as a key moment for how quotas would be used as a mechanism of immigration control. The intervention of a sympathetic leader on behalf of the average worker who felt their labour market position was not being protected by bureaucrats issuing the quotas or market-driven employers interested only in cheap labour erected an appropriate image of immigration control through the quota. Putin superseded bureaucratic procedure and labour market signals but nevertheless demonstrated how emotive logic must be considered alongside rational displays. The quota itself became a lasting image of immigration control since after 2009 it never again increased beyond two million until the mechanism was repealed altogether at the end of 2014, clearly taking a signal from Putin about how high the quota should be set.

To maintain the image of quotas as a display of immigration control (see Table 9.2), the bureaucratic quota planning apparatus moved mountains of documents each year to produce a rational calculation of the labour market need for migrants that would also be accepted by the public. These activities are what Migdal (2001) calls practices, and we can classify them as reinforcing in that they seek to uphold the image of immigration control through the institutional activity of the

Table 9.2 Image and practice of quotas

IMAGE	Quotas are an appropriate and effective mechanism of immigration control
FORMAL PRACTICES	
Reinforcing practices	Quota planning
Contradictory practices	Work permits issued by Federal Migration Service (FMS)
INFORMAL PRACTICES	
Compensating practices	False work permits
	Legal impunity
Coordinating practices	Sale of quotas

bureaucracy. Quotas are further useful because they uphold the personal promise of Putin. Nevertheless, they continually reinforced a picture of the labour market that did not correspond to reality. While the quotas produced numbers that were publicly palatable, they did not allow enough work permits to legalise all of the migrants working in Russia.

Quotas were determined by the Ministry of Health and then the Ministry of Labour, but it was the Federal Migration Service (FMS) that issued work permits. We could classify the FMS practices as contradictory to the activity of the quota planners, since FMS officials often issued work permits with general disregard to the lists of employers approved to hire migrants compiled during the quota planning process. In many cases, regions obeyed the numerical cap placed on work permits, but in some cases the quotas were flouted quite dramatically. This could be framed as adding flexibility to the system or correcting the estimates of the quota planners by issuing work permits in an on-demand manner. It is notable, however, that though in certain regions FMS officials issued more work permits than the quota allowed, the federally aggregated number of work permits issued annually never exceeded the nationwide quota. As such, the FMS practices contradicted the quota plans, and the contradictions between image and practice were kept in check and, most importantly, out of the public eye.

A great deal of bureaucratic effort was put into creating the image of immigration control through quotas as well as into producing official data that corresponded with Putin's signals. Consequently, there were never sufficient work documents to legalise migrant workers. Elsewhere, I have called this a scarcity of legal labour (Schenk 2018a). As a result, a number of informal practices arose to mediate a formal space that narrowed in order to create a certain image of the state. These informal practices can be called compensating practices, because they address structural demands in the labour market and facilitate migrants' abilities to operate within the system (either legally or illegally).

Compensating practices include the industry that arose to provide migrants with false work permit documents. In fact, an active sector of migrant intermediaries arose during the quota period to assist migrants with obtaining documents. Those

intermediaries that provided false work permits helped migrants to operate within the system with some degree of legal coverage (in the sense that they were at least able to produce a document when asked, in the hopes that it would be sufficient). At the same time, these practices allowed more 'documented' migrants into the system than the number allowed by the quota. The fact that these false work permits did not appear in official statistics, however, reinforced the quota numbers.

Another informal practice that could be viewed as compensating is when law enforcement officials looked the other way when faced with migration violations. This looking the other way occurred if a migrant paid (either a bribe or sometimes in labour).[3] These corruption-related practices allowed migrants to continue operating within the system with legal impunity (although not without consequences), thereby reinforcing a more market-driven population of migrants than the quota numbers allowed.

Other informal practices can be considering coordinating, because they uphold the image of immigration control through the quota despite their informal or even illegal nature. One such practice was the use of quota by intermediary companies. Many times, subcontractors would apply for quota (sometimes in very large numbers), which they would then either sell to other companies or subcontractors, or use themselves by acting as an employment placement agency (sometimes registering themselves as the official employer). The layers between the recipient of quota (named in the Ministry of Labour quota allocations) and the actual employers who interacted with migrants were often shadowy and complex. Nevertheless, they allowed migrants some degree of access to legal work documents, and some legal cover (or plausible deniability) to employers who either did not have a direct relationship with migrants or who hired more migrants than they were strictly allowed (some with work permits and some without). Another coordinating practice can be found in corruption schemes, which provided work permits to migrants if they paid a bribe or unofficial fee. These schemes were extortionist and exploited migrants, yet they upheld the image of the quota as an effective mechanism of immigration control and simultaneously provided a reward to bureaucrats who worked to uphold the image of the quota.

Amid the field of practices that assumed various relationships to the image of immigration control through the quota, the symbol of a technocratically planned quota, based on authentic and routinely practised state activity, was erected as the key focal point of an appeal to effective state policy. The quota was announced yearly in the mass media and was presented as an objective indicator of what the government would do in the coming year. The planned quota was often announced alongside an estimate of how much of the quota was used in the previous year (at the federal level), reinforcing the effectiveness of the mechanism. Putin's intervention in the quota system warrants a few words of reflection, however. If the planning activities of bureaucrats served as a symbol of rational and technocratic immigration control, Putin's announcement to decrease the quota injected an emotive appeal into the symbolic framework. This suggests that rational appeals can gain additional traction when adjustments are made through appeals to emotion.

Though quotas for CIS citizens remained in place until the end of 2014, increasing numbers of migrants were able to obtain work documents through alternative means, namely by buying pay-as-you-go monthly permits called *patents*. Because the number of officially counted labour migrants increased, new mechanisms were needed to re-establish the image of immigration control. Quotas remain for other categories of immigrants (e.g., workers from outside the CIS and temporary residents), thereby retaining the rational appeal of the mechanism albeit on a much smaller scale. In this increasing space, deportations and associated measures emerged as a way to project a new image of immigration control.

Deportations

In 2012 and 2013, legislation was amended to increase the penalties for migrants who committed administrative and other migration-related violations. These changes served as the starting point for a dramatic increase in the number of migrants deported, administratively expelled or put on a reentry ban list (Kubal 2017; Troitskii 2016).[4] The amendments to the migration law in December 2012 and July 2013 and the administrative code in August 2013 came amid several events that elicited resolute state action to address immigration control problems.[5] From the beginning of 2012, during Vladimir Putin's re-election campaign, migration issues were mobilised as a priority for government attention. This ushered in a period lasting until the end of 2013 characterised by a dramatic increase in antimigrant rhetoric in the media (Tolz and Harding 2015). Media rhetoric converged with other statements and declarations from state officials, as well as visible migration control activities. Deportation and its surrounding policies became a primary focal point for this image of control, while official data served as an important measure of effectiveness and the foundation for erecting the image. Police raids and mass arrests, I argue below, became particularly symbolic during this period of effective immigration control.

The elevation of deportation to a primary mechanism of immigration control through changes in legislation and enforcement came as Russia was preparing for the free movement of labour likely to follow Kyrgyzstan's entry into the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and amid calls to move towards the adoption of a visa regime. By using increasingly security-oriented immigration control measures, the government could move forward with plans for the EAEU while still assuring the public that border control would be tightened, keeping out the 'wrong kinds' of migrants (presumably, criminals, although in actual fact many migrants were added to a reentry ban list for relatively minor administrative violations).[6] The timing in response to critical voices and corresponding media coverage amid greater geopolitical securitisation more generally are important for creating the symbolic image of immigration control.

Certain activities of state officials and agencies can be considered image-reinforcing practices, upholding the image of immigration control through deportation (see Table 9.3). These practices include the construction of migrant detention centres, the increased prosecution of administrative expulsion and deportation

Table 9.3 Image and practice of deportation

IMAGE	*Deportation is an appropriate and effective mechanism of immigration control*
FORMAL PRACTICES	
Reinforcing practices	Detention centres
	Increased prosecutions (deportations)
	Official data
	Blacklists
Contradictory practices	Blacklist database uncoordinated
INFORMAL PRACTICES	
Compensating practices	Corruption schemes
	Legal impunity
Coordinating practices	Self-executed deportations
	Visible document checks
	Raids and arrests

cases and the production of official data. In particular, the production of data became crucial for upholding the image of immigration control.

In August 2013, the FMS submitted draft legislation proposing the construction of 83 new detention centres in 81 regions of Russia.[7] This proposal was reported in the Russian- and English-language media, although it was not adopted into law at that time. Nevertheless, according to the Global Detention Project, of 88 detention centres currently operating across Russia, 76 were established in 2014.[8] Though government documents have never specified the number of detention centres that should exist, from the end of 2013 government orders and orders issued by the FMS and Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) began providing much more explicit instructions for how migrant detention centres should be used.[9]

The number of court decisions on deportations (administrative expulsions) also provides image-reinforcing practices on the part of the judicial system. The number of decisions increased from 40,396 in 2011 to 137,097 in 2013 and 198,371 in 2014, before declining slightly to 177,821 in 2015 (Troitskii 2016). An increase in arrests (Abashin 2017) leading to these court decisions signified systematic activity by the police in upholding the image of immigration control. However, the flow of 20 to 30 million foreigners across Russia's borders each year has remained steady and even increased in more recent years. This suggests that, contrary to the image, deportation policies do not have a marked impact on migration flows.[10]

The numbers of foreigners placed on reentry ban lists (blacklists) parallel court decisions, increasing from 65,000 in 2011 to a peak of 645,000 in 2014. This might seem natural, since deportation comes with an automatic five-year reentry ban. However, many of the practices constituting the entry-ban list are contradictory to its image as effective immigration control.

Research on the entry bans reveals a lack of institutional coordination (Bahovadinova 2016). The legal basis for applying an entry ban rests on a web of interlocking legislation and legal terms (Schenk 2016). A number of agencies

can declare foreigners 'undesirable' or add them to a blacklist for any number of reasons. The migration services can also cancel a visa, the courts can order expulsion or deportation, and the border agency can deny a foreigner entry. Therefore, the mechanisms for foreigners being removed from or denied entry into Russia are many and varied, and not captured in a single set of statistics or within a single 'blacklist'. Government agencies have different lists, which may or may not show up in the border agency's records, and therefore may or may not result in an individual flagged by a particular agency being prevented from entering the country. This lack of coordination works against the image of immigration control and, therefore, can be seen as a contradictory set of practices.

It is also important to note that many banned migrants are placed on the list while in Russia for any number of administrative violations. These migrants may be placed on the reentry ban list without even knowing it. Many of these migrants remain in Russia even though they are prohibited from entering the country. To the degree that the blacklist encourages migrants to stay in Russia rather than risk being barred reentry, the mechanism itself serves to reinforce illegal migration rather than act against it. While these migrants may appear in the official statistics of the blacklists *and* remain in Russia to continue working, and thereby address structural rigidities in similar ways to coordinating practices, in this case it is not the routine informal actions of state officials that allow migrants to remain in the system. Rather, migrants' activities are either based on a lack of knowledge or a desire to utilise existing loopholes. These types of activities of migrants, while important in the immigration sphere, are not the focus of this chapter.

As seen with the quota case, informal or off-the-books practices by state officials can compensate for the rigidities created by formal immigration control policies in the context of a structural labour market need for migrant workers. Compensating practices include judicial and law enforcement practices that do not prosecute migrants to the full extent of the law and, therefore, allow migrants to remain in Russia. These include a number of practices, often involving the police, that offer migrants legal impunity via various corruption and extortion schemes.

Azamat,[11] a return migrant interviewed in Bishkek, explained to us that there are often police officers in each district of a city who take it upon themselves to know the registration status of migrants. If a migrant has a registration in one place, but physically lives in another, these district police officers (*uchastkovyi*) know. 'If one is lucky', Azamat explained, 'he can pay that *uchastkovyi* 2000 to 3000 roubles each month (at the time of the interview $30–50 USD), so that the officer does not bother him.' These relationships between the *uchastkovyi* and migrant can even approach a sort of friendship, as Azamat recounted the story of a friend and housemate of his who, over time, became 'friends' with his *uchastkovyi*. This type of scenario has been well documented in ethnographic accounts of migrants in Russia (Reeves 2015) and represents an informal practice that contradicts the image of migration control in that it avoids channelling migrants who violate registration procedures through official channels so that they can appear in certain enforcement statistics. Yet, these regular interactions provide some means

for migrants to mitigate risk and remain in Russia without their migration violations being discovered. As Azamat says, 'the *uchastkovyi* is interested in keeping you safe from other police officers', allowing migrants to live in relative peace and avoiding the consequences of deportation regardless of their legal status.

Other informal practices by state officials may include corruption, or they may simply result from navigating the decision-making implicit in their professional duties. To the degree that any of these practices uphold the image of immigration control through deportation, they can be considered coordinating practices.

The initial results from a new project compiling a database of court cases related to migration violations indicate that women are more often allowed to 'self-execute' their expulsion, whereas men are more likely to be remanded to a migration detention centre to await removal from the country by state officials. The decision of a judge to assign self-executed versus forcible removal is well within the scope of judicial discretion. However, to some degree, assigning self-executed departure allows migrants the possibility of remaining in the country, even if it is not the intention of the judge. Thus, this practice can serve to address the structural demands of the labour market, while simultaneously contributing to robust prosecution statistics, thereby serving to uphold the image of the deportation policy as effective immigration control.

Other informal practices that uphold the image of immigration control include occasions when state officials might allow migrants to enter Russia even if they are on the blacklist. Some illegal entry practices may be migrant-driven as in the case of return migrants in Kyrgyzstan. These migrants told us stories of obtaining a new passport with a different name or a different spelling, crossing the border using passport stamps from friends or even crossing the border without a passport altogether. If officials deliberately allow irregularities, however, this is a coordinating practice that does not interrupt (and thus upholds) the image of immigration control through deportation and entry-ban procedures and statistics. In Kyrgyzstan, Altair told us about a friend of his who was on the blacklist:

> [He] decided to cross the border by car. How he was able to cross the border, I have no idea. He got his documents there and now he is working. When I asked him how he was able to do that, he told me that he paid a fine. When I asked how much, he told me nothing but the fact that it was expensive.

Strategies like this do not disrupt deportation or blacklist procedures, or the official construction of statistics. Yet, they allow migrants to find ways to remain engaged in the Russian labour market.

Certain activities of state officials have a complicated relationship with the categories of formal and informal practices I have outlined thus far in this chapter. The practices surrounding document checks and raids are official, formal reinforcing practices that uphold the image of immigration control through deportation policy. Officials also regularly engage in compensating practices, for example, when migrants are extorted during document checks and raids, and subsequently allowed to return to the labour market. Raids also have a symbolic function

irrespective of whether they channel migrants through formal legal channels into deportation proceedings or the blacklist mechanism. As a symbol of immigration control, raids use the official position of the police and military actors, enacting routines that can be visibly displayed to the public to uphold the image of immigration control.

Visible public document checks and arrests of migrants are frequently framed as extortion schemes, where police detain migrants until they either pay a bribe or are remanded to the courts for deportation (Urinboyev 2018; Round and Kuznetsova 2018). While the migrants who are willing to pay are not in the end included in the court, deportation and blacklist statistics, they may be recorded in police reports and certainly offer a type of rent or reward to state officials for producing visible displays of immigration control such as street arrests. Large migration raids take this logic a step further. Raids covered in the media become a dramatic exemplar of state activity in pursuit of immigration control.

A July 2013 fight in a Moscow market led to a number of migration raids and mass detentions, to the extent that police station holding facilities were filled and a makeshift camp was created. Moscow Mayor Sobyanin, himself in the midst of an election campaign that frequently focused on migration-related issues, defended the crackdown, saying 'in any society, in any country, if an emergency situation happens, then the government and society begin to act more harshly' (Myers and Roth 2013). The fact that the original fight was between Dagestanis (Russian citizens) and the police, yet the migration raids and detentions primarily targeted Vietnamese, belies the image-making nature of the episode. Both the mass detentions and an ensuing announcement by the FMS that 83 new detention centres would be constructed the following year were covered in the Russian-language media as well as by international English-language media and rights groups.

During a research trip to Moscow, I accompanied human rights activists to the site where a migration raid had been conducted in the run-up to the FIFA World Cup in summer 2018. While talking to migrants, it became clear that law enforcement had strategically chosen the timing of the raid. After sundown during Ramadan, many migrants were breaking their fast in cafes near a market on the outskirts of the city. Police separated Central Asian migrants from other restaurant patrons, sending away those of other nationalities. Some migrants were taken to holding facilities, some were beaten and others were let go after paying a bribe. Other raids take place during the daytime, as in a recent raid in Tula in October 2018, which was widely publicised in regional newspapers and on social media. Photos showed migrants organised in long lines, while masked special forces troops stood guard with large guns in hand. As a symbol, raids provide a highly visible display of routine and authentic (i.e., according to the official position) state action.

The spectacular show of securitisation used during migration raids plays a role in symbol- and image-making, even though the exercise of catch and release (for bribes) rather than a systematic implementation of policy as written could call the effectiveness of a policy into question. The key element relies on visibly and loudly displaying the activities of state officials in a selective way that crowds

out attention from the informal activities those same state actors may be performing on the side. Making visible public displays of authentic (albeit selective) routinised state activity becomes a primary tool to make legitimacy appeals. In other words, the symbols are integral to demonstrating that immigration control is effective, by focusing on a limited measure of control that can be more easily controlled and projected for public consumption.

Discussion and conclusions

Two policy mechanisms—quotas and deportations—provide a window into the image and practice of immigration and labour mobility control in Russia. Symbolic immigration control mechanisms are lifted up to dominate the landscape and absorb any attention from inconsistencies or contradictions that make the policy appear ineffective. Contradictions in the system should not be used to argue for policy ineffectiveness in and of themselves, since both formal and informal practices by state officials work together to coordinate a complex field of human interactions and mediate between conflicting goals. The two cases suggest that, despite policy changes, informal practices adapt to new policy spheres to ensure migrants can remain and address structural labour demand. This picture of immigration control is quite different from a typical estimation of policy effectiveness based on how closely enforcement matches policies on paper. Rather, this view demonstrates that informal strategies are essential to mediate and compensate for a seemingly uncoordinated and arbitrary space when state image and practice diverge.

Symbolic control policies that produce visible displays for the public are based on official, routine activities of state agents, ranging from the everyday to the spectacular. Together these aspects of symbol serve a legitimacy function, highlighting policy mechanisms (or certain aspects of these) that are effective, even for the limited goal of producing official statistics. Thus, they serve specific immigration control goals.

It is equally important that the policy landscape is sufficiently porous to allow sufficient numbers of workers to satisfy labour demands and help decision-makers balance the disparate needs of various actors in Russia seeking different outcomes from migration policy. Policies are perhaps most effective at controlling the proportion of migrants who have access to legal documents and a secure status, although they do not ultimately reduce the numbers of immigrants in the country. Tracing outcomes over a number of policies suggests that while symbolic policies are erected to serve a certain policy goal, the management of migration depends on the continuity of a mixture of formal and informal practices. While policies may change rapidly, stability stems from a resilient understanding of this formal–informal mix. Informality is necessary because it allows the system to flexibly adapt to new policies and ensures migrants can find ways to remain in Russia and continue contributing to the economy.

This chapter utilises a view of the migrant population as a mass of mobile labour rather than a perhaps more authentic view of a dynamic group of individuals.

Accounts that look at the individual experiences of migrants in response to policies create a very different picture of the impact of migration policy in Russia. My aim is to demonstrate how the state, writ large, sees the migration situation and how it reacts accordingly. From this perspective, focusing on individual migrant experiences does not help to determine how the state system views migrants primarily as official statistics (or through the interactions that produce those statistics).

Taking this view shifts our focus from a state that is actively working to produce illegality or deportabilty (De Genova 2002) as some (Reeves 2015; Kubal 2017) have argued. Rather, this view shows that the state is working through myriad actors and processes to produce a certain picture of legality. Managing the balance between the picture of legality (image) and the on-the-ground reality (practice), which requires a reliable stock of migrants (regardless of their legality), is often devolved to lower state agents (Schenk 2018a). Examples of the activities of bureaucrats, courts and law enforcement in this chapter demonstrate the importance of these non-elite state officials. In their interactions with state officials, migrants are variously made legible through fake or real documents (Reeves 2013). But, from the view within the state, legibility is not attached to the individual personhood of a migrant. Rather, legibility emerges in terms of numbers that can be recorded and preserved in official statistics and documents.

While the consequences for migrants on the ground may be the same (illegality and vulnerability), this 'migrants as a mass' view, whereby statistics are the end goal, reveals important attributes of the state. The state is not merely decision-makers in Moscow who design policy and enact it through laws and implementing orders. It is also not primarily street-level bureaucrats who interact with migrants and employers and write reports that are then aggregated into statistics. The field of the state extends to those agents that mediate between various goals and needs of the state, iterated at different levels. For all state agents, the availability of both formal and informal strategies is essential to creating an image of immigration control while still providing the space for migrants to remain in Russia, engaged in the labour market (either formally or informally). Thus, because the state can rely on informal practices, actors can use symbolic policies to meet some goals, while not upsetting the general migration governance landscape. This chapter further suggests that combining rational appeals, such as that to state planning or official data, with emotively oriented displays, such as the personal intervention of the President or highly securitised policy actions, is a powerful combination that can be mobilised in support of legitimacy appeals. The examples of quotas and deportation policies and practices suggest that state actors have learned across policy periods how to combine various elements of symbolic displays in their routine activities.

Notes

1 Similar concepts call image-making efforts by the state symbolic (Edelman 1967), spectacular (Cummings 2013; Adams 2010), political theatre (Pisano 2014) and performance (Reeves, Rasanayagam and Beyer 2014; Reeves 2014). Other scholars talk

about the mythical or ceremonial nature of formal politics or state function (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Migdal 2001).

2 Verdery (1993) discusses the legitimacy function of symbols in the context of nations and nationalism.

3 See Bahovadinova (2016). This topic also came up with the author's own interview with a migration expert in Krasnodar in 2012.

4 While administrative expulsion, deportation and reentry bans are separate legal mechanisms, migrants in our field interviews (summer 2017) often referred to them synonymously as deportation, blacklist (*chernyi spisok*) or entry ban (*zapret na v'ezd*). I use 'deportation' to refer to this package of policy mechanisms.

5 Elsewhere, I have called this an 'invented crisis' of illegal immigration, where 'the invented nature of the crisis at hand is not the fact of illegal immigrants on the ground, but rather the characterisation of why migrants are illegal, what potential dangers these illegal populations pose to society and what mechanisms will reduce illegal migration' (Schenk 2018b).

6 Some have also suggested that the timing of the legislation was aimed at reducing the numbers of migrants in the country during the 2018 FIFA World Cup. If there is any merit to this argument, perhaps it stems from a desire to avoid the type of international coverage criticising migrant exploitation and discrimination during the preparation for the Sochi Olympics in 2014. It is also plausible, however, that accompanying increases in administrative expulsion–deportation proceedings were aimed at removing migrants who had worked on Olympic construction projects.

7 The proposal can be found at http://regulation.gov.ru/projects#npa=13509, accessed 25 October 2018.

8 See https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/countries/europe/russian-federation, accessed 31 October 2018.

9 These efforts to reinforce the image of immigration control have a parallel in later efforts to consolidate the issuing of *patent* documents through the construction of numerous government migration centres (Schenk 2018a).

10 These figures for the total number of foreigners crossing into the country are rarely, if ever, mentioned in the media.

11 All names are pseudonyms.

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10 Informal practices and the rule of law

Russia, migration and the 'Arctic route'

Joni Virkkunen and Minna Piipponen

Introduction

When the border between the Russian Federation (hereafter, Russia) and Norway and, later, between Russia and Finland 'opened' during the 'migration crisis' of 2015 and 2016, the so-called Arctic route through Moscow and Northern Russia became another major channel to the European Union. Migrants from various Asian, African and Middle Eastern countries chose this route given its cheaper price and, significantly, because it was considered safer than the overcrowded route through the Mediterranean Sea to Greece, Italy and Spain. Those using the Arctic route consisted of several groups of migrants migrating for varying reasons, including real and perceived threats such as war, conflict, poverty and religious extremism experienced in their home countries as well as acute insecurities in Russia. Due to extensive coverage in social and online media, reports of and rumours about the Arctic route quickly spread amongst migrant communities and smugglers in Russia and globally.

   This study examines the Russian state as a legal power operating through informal practices, and how these practices manifested in the Arctic route. Specific attention is paid to informal practices such as corruption and migrants' ambivalent encounters with Russian authorities facilitating migration to and from Russia, whilst simultaneously creating severe insecurities and distrust amongst migrants, pushing them to negotiate their daily survival and possible future in Russia. In addition, smugglers and other intermediaries with links to authorities assisted migrants whilst also taking advantage of migrants' insecurities. Such individuals and intermediaries organised tickets, documents, permits, hotels and vehicles and provided migrants with information about possible routes. For some migrants, smugglers organised the entire journey through Russia to the Finnish border. By mingling with the Russian legal system, they played a central role in how the Russian North and the Arctic became a functioning route to Finland and the EU's Schengen Area.

   Urinboyev (2016) argues that the presence of millions of irregular migrants in Russia affects the functioning of its formal institutions and leads to the emergence of informal structures and responses, that is, a 'parallel legal order'. Rather than reflecting upon the 'rule of law', migrants discover different tactics and strategies

to adapt to the current 'informality environment' in order to 'get things done' and, thus, create various 'legal orders' to regulate their working lives and seek solutions to their problems. As such, Kubal (2019: 168) illustrated how everyday life perspectives on immigration and refugee law reveal a more complex view of law: migrants try to avoid or bypass the complex bureaucratic structures of the country, like ordinary Russians, but the rule of law 'does not necessarily entail the rule of disorder and mutual abuse'. An everyday life perspective, she argues, reveals the cultural expressions of legality and should not be suppressed under the universal rubric of the rule of law.

In this chapter, we argue that informal practices between migrants, different intermediaries and authorities contributed to the establishment of the Arctic route and functioned both as push and pull factors for migration. These informal practices were simultaneously domestic and transnational, structural and experienced. Furthermore, informal practices become a part of the fabric of everyday life in which a complex set of law and legal practices, administrative procedures and networks are amalgamated with migrants' everyday life experiences. Immigration laws and regulations create legal categories, such as irregular migrant status, which shape migrants' incorporation, position and wages in the labour market and their life chances in general (Agadjanian, Menjívar and Zotova 2017: 2). At the same time, refugee smuggling flourishes particularly in countries where the rule of law is weak and public officials are prone to corruption (OECD 2015: 3), and where the informal practices of officials and governance, particularly payments to police officers, migration officials and border guards, as well as life subjected to 'violent entrepreneurs' who abuse migrants' vulnerabilities, become staple features of migrant life (Reeves 2013: 518; Malakhov 2014: 1070). These realties create a context where migrant bodies are not only vulnerable, but also particularly untrustworthy, prone to fakery and, thus, legitimate targets for document checks, fines and threats of deportation (Reeves 2013: 509).

Here, we examine migrants' experiences with Russian informal practices, intermediaries in the process of migration and encounters with the Russian legal system through narrated stories. In doing so, we aim to improve our understanding of migrants' experiences in Russia as a country of immigration and transit, and our understanding of the everyday insecurities and opportunities such informal practices amongst migrants generate. The chapter relies on a content analysis of the narrated stories from the asylum application protocols of 1164 asylum seekers who used the Arctic route and applied for asylum in Finland in 2015 and 2016. The materials were produced by the Finnish Border Guard, the Police of Finland and the Finnish Immigration Service.

The Arctic route from Russia to Finland

The Arctic route emerged as one of the European migratory routes asylum seekers used to enter the Schengen Area during the 2015 and 2016 'migration crisis'. The route traversed through Moscow and the northernmost border-crossing stations between Russia, Norway and Finland[1] (Figure 10.1). Asylum seekers arrived

Figure 10.1 The Arctic route through Moscow to the North, 2015–2016.

in Finland through border-crossing stations at Raja-Jooseppi and Salla between September 2015 and February 2016 (Finnish Border Guard, 8 January through 4 March 2016).

Surrounding the Arctic route, existing immigrant networks and the reputation of Norway as a wealthy, tolerant and open society meant that Norway emerged as the preferred and first destination amongst asylum seekers. Neighbouring Finland was much less well known and gained interest especially in November 2015 when Norwegian border guards began returning asylum seekers to Russia, whilst Russian border guards simultaneously stopped accepting those travelling to Norway without valid Schengen visas (Moe and Rowe 2016: 88–89). Rumours began quickly circulating in news outlets and on websites about the 'open borders' to Finland, and migration changed course to the Russian–Finnish border.

In Finland, the 'episode' lasted until February when the Finnish and Russian ministries and, then, Presidents Niinistö and Putin negotiated and agreed upon a 180-day closure of the Raja-Jooseppi and Salla border stations to individuals who were not Finnish, Russian or Belarus citizens (Nerg & Järvenkylä 2019; Huhta 2016a, 2016b; Koivuranta 2016). President Putin's public address on the issue to the FSB (*Federal'naia Sluzhba Bezopasnosti*, Security Service of the Russian Federation) of the 'necessity to strengthen the control of refugee flows both to Russia and in transit to European countries' played a role in closing the route (Nerg and Järvenkylä 2019; Putin 2016).

Russia and the Arctic route functioned as alternatives to the crowded Mediterranean and Balkan routes, which were expensive and hazardous because of the extreme maritime dangers and the extensive rebordering of East and Central European states like Serbia and Hungary. A total of approximately 38,100 persons applied for asylum in Finland in 2015 and 2016, of whom only 1756 (4.6%) entered Finland from Russia through the Arctic route (Finnish Immigration Service 2017; Finnish Border Guard, 8 January through 4 March 2016). Our research material consists of the 1164 asylum application protocols from those who submitted their applications in Finland. Up to 281 (24%) of these 1164 asylum applicants reported residence in Russia prior to arriving in Finland.[2] Overall, the group was quite heterogeneous reporting a variety of countries of origin; transit migrants whose aim was to travel through Russia to 'Europe'; remigrating students and labour migrants from Russia; extended families consisting of several generations; and those travelling alone to Russia from different parts of the world. Unlike Middle Eastern, African and other South Asian immigrants, most Afghans were accompanied by children and family members.

Because the route through the Russian north and the Arctic took place following the occupation of Crimea and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, both the Finnish and Norwegian media presented the episode as related to geopolitics and, possibly, representing a part of Russia's hybrid warfare. Particularly puzzling were questions related to border management: Why did the previously well-functioning cooperation with the Russian border guards suddenly fail, and why were migrants without Schengen visas allowed into and through the Russian border zone (Skön 2017; Moe and Rowe 2016)? Although the number of asylum seekers crossing the

Russian border represented less than 5% of all asylum applications submitted in Finland in 2015 and 2016, these questions rendered migration through the Russian or 'the Eastern' border politically more sensitive (Virkkunen 2018).

In Finland, both the government and media described asylum seekers from 'the East' as part of contemporary geopolitics and Russia's increased hybrid warfare: Russia used migrants and asylum seekers as pawns in its European politics (see, e.g., Honkamaa 2016; Rautio 2016). Simultaneously, statements related to the rule of law emphasised that asylum seekers should not have the right to freely choose the country of asylum, since both Finland and Russia are considered safe (Lindroos and Hamunen 2016). We have argued elsewhere that the Arctic route should be examined as a part of broader global and European contexts, on the one hand, and in the context of highly restrictive and unstable immigration, asylum and labour market policies in Russia, on the other (see, e.g., Piipponen and Virkkunen 2020, 2017; Virkkunen et al. 2019). The Arctic route was neither separate from the 'refugee crisis' taking place in Europe nor an event simply organised or manoeuvred around by the Russian state. Instead, it resulted from different vulnerabilities and survival strategies migrants tackled both in Russia and in their home countries.

Most of the asylum seekers traversing the Arctic route fell into the status of irregular migrants and were, thus, excluded from regular labour and housing markets as well as most health and social services when their visas or work permits in Russia expired. At the same time, stories of racist, indifferent and even illegal behaviour amongst the Russian police and authorities were common. In what follows, we describe some of these vulnerabilities from the perspective of informal practices and the rule of law. Clearly, whilst such practices negatively affected migrants' feelings of security and quality of life in Russia, these also provided prospects for migration.

Empirical framework of this study

Our analysis relies on the qualitative content analysis of 1164 asylum application interviews conducted by the Finnish Border Guard, the Police of Finland and the Finnish Immigration Service (see Table 10.1). Asylum seekers who completed the asylum interview process represented 32 nationalities and countries of origin, with the largest groups consisting of citizens of Afghanistan, Nepal, Syria, India, Iran, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Iraq and Pakistan as well as Palestinians specifically from refugee camps in Lebanon. Our materials exclude children ($n = 322$) who were not interviewed given their young age, and almost 300 individuals of different nationalities who disappeared before interviews took place.

As the table illustrates, the majority of asylum seekers using the Arctic route transited through Russia. In particular, Afghan citizens entered Finland with their extended families including individuals from several generations, partially reflecting the large share of individuals who stayed in Russia many years as immigrants. Nearly one-fourth of all asylum seekers had stayed and lived in Russia as immigrants prior to remigration to Finland. Methodologically, our division between

Table 10.1 Country of origin for asylum-seeking applicants by citizenship, immigrants in Russia, transit through Russia and family status.

Citizenship	Total	Immigrant in Russia		Transit migrants		With family members
		n	*%*	*n*	*%*	*%*
Afghanistan	421	120	29	301	71	62
Nepal	88	6	7	82	93	1
Syria	87	18	21	69	79	11
India	81	3	4	78	96	2
Iran	63	0	0	63	100	5
Bangladesh	57	8	14	49	86	0
Cameroon	54	42	78	12	22	1
Palestinians (Lebanon)	48	1	2	47	98	7
Iraq	42	0	0	42	100	5
Pakistan	31	5	16	26	84	1
Other countries	*192*	*78*	*41*	*114*	*59*	*2*
Arctic route	**1164**	**281**	**24**	**883**	**76**	**–**

immigrants and transit migrants stemmed from several aspects of an applicant's story: length of stay; initial intentions and plans, if available; and statements regarding work, renewing visas, residence permits, asylum in Russia and their reasons for remigrating. A short stay did not automatically indicate one's status as a transit migrant or longer stay immigration. In addition to these empirical materials from asylum application protocols, we relied on research literature and reports, seminar discussions and information from other sources (e.g., news items and statistics) to contextualise our study and to better understand the migrants' interpretations.

Asylum interviews as narrated stories

The asylum interview protocols are confidential and sensitive. We collected and read through these protocols viewing them as qualitative and quantitative data, which were compiled in an extensive Excel file at the Finnish Immigration Service's premises in Helsinki. We, then, conducted a qualitative content analysis of these materials. Our research interests and analysis focus on asylum seekers' experiences and interpretations of their motives for migration and asylum, their residence and everyday lives in Russia, as well as their narratives of their travel, border crossings and the organisation of their journeys. We were also interested in migrants' images of Russia, Europe and Finland. We did not include in our analysis Finnish asylum policy, the asylum process or the grounds for seeking asylum in Finland.

As official documents, asylum interview protocols describe the specific context of these narratives. Interviews are conducted in a formal institutional setting, consisting of an interaction between the interviewer as a representative of

the authorities, the asylum seeker and a translator. The materials can, therefore, be characterised by various asymmetries (Tanttu 2017). Applicants occupy a quite vulnerable situation with immense expectations and uncertainties regarding their future, whilst the interviewer's task is to determine the applicant's travel details and motives for asylum. In theory, this process is completed in the asylum seeker's native language through an interpreter, who also functions as a cultural mediator.

The highly sensitive issues discussed during the interviews conducted within this formal institutional setting mean that establishing trust in the process does not lie exclusively in the hands of the interviewer: the applicant's background and previous encounters with authorities, for example, influence their capacity and willingness to talk openly. Because it is entirely possible that the applicant, despite encouragement from the interviewer, conceals or adds details with the expectation of a positive asylum decision, we cannot interpret the information in the protocols as 'facts', but rather as a particular type of narrative that reveals and conveys some important aspects of asylum seekers' experiences. The large volume included in our sample may also reveal details regarding the broader migratory processes within which Arctic route migration occurred.

We analyse the protocols as narrated stories in which asylum seekers reconstruct their migratory journeys, experiences and interpretations in relation to their social and cultural contexts. According to Patterson and Monroe (1998: 330), narrated stories are a source of information in which people make sense of their lives, assemble information, conceive of themselves and interpret the world. Such stories include both the experiences and means of interpreting them available to those telling them.

In practice, the asylum application protocols conducted during the (occasionally) complicated moments of interviews include several narrators. Some parts of the stories are written verbatim as the translator conveyed the applicant's words; however, large parts of these documents consist of the words used by the interviewing authority to tell the applicant's story. In the empirical part of this chapter, the narrated stories may, therefore, appear disorganised and disoriented. Yet, the form of these stories allows us to organise information about applicants' migratory contexts and motives. In addition to 'real experiences', life contexts and motivations, the stories include various fears, prejudices and imaginings that may be secondary, yet still guide migrants' hopes, intentions, plans for the future and the perspectives related to their agency. In relation to informal practices, the narratives incorporated descriptions of peer social networks, as well as encounters with other migrants, intermediaries, smugglers and authorities along the migration route.

Repeated and highly emotional illustrations of informal practices and maltreatment within the frameworks of the Russian legal system, governance and, particularly, law enforcement, as well as the clear presence and involvement of different smugglers and intermediaries, tied informal practices to the rule of law. These not only produced severe daily insecurities amongst migrants, pushing them to leave, but also facilitated the entire process of migration to and from Russia.

State authorities and informal practices in Russia

In Russia, informal payments have become instruments to overcome suspicion, whilst the exchange of gifts and payments to police officers, migration officials and border guards has become staples of migrant life (Reeves 2013: 518). Such practices clearly link to a broad culture of corruption that, according to Malakhov (2014: 1075), has emerged as the primary factor determining current immigration politics in today's Russia. In Russia, corruption is a systemic phenomenon closely linked to status inequality during interactions between citizens and the state (Rimskii 2009; Gorenburg 2009). Whilst small payments are both pervasive and potentially morally acceptable, actions taken by local-level officials do not follow the legal–rational logic but, rather, the logic of material interests. In places and sectors such as the healthcare setting, where the law is inscrutable, corruption inevitably becomes a fact of life (Malakhov 2014: 1075; Reeves 2013: 518).

Migrants' distrust of and frustration with police relates to the overall dissatisfaction with officers' tendency towards systematic involvement with self-serving corruption, contrary to the public interest (Semukhina and Reynolds 2014: 162). In this context of widespread corruption, migrant bodies are viewed simultaneously 'as particularly untrustworthy and liable to fakery—and thus particularly legitimate targets for document checks, fines and threats of deportation' (Reeves 2013: 509). For migrants who often appear noticeably different and are non-citizens without legal documents, this creates a space of uncertainty where, as Reeves (2013: 508) explains, 'the states' documentary regimes, racialising practices and migrant workers' experience of everyday precariousness coincide'.

Within the Arctic route, the behaviour of authorities and the self-guided mindsets of governance were crucial in creating insecurities amongst different groups of migrants. Such authorities formed practices that simultaneously allowed racism, different forms of misbehaviours, discrimination and abuse. Agadjanian et al. (2017: 2) argue that immigration laws and regulations create legal categories that include and exclude crucially shaping immigrants' incorporation and life chances. In the context of widespread racism in Russian society, racialised practices and resentment towards 'black' are common amongst officials, businesses and housing markets. Boundary between legality and illegality is blurred, for example, when corrupt officials give consent to employers to act as 'violent entrepreneurs' (Voronkov 2002 in Malakhov 2014). They are thus not obligated to adhere to minimum wage laws and can exploit migrants.

From the perspective of migrants, we can identify the intersectional character of insecurity,[3] where informal practices and concerns related to justice create overlapping insecurities that impact migrants, their positions and their relationships within society when they attempt to manage their survival in extremely precarious life contexts. In the next section, we examine the most obvious informal practices along the Arctic route. Whilst stories of mistrust of Russian officials, the judiciary and the rule of law dominated, informal practices obviously also created opportunities for migrants. These included the possibility of getting off scot-free

when they violated a law by, for instance, overstaying their visa or not obeying a deportation order issued by a local court.

The Russian judiciary and migrant vulnerability

The mindset towards the Russian judiciary amongst migrants using the Arctic route centred on the arbitrary, or even illegal, conduct related to Russian governance. In many cases, different structures of governance were used interchangeably, reflecting their interconnected and obscure character, migrants' unfamiliarity with the system and their upsetting encounters with Russian authorities, businesses and, sometimes, Russian society in general. Most descriptions detailed corruption and how both the Russian legal system and Russian society felt unjust. A 34-year-old Afghan man, who had applied for asylum in Russia several times, for example, expressed it:

> The Russian authorities can make up [the reasons for a negative asylum application decision] themselves. I appealed the decision to the court. They sent a letter to my home indicating that my court appearance date was three days before [the letter arrived]. They had sent the letter late intentionally, so I did not have a chance to appeal. That was in 2011, when I received my first negative decision. (Row 28[4])

This man believes that the court intentionally acted against his interest. Another 29-year-old Afghan man raised the question of racism, which was particularly obvious in descriptions of the police, but also in descriptions of other authorities. Such narratives usually reflected specific encounters with racism in Russia, on the one hand, and the arbitrary use of legislative power, on the other. Instead of receiving assistance, the police rejected this man's criminal report of assault and, instead, verbally attacked him. In addition, this man's entire family was issued a deportation order, even though they had lived in Russia for five years and his children were born in the country.

> [The applicant] turned to the help of the Russian authorities in 2015 as he feared being in danger of death. Relatives and the ex-husband of his Russian partner attacked him and the applicant tried to file a criminal report. 'The authorities said, "Russia is a country of Russians and you can't report a crime against them."' They issued a deportation order to the applicant and his family, even though his children were born in Russia. (Row 35)

In contrast to members of national diasporas, immigrants and transit migrants rarely had a high educational background or sufficient knowledge of the Russian language and society, including Russian legislation, as well as labour and housing markets. Consequently, such individuals were easily subjected to different kinds of abuses, pressures and shams. As irregular migrants, they were threatened with ending up in slavery-like situations. A 26-year-old Nepalese man described some

of the following characteristics common to global and Russian migrant labour markets. These included big promises by agents and intermediaries, harsh realities and unrealistic expectations amongst migrants and abuses of power by business owners:

> I was promised that I could save 70 000 rupees a month [€625], get a job at a hotel, but everything was a lie. Instead, I was gardening in Moscow and was paid nothing at all. Only money for rent and container living. The working hours were a minimum of 12 hours, sometimes 18 [per day]. … When we were working there and demanded our salary for food, we were told, 'If you demand money, we will call the police and return you to Nepal.' … We are not machines, but people. If you were sick, you got no money and faced hunger all the time. … Russia is a bad place; they have no laws or system. I do not understand their language. (Row 146)

Agadjanian, Menjívar and Zotova (2017) observed in their analysis of Central Asian migrants in Russia how migrants' legal status directly correlated with the likelihood of experiencing harassment at the hands of law enforcement agents, other authorities and various actors. This also emerged in our materials, where the largest risk for abuse was amongst irregular migrants who may have arrived in Russia legally but who, for one reason or another, could not renew their residence or work permits even after several years' residence in the country. Consequently, they would avoid the police and migration officers as well as public places for fear of being arrested and deported. Incidents of corruption, maltreatment and abuses of power amongst migrants were common.

Corruption, maltreatment and the abuse of power

Migrants using the Arctic route described a highly negative overall impression of Russian state officers. The main concern shaping this impression related to the above-described culture of corruption, but it also stemmed from the severe maltreatment and abuse of power perpetrated by state authorities, particularly by the police. Because deportation orders (see below for further details) and travel to the border were primarily organised by smugglers and other intermediaries, the migrants' personal encounters with the Russian court system and border services in the north remained limited. Despite confusing various authorities stationed along the Northern border areas, illustrating well the vague notion of the migration process in general, the below description from a 26-year-old North African man on his transit to Finland provides a rare, neutral, if not slightly positive, view of Russian authorities:

> In Murmansk, the police said that we had to leave the country since our visas were running out. The police said that we must connect with Finland or Norway. He also showed us a taxi that would supposedly get us to the Finnish border. [The taxi driver] called in advance to a familiar police officer who

was working at a checkpoint before the border. That police officer collected and checked our documents at the checkpoint and called the border to tell them that we were coming. He told the border agent that we should be able to cross the border swimmingly well. (Row 73)

In contrast, stories frequently described constant stops, arrests and forced bribery as well as 'robberies' and 'kidnappings', where police officers not only demanded money and detained individuals for an hour or two but even transported migrants to a forest to exert further pressure on them. Based on studies amongst African immigrants in Russia (see, e.g., Virkkunen et al. 2019; Bondarenko 2018; Bondarenko et al. 2009), the experiences of highly educated national diasporas in Russia were also quite different from the experiences of 'new' African immigrants. Businessmen and diplomats who completed their education in Soviet or Russian universities, who knew the Russian language, received Russian citizenship and integrated into a transnational lifestyle did not face, or at least describe, similar concerns or experiences. Despite a similar status within the ethnic hierarchy as that amongst newer African migrants, their social and economic status complete with solid contacts and a transnational lifestyle directed these members of diasporas to an entirely alternate living environment and experiences in the country. Thus, members of such diasporas neither left Russia through the Arctic route nor were they represented in our materials.

In addition to the asylum seekers' social and legal status in Russia, the arbitrary behaviour of police officers represented one of the main reasons justifying migrants' decision to leave Russia. A 22-year-old Guinean man described how he experienced fairly common incidents of racism and a racialised implementation of the law. This man arrived in Russia as a student in 2012, three years before leaving for the Arctic, and ended up doing odd jobs as an irregular migrant when his university closed and his visa expired. After being physically attacked in the Metro, he wanted to file a report on the incident to the police but was refused given his background. For him, the arbitrary actions of the police represented the overall racism within the country:

But if you don't have anything in Russia, you are nothing. I cannot even talk about it. I was beaten up on the Metro twice. I tried to explain that to the police, but they were not interested since I was an African. I have worked a lot and did not get paid, and they just tell me to go away. … Russians often say, 'You, African, why are you here? Why don't you live in France or somewhere else?' Russia is the most racist country, even they [Russians] say so. (Row 190)

According to Agadjanian et al. (2017; see, also, Levada Centre 2019), the idea of 'Russia for ethnic Russians' has been fully or partly supported by half of Russia's population since the early 2000s. In larger cities, there are numerous public places (such as Metro stations) where migrants are exposed to police checks of documents. The comment of a 32-year-old Afghan business owner with over ten

years' experience in Moscow well crystallises the ambiguity of the document check procedure, which is officially justified by the rhetoric of security. For most of the time, he and his family did not occupy the position of irregular migrants. Yet, he still struggled with residence registration, which is simultaneously the cornerstone of the Russian residence system[5] and, in general, one of the most problematic sources of insecurity for immigrants in Russia (Piipponen and Virkkunen 2020; Nikiforova and Brednikova 2018; Reeves 2013). Because he stood out given his skin colour, he was constantly stopped:

> when the Russian police sees that your skin colour is different and recognises you from that. They tell me to come over. Even if you have your documents, they will bring you to the police car, check and empty your pockets and let you go. They have even learned Dari, since there are many Afghans over there. (Row 79)

The document check was described in detail as a racialised practice by many asylum seekers, including South Asian and sub-Saharan and North African migrants. In order to add to the emotional impact, the procedure involved not only a formal ID check and check of possible registration and work permit, but also included demands for bribes. Because such interactions could well lead to arrest or deportation, this man experienced them as extremely frustrating and frightening. Many of the Afghan migrants, for example, who grew up in Russia or in Iran and had no contacts in Afghanistan, were particularly terrified of possible forced deportation. The following narratives from two Nepalese men, a 31-year-old and a 26-year-old, respectively, capture how irregularities were 'open to monetary negotiation with state officials' (Reeves 2013: 518) along the Arctic route as well. In this context, informal payments helped 'to overcome the space of suspicion between physical and documented person' (ibid.) on behalf of the police, whilst simultaneously creating serious insecurities among migrants:

> It was very difficult to move around. As soon as the police see us, they want money. If you don't give them [money], they will take [it]. Sometimes they caught us and brought us to the forest. … If we give them 500–1000 roubles, they leave. If you give them less than 500–1000 roubles, they will take you to the forest and leave you there. When I was new and did not even know my way; it was difficult to get back. Besides, I did not have lots of money. (Row 95)

> If you don't give the money, you will be driven far away and left there. We were afraid all the time. They always told me that if 'you don't give us money, you will be returned back to Nepal'. (Row 146)

In her study, Reeves (2013: 517) also emphasised that it was not only the status of the document per se that was important regarding perceptions of legality but also familiarity with the Moscow Metro that could signify a broader ability to navigate the city and its risks. Whilst most migrants cannot hide their foreign

background due to their different skin colour, 'you've got to walk like you know where you're going, even if you haven't a clue' (ibid.). Apart from avoiding public places, this cultural adaptation was presented as another way to avoid 'falling' to the police.

Ambiguous deportation orders

Informal practices in our material also related to the twofold use of deportation orders as components of the Russian migration policy and the Arctic route. Kubal (2019: 67–69) introduced Daniel Kanstroom's (2000) twofold model of deportation—that is, deportation as border control and deportation as social order. Whilst deportation as border control refers to 'a consequence of a violation of the contract between the migrant and the host country as inherent to immigration law', the social control model signifies a 'method of control of the behaviour of non-citizens for their post-entry misconduct' (Kubal 2019: 67-68). In the latter case, a deportation order is typically issued by a court as a result of a non-citizen breaking the laws of the host-state territory. A deportation order carries both regulatory and punitive elements.

In the context of Arctic route migration, deportation orders certainly carried both functions. Most migrants entered Russia legally but ended up in the country as irregular migrants since renewing documents was exceedingly difficult, and they were often persecuted for different forms of misconduct whether they broke a law or not. For migrants, this control resulted in abusive and arbitrary encounters with the police or other authorities leading to a possible forced deportation, contributing to other daily insecurities.

Yet another understanding of a deportation order that was rather desirable consisted of an administrative procedure, allowing migrants to cross the border to Finland. Formally, a deportation order followed the usual procedures of justice. It was issued by local courts in Moscow or Murmansk as a result of breaking a law, typically overstaying a visa. In this case, both the deportation order and court procedures functioned as tools of the Russian migration policy and border governance, allowing migrants to leave whilst also restricting their return to the Russian Federation following departure. For immigrants and transit migrants alike, with or without a valid visa, this guaranteed them access across the Russian border to the Finnish border and increased their expectation of successful migration to Finland. The asylum interview with a 28-year-old Nigerian woman (as summarised by the interviewer) describes her journey across the Russian border checkpoint:

> Went to the Nigerian embassy after about 6 years and got herself a passport. Next, she got the exit permit from authorities and paid the 5000-rouble fine. Flew from Moscow to Murmansk where the authorities questioned the applicant and checked the legality and authenticity of her documents. 'They asked me where I was going, and I answered that I was going to Finland. … At the border, the Russian authorities completed a security check and checked my

documents, took away the exit permit at the last checkpoint. That is called a deportation order. If you did not pay, you could not get away.' (Row 294)

Since travel was often organised by family members, and assisted by family members, smugglers and other intermediaries, migrants themselves were not necessarily aware of all of the required documents and procedures. In our materials, deportation orders were also referred to as 'exit permits', 'exit passes' or, in some cases, 'exit visas'. Interestingly, the deportation order and the officials organising those transformed from corrupt and something necessitating fear to supportive and purely administrative components of the process. The examples of the Nigerian woman above and of this 29-year-old Afghan man well illustrate this contradiction:

> The Russian border authorities treated us ok even though we did not have a residence permit in Russia. In Moscow, we got a 5000-rouble fine for being in the country illegally and we were given a pass to exit the country by ourselves. (Row 222)

Intermediaries negotiating the Arctic route

Russia plays an integral role in global migration, and the Arctic route appeared to serve as an alternative route for many transit migrants. Whilst much of the media attention on migration routes focuses on the role of traffickers and smugglers, Leman and Janssens (2015: 1) noted that neither illegal migration nor all illegal transport of people by individual smugglers or 'soloist' traffickers across borders without the acquisition of real profits accounts for people smuggling. By definition, this involves illegal profits accumulated by a trafficker through transport. Yet, this is usually facilitated by a range of agents, smugglers and transnational intermediaries, such as travel agencies, global smuggling networks, local mafia-like groups, individual business owners and business-minded individuals, who view migrants as an opportunity to earn extra income. Corruption also plays a fundamental role in migrant smuggling (McAuliffe and Laczko 2016).

The last section of this chapter deals with the seemingly non-state informal practices that remained tightly connected to the above-described weaknesses of the state. The migrants relying on the Arctic route were rather heterogeneous. Whilst some migrants were totally dependent on agents and smugglers, others organised their trip to Russia and through the North themselves without (almost) any assistance.

Agents, smugglers and transnational criminal activities

Along the Arctic route, many of the migrants used agents and smugglers during their trip to Russia and further to Finland. These 'agents' actually represented a diverse set of well-networked smugglers and other actors in different places and of varying nationalities. Apart from activities related to organised crime and the

illegal human smuggling business, friends, family members and acquaintances as well as travel agencies were crucial in providing migrants with assistance and information about various possibilities. Instead of forming a straightforward process, travel typically took place in segments, such as first to Moscow, then to other parts of Russia or the post-Soviet space, where the migrants stayed in hotel rooms or apartments whilst their agents organised documents and sought solutions for subsequent legs of the journey. The role of agents—or smugglers— were pivotal both for labour migrants who intended to stay in Russia for work purposes and for migrants passing through Russia to the European Union. The following asylum interview with a 26-year-old Palestinian asylum seeker from Lebanon describes the process with 'full service' to Finland:

> Applicant's mother paid US$7000 to the smuggler who organised the [applicant's route] from Lebanon to Finland. The smuggler stayed in Lebanon. … Four Russian-speaking persons met the applicant in Moscow and helped him further to Murmansk. … The smuggler in Lebanon organised everything for the trip and there was always some Russian-speaking person to escort [them] further. … In Murmansk, the applicant was told that if he pays US$500 more for the Russian assistant, he will be allowed into Finland faster. The applicant got more money from his mother in Lebanon, paid the required sum to the Russian assistant and was able to continue his trip. (Row 1098)

This Palestinian used the well-connected international 'smuggling service' network to organise his trip to Russia and further to Finland. Those immigrants who lived in Russia and knew the Russian language could organise their travel to Murmansk independently with no need for expensive agents or smugglers. However, for most transit migrants and other immigrants, the trip to Russia and further to Finland was possible only through intermediaries with contacts and local expertise. Such migrants' poor knowledge of Russian and the country in general, combined with lofty promises and future expectations, led to vulnerabilities, whereby they were subjected to shams and abuses. The following narratives from two Nepalese men, 24- and 26-years-old, respectively, who were originally labour migrants, illustrate how misleading promises related to legal documents, high-paying jobs, an improved quality of life and the possibility of sending remittances can lead to completely unrealistic expectations, disappointments and decisions to remigrate:

> Agents organised the work visa to Russia for me. I don't remember his name, but he was Nepalese. I had to pay him about 600 000 rupees (about €5000). I signed a contract that included a visa, plane tickets and a Russian work permit. In the contract, they promised me a job, food and that I can save about US$700 per month. There was no work, but I got work from somewhere else in Moscow. In the toy store, my salary was US$330 a month. The salary was supposed to be US$1400–1500. (Row 139)

The smuggler organised all the work-related things. He promised a good job and a salary. Nothing he said came true. I had to work 16 or 17 hours a day. I got food once a day. … In Moscow, I went to some travel agency where they let me know how I can get to Finland, and we booked flights to Murmansk. Perhaps the name of the travel agency was on my plane ticket, but it was in Russian. I paid 4500 roubles for the plane ticket to Murmansk. (Row 137)

Whilst both of these Nepalese men were cheated and endured long working hours and relatively low pay, a common occurrence for labour migrants in Russia, they did not experience serious abuses, such as that described by a number of migrants from different parts of Africa. A Nigerian woman described the realities of human trafficking in Russia, similar to descriptions appearing in the international media in recent years (see, e.g., Taub 2017; Kuronen 2019):

The woman had other girls in Russia who had been involved with prostitution. The woman demanded that I join them. She had paid for my trip to Russia and I had to work for her since I had no friends that could help me. I told the woman that I do not want to do that work, but that I can do hair. … In Nigeria, there is no work. … I have no one in Nigeria. My mother and father died in 2010. I am not threatened by anything in Nigeria. (Row 692)

According to Taub (2017), thousands of young Nigerians on their way to Europe are subject to human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. As a highly gendered phenomenon, this sort of exploitation also involved different forms of physical and psychological violence (Gerassi 2018; UNODC 2018). In our materials, sexual exploitation amongst trafficked individuals involved deprivations of liberty, rape, death threats and extortion. In this respect, the stories of human trafficking in our materials were part of a wider international phenomenon:

'One woman brought me to Russia and promised me work as a dressmaker, but when I came to Russia she forced me into prostitution.' … When the applicant refused prostitution, the woman beat her and took her phone. She was not allowed to leave the house freely. The applicant lived in the house of that woman for years (and worked as a prostitute between 2012–2015) until one day she found her passport and ran away. (Row 694)

The victims of human trafficking, like the 38-year-old Nigerian woman above, were usually tricked to Russia with stories of 'regular' jobs in hair salons, restaurants or dressmaker's shops. In reality, they ended up in serious debt and forced prostitution. Smugglers and intermediaries demanded that they repay all travel-related expenses in amounts totalling up to US$45,000. Only the border-crossing experience to Finland signified a clear improvement towards feeling safe.

Taxi drivers and local businesses

The last group of intermediaries along the Arctic route examined in this chapter consists of local actors ranging from individuals to business owners who helped migrants in the North close to the Finnish border. Since the Arctic route was used in autumn and the depths of winter and traversed the remote Arctic periphery with up to a two-week queue close to the Finnish border, migrants travelling from Murmansk to the border required external assistance related to transport, lodging and local knowledge. Apart from global networks, assistance was provided by 'soloist' actors and well-organised businesses, such as taxi companies and hotels with solid contacts with the police and the border services. These soloists understood the local conditions, infrastructures and contexts of border crossing. The price, quality and risks of a 'service' depended upon the assistance required, the character of the provider and, undoubtedly, how dependent the migrant was on the intermediary. During his asylum interview, a 38-year-old North African male transit migrant described how he organised his travel to Murmansk on his own and how he found his driver in the lobby of his Murmansk hotel:

> Heard how to travel to Finland from the internet. There he was told that he could get a flight to Moscow and to Murmansk, and from there he could get across the border. Received no assistance from anyone in organising his trip but organised it himself. Took a taxi from Murmansk airport and went to the hotel. … In the hotel lobby, he was asked if he was on his way to Norway. He told the individual that he was on his way to Finland, and the person offered him a ride for US$500. There were also other passengers in the car. It was not a taxi, but a civilian car. Before the border check, they were given bicycles and the applicant continued to the border. (Row 196)

This man did not use international smuggling networks or other intermediaries before reaching Murmansk. Whilst travel to the border was typically organised by taxi drivers, the narratives of the following 28-year-old Syrian man and 36-year-old Guinean man reveal the essential role of hotels along the Arctic route. Hotels functioned not only as places of accommodation and waiting, but also significant spaces for interaction between migrants, intermediaries and authorities:

> Spent a week in Murmansk. At the hotel, people speaking Arabic told him about a Russian van driver who drove him close to the Finnish border. … Paid US$1200 for a bicycle, transport and hotel accommodation. (Row 391)

> At the first border guard/army checkpoint in Kantalahti, people in the car were informed about two hotels in Kantalahti and that more information can be received at the hotel. … Upon arrival, the hotel personnel wrote down the information of the person arriving and let the authorities know. … There are two hotels in Kantalahti and both hotels have the same system: Immigration Service officers come to the hotel to tell asylum seekers whose turn it is to depart to Finland. The applicant says that he has heard that it is possible to pay

to progress more quickly in the queue, but the applicant did not pay anything extra and instead waited for his turn. … The list was at reception. … The personnel from the Immigration Services determine the number and decide whose turn it is. (Row 864)

These fragments from quite different migrant stories closely touch upon a matter widely discussed in Finland when the Arctic route immigration took place, namely, how likely the entire scenario was without the direct involvement, or at least the acceptance of, the FSB and the Russian state (see, e.g., Nerg and Järvenkylä 2019; Huhta 2016b; Rautio 2016). These narratives clearly demonstrate that both migration and the Arctic route represented a combination of global migration, engagement amongst diverse intermediaries and engagement with the state, particularly at the border. Therefore, it was also possible to close the route through bilateral negotiations.

Conclusions

In this chapter, we analysed the Russian state as a legal power, focusing on informal practices and the ways that these informal practices contributed to migration during the so-called Arctic route to Finland. A careful study of migrants' narratives on Russia and their journeys along the Arctic route reveals how various state and non-state informal practices and issues related to the rule of law intertwined and, thus, influenced both people on the move and the route in general. Whilst the deep-rooted culture of corruption and migrants' ambivalent encounters with Russian authorities, such as the police created deep-seated frustrations and insecurities amongst migrants, these understandings simultaneously facilitated migration to and from Russia to Finland. At the same time, non-state actors such as agents, smugglers and business owners functioned as intermediaries by negotiating and navigating through migratory practices along the route.

The individuals using the Arctic route for migration varied. For transit migrants, the route functioned as another route in global migration, an alternative to the crowded Mediterranean and Balkan routes to the European Union. After hearing about the route via (usually online) traditional or social media platforms, or from family members, friends or acquaintances, many organised their travel relatively independently to Russia and further to the North. However, many others used agents, human smuggling and other well-connected transnational crime networks during the process. These nefarious actors not only subjected migrants to varying vulnerabilities and insecurities along the way but, importantly, made their migration possible. Amongst the other group, consisting of labour migrants, students and refugees residing in Russia, a rather different situation emerged. Many of them, although certainly not all, possessed better linguistic and other knowledge necessary to organise their own travel to the North, where they joined transit migrants towards the Finnish border. Because the Arctic route 'episode' took place in late autumn and deep into winter in a very remote northern periphery, the practical organisation

of travel in the North was possible only with assistance from local taxi drivers, businesses and individuals who helped migrants not only with transport but also with accommodation. Apart from gaining material benefit from the situation themselves, these local actors also functioned as mediators between migrants and the state.

Confirming assumptions held by the Finnish public and put forth in political discussions, the Russian state bureaucracy was aware and, even, somewhat involved in the Arctic route by granting asylum-seeking migrants with deportation orders (that is, 'exit permits', 'exit passes' or 'exit visas', as migrants referred to them) to enter the normally well-guarded border zone in the North and to approach the Finnish border. The route was not a state-organised practice. Migrants exhibited their own agency, and, with assistance from intermediaries between migrants and the state, could manage their trip to Finland and the European Union. In other words, because informal practices functioned as the contextual foundation for migration in Russia and along the Arctic route, transnational and local intermediaries with their contacts negotiated concrete solutions and practices for migrants and the state bureaucracy alike. Without these, neither transnational migration nor the Arctic route would have been possible.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 For Norway, see Moe and Rowe (2016) and Mikhailova (2018).
2 The asylum application protocols consist of asylum investigation protocols (*turvapaikk akuulustelupöytäkirja*) conducted by the Finnish Border Guard or the Police of Finland, and asylum hearing protocols (*turvapaikkapuhuttelupöytäkirja*) conducted by the Finnish Immigration Service. The former are fixed forms, whereby an officer verifies the applicants' travel documents, identification, route travelled, border crossings, accompanying persons and other family members and former places of residence, including possible asylum applications pending or submitted in other countries. The latter determines the grounds for the applicant's application of asylum. Because the conditions and motivations for asylum vary, the hearing questions are determined on a case-by-case basis. Here, we use the term 'asylum interview' or 'asylum application protocol' to refer to these materials as a whole.
3 The idea of the intersectional character of migrants' insecurity derives from the theory of feminist sociology, which focuses on how an individual's social identities, such as gender, race, class, age and sexuality, combine when describing and explaining different kinds of social, political and personal inequalities (see, e.g., Yuval-Davis 2015; Smith and Marmo 2011). Thus, migrants' insecurity in Russia was comprehensive and not determined by a single factor, such as by race or gender alone but, rather, by a combination of factors.
4 The row numbers of the quotations refer to the collected Excel dataset of the original asylum application protocols. The 1164 protocols are organized by rows in the data.

    We avoided collection of applicants' names and other personal information unnecessary for the research.

5 The procedure for residence registration dates back to the Soviet-era residence permit system and the infamous institution of 'residence registration' (*propiska*) (Nikiforova and Brednikova 2018; Reeves 2013; Nozhenko 2010). The *propiska* anchored individuals to a particular place, usually a city or town, allowing them access to the labour market and social services in that location. Formally, the *propiska* was abolished after 1993, but it was essentially reintroduced as the 'residence registration system' (*registratsia*), an important entry point to legal status and social benefits, such as education, health services and the Russian housing market.

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11 'Ask us decently and then we will not reject anyone!'

Providing informal healthcare in a Kazakh medical space

Bakyt Muratbayeva and Benjamin Quasinowski

Introduction

Mobility tends to accompany new, strange and unknown contexts otherwise deemed stable and familiar, contexts characterised by taken-for-granted and approved, 'good' practices and ways of living. Thus, mobility can increase social contingency. As such, it also creates spaces of insecurity and fluidity, which, in turn, provide the conditions for the emergence of new forms of informality. Studying such spaces facilitates a theoretical examination of the connection between everyday aspects of mobility and informality. Vigorous debate surrounds the role and breadth of practices related to informal welfare provision in post-socialist countries (Polese et al. 2015). Is informality per se counterproductive with regard to attempts to guarantee universal welfare through the establishment of corresponding state infrastructures? Or can practices of informality take on a complementary function, existing alongside formal practices, in spaces beyond the reach of states' formal practices related to welfare provision?

This chapter is an empirically grounded attempt to contribute to this debate. We focus on informal practices in primary healthcare (PHC) services for people occupying the margins of official regulations in rural Kazakhstan. Primarily, we argue that in post-Soviet Kazakhstan a number of practices related to the informal provision of healthcare have emerged in connection with a new mode of translocal mobility and the emergence of a new category of 'paperless' migrants. Alongside initiatives to reform and digitise the country's healthcare system, these practices have recently come under pressure, although they persist today. These practices of informality tend to take on a complementary role to the formal provision of healthcare services, particularly in rural contexts where regulatory frameworks are often inconsistent or entirely absent.

Kazakhstan offers an interesting case for examining the connection between everyday aspects of mobility and informality for at least two reasons. Firstly, mobility is both a historical and contemporary constant of the country. According to the International Migration Report (2017), 20% of Kazakhstan's population consists of international migrants. In absolute terms, this equates with over 3.5 million people, which, in turn, accounts for around 66% of the approximately 5.5 million international migrants in post-Soviet Central Asia (UN 2017: 25). The

population inhabiting Kazakhstan, the ninth-largest country in the world in terms of landmass, has long been mobile, from Kazakh nomads seeking better pastures (Olcott 1995) to the deportees sent there by Stalin (Pohl 2007), from students arriving through Khrushchev's Virgin Lands Campaign to today's Oralmandar—that is, the 'returnees' of the Kazakh diaspora (Diener 2005).

Secondly, Kazakhstan offers a paradigmatic case in mobility leading to new informal practices. In the literature on global health, the notion of PHC is often associated with the Alma-Ata Declaration (Packard 2016: 227). Although some serious efforts have been made by the Kazakh Ministry of Health towards implementing reforms (Obermann et al. 2016; Jones et al. 2017), universal health coverage and PHC remain unrealised (Lane 2018; Shukshin 2019). In particular, the '[p]rovision of healthcare in rural areas is one of the main challenges facing the Kazakh health system' (Footman et al. 2014: 190-191f). The decrease in financing available to the healthcare system after 1991 has yet not been completely reversed, leading to considerable amounts of private out-of-pocket payments for healthcare services (Shukshin 2019: 250). Rural areas and PHC facilities remain undersupplied in comparison to urban areas and hospitals (Rechel et al. 2013). Moreover, rural populations tend to have less access to pharmaceuticals (Footman et al. 2014: 190). Finally, a tradition of informal payments for health has existed for quite some time and remains widespread (Ensor 2004: 239).

In what follows, we first introduce the ethnographic field site from whence we drew our data. The structure of the chapter then proceeds in a way similar to a pair of binoculars, whereby we zoom in to focus on ever-smaller sections of the landscape at two different times: from a historical sketch of the emergence of biomedicine in Kazakhstan during the era of Soviet internal migration to its repercussions in a rural village community; then, from the flows of return migration amongst the Kazakh diaspora in the post-Soviet era back to the rural community, now undergoing some grave changes vis-á-vis its hospital, its discourses surrounding marginalised outsiders and informal practices related to healthcare provision.

Ethnographic research in a rural hospital

The research presented in this chapter was carried out within the context of two PhD projects: one focused on the role of ethnicity in medical interactions (Muratbayeva), and the other on the global diffusion of biomedical institutions (Quasinowski). We conducted ethnographic fieldwork in a village in eastern Kazakhstan and, specifically, in a local hospital. An acquaintance of ours, the director of the hospital, assisted us in gaining access to the community of Kyzylzhar[1] as well as to the hospital itself. The hospital served as our primary field site for more than 12 months between 2015 and 2017.

Kyzylzhar is located in a sparsely populated steppe area bordering China. Since the mid-twentieth century, Kyzylzhar has been home to a population of several thousand residents. A wave of out-migration followed the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, when considerable segments of the village's ethnic Russians

and Germans left. Today, about 8500 people continue living in the village. Whilst the 1990s witnessed the shutdown and relocation of several factories and state-run enterprises, some important administrative and state-run infrastructure remains, including the local government office (*akimat*), a postal and telecommunications office, a police station and the local hospital. The hospital is divided into a number of functional sections. Firstly, it houses a clinic that primarily provides outpatient PHC services. Secondly, a small inpatient facility houses 15 beds. Thirdly, a small emergency department is staffed 24 hours a day with a paramedic (*fel'dsher*).

In the hospital, we completed observations, talked with and learnt from staff members and, with their consent, made video- and audio-recordings of their daily work activities. One focus of these observations was the daily conferences (*pyatiminutka*), which take place at 9.00 each morning and which most staff members attend. These daily conferences provide an organisational space for the exchange of information and for status updates on work-related issues, such as patients' health conditions or the hospital's current medical supplies. They also serve as nodes for orders and instructions—that is, for organising the administrative and organisational work of the hospital.

Here, we primarily rely on the existing literature on biomedicine and migration to and within Kazakhstan, data from our own observations and on our interviews with hospital staff.

Mobility and medicine in Soviet Kazakhstan

In order to develop an initial understanding of the daily affairs within the village hospital, it is important to situate it within a broader historical context and within the processes that led to the consolidation of biomedical knowledge and institutions in Kazakhstan (Michaels 2003; cf. Lock and Nguyen 2018 on the notion of biomedicine). The introduction of biomedical institutions in Central Asia is a relatively recent phenomenon, deeply interwoven with the establishment of Soviet power. The first period of this process of establishment, from around 1918 to 1941, was characterised by a slow but continuous growth and the spread of biomedical institutions into the rural areas of the country. According to the plans of Soviet officials, the benefits of biomedicine were to reach every corner of this large Soviet republic (Michaels 2003: 109). During that period, 'the original emphasis was on communicable disease control and the development of a rural primary healthcare infrastructure' (Katsaga et al. 2012: 15).

However, as Michaels shows, biomedicine—compared to more traditional forms of medicine—served not only the purpose of improving the overall health conditions of the population, but also held political significance. In the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR), the institutionalisation of biomedicine helped to diffuse and popularise the ideas of the Soviet cultural revolution. As Michaels argues, the Soviet authorities 'saw medical educational institutions as laboratories of social engineering' (2003: 96). Having learnt about political economy in special courses included in their curricula at universities, the new medical elite was not only charged with propagating the newest standards of hygiene but were also expected

to spread the words of Marx and Lenin. Doctors often became authoritative figures in their local communities and served as models of the 'new Soviet person'.

A second important period for the development of the biomedical infrastructure in Kazakhstan was the Second World War. Throughout this time, the Kazakh SSR witnessed two large migratory flows of members of the medical profession: one into the country, and the other out of the country. On the one hand, many practitioners were drafted into the Red Army, with many sent to the frontline of the war. As a consequence, the Kazakh SSR struggled with a severe lack of medical practitioners. The Soviet government attempted to compensate for this shortage by increasing the number of trained professionals. Simultaneously, Nazi Germany's attack on the Soviet Union in 1941 led to the evacuation of a number of important medical facilities from Moscow, Leningrad and other cities at risk of being attacked. Amongst the evacuated staff were some of Soviet Russia's key professors. After the end of the war, these professors began to play major roles in establishing medical facilities in the Kazakh SSR.

One consequence of these developments was that after the war more doctors and other medical professionals had been trained than ever before. Moreover, these professionals were no longer concentrated in the country's urban areas. As Michaels writes, 'By the early 1950s, meaningful headway had been made in bringing biomedicine to even the most remote areas of Kazakhstan' (Michaels 2003: 109). Thus, these developments suggest that migratory flows have been a key feature, or even driver, of biomedical institutionalisation in the territory of what is today the Republic of Kazakhstan.

This mode of mobility was not confined to medicine, however. Instead, mobility represented an experience historically shared by large parts of the country's population—that is, it represents a collective experience. In addition to the previously mentioned events specifically affecting the medical profession, a number of other events contributed to the formation of this collective experience in more general terms. Firstly, collectivisation, relocation and *dekulakisation* (the dispossession of peasants conceived of as large property owners) decimated the Kazakh population, from 3.6 million in 1926 to 2.3 million in 1939. These events also destroyed the last remnants of the nomadic way of life in the region (Kindler 2014; Olcott 1995; Alekseenko and Masanov 2000: 380). Secondly, with the onset of Stalin's purges in the mid-1930s, the sociocultural configuration of the Kazakh SSR continued to dramatically change as the country became the new home for hundreds of thousands of deportees (Martin 2001: 328). Amongst these were approximately 449,000 Germans, 24,500 Chechens, 100,000 Koreans and 81,000 Ingushets (Alekseenko and Masanov 2000: 390). Finally, with the land reclamation programmes initiated by Khrushchev following Stalin's death, which were intended to solve problems related to supplying the USSR with agricultural products, another estimated 1–2 million settlers came to the Kazakh SSR (Pohl 2007: 238; Olcott 1995: Ch. 10). These people were mainly sent to the northern parts of the country, which likewise became the primary destinations for forced 'special emigrants' (*specpereselency*) and former inmates of the Gulag system (Pohl 2007).

As a consequence of these multifaceted migratory flows, many rural villages suddenly comprised a mixture of socially and culturally diverse groups. Routines related to dealing with cultural and ethnic alterity and difference in everyday life became necessary. It seems that the collective experience of being a stranger, migrant or refugee or a victim of Stalinist repression facilitated the social integration of the newly emerging diversity. Thus, we argue that this very specific kind of collective experience of mobility laid the foundation for a particular kind of conviviality, which is often mentioned by members of the country's older generation when pressed to describe Soviet times (Pohl 2007: 251). If only because they often had no other choice, people devised ways of managing their daily dealings with cultural and ethnic others, even under circumstances where almost everyone was a stranger.

Conviviality was also encouraged by the creation and propagation of a mighty bureaucratic apparatus that supported the implementation of the Soviet model of international friendship (Martin 2001: 432–461). Soviet leaders propagated a view of the Kazakh SSR as a paradigmatic case of Soviet multiculturalism, and people learned to see the country as a 'laboratory of the friendship of peoples'. This model of multiculturalism aimed to secure the harmonious coexistence of a diverse population intended to bring about a bright socialist future.

A rural hospital and its institutional biography

The institutional biography of Kyzylzhar's hospital can be traced back to the 1970s. Officials originally chose a remote location to build an administrative centre for the newly organised district (*rayon*) in the east of the Kazakh SSR. In order to foster the development of the new district and its centre, young specialists from various fields and from different parts of the Soviet Union were sent there through government programmes. Doctors with their assistants, nurses and midwifes arrived in the village, all with the aim of providing healthcare to a population sparsely distributed over the large sandy semi-desert landscape of the district. These local residents included the aforementioned resettled peoples, including individuals from the Caucasus, the Volga region and the Turkmen and the Uzbek SSRs. The hospital had the official status of being a central district hospital at that time, and featured various departments and housed a relatively broad range of medical professionals.

Many of the newly arrived professionals to Kyzylzhar also shared the experience of having settled down in a distant, unfamiliar place, as indicated earlier. In addition, almost all of the older members of the hospital staff shared similar experiences of geographical mobility—that is, everyone once came here as a stranger. But, in order to make a living, people had to build trust in each other and help one another.

Kyzylzhar's infrastructure, including the hospital itself, was poorly developed at that time. In an interview, one doctor who arrived in the early 1970s recounted how the hospital lacked access to drinking water then:

> Kyzylzhar was terrible. Why? First, because there was no drinking water. We had to pump up the water from the wells. … When I arrived, the hospital

was small and in an adobe building. … There was a kind of dormitory in the centre. Over there was the polyclinic, the treatment room and so on. In general, it was a terrible building.

(Interview with Olga Stanislavovna, June 2017)

Despite such adverse circumstances, the young professionals working in the hospital were motivated and relied on each other. Living close to one another, they helped each other out and managed to deal with the many challenges accompanying the process of starting a new life in a desolate place. Many relations amongst staff members at that time were characterised by ties of friendship, community or kinship. Amongst the medical practitioners, an emotionally invested sense of belonging exists, to the hospital and the village alike.

Therefore, in the institutional biography of the village hospital, we can find the kind of collective experience of mobility that we described as typical for many people having grown up in Soviet Kazakhstan. We argue that this experience not only affected the medical practitioners of the village but also affected the village community at large. As such, it shaped not only many individual biographies but also the identity of the village community, its image and representation of itself as well as of outsiders. Or, to state this argument in the terminology of Appadurai (1996: Ch. 9), in Kyzylzhar, mobility served as a constitutive moment in the 'production of locality'.

However, social and economic processes that have been underway in Kazakhstan since the disintegration of the Soviet Union have also left their traces in Kyzylzhar. One consequence of these transformations is that the general parameters of mobility have changed for large parts of the country's population. As previously argued, whilst mobility has been a constitutive yet rather singular (non-recurrent) factor in people's individual life histories, in more recent years mobility has become something that many people recurrently experience. Temporary migration from Kyzylzhar to the larger urban centres, like Almaty or Karaganda, represents just one instance in a range of new kinds of translocal mobilities, which have begun to restructure peoples' lives.

As another case in point, consider the shuttle traders (*chelnoki*) who started a new way of doing business resulting from the introduction of a free market economy in the 1990s. Their business consists of buying goods, often imported from China, and then selling them in one's native or neighbouring village. Shuttle traders from Kyzylzhar have used the opportunities of the newly emerging transportation infrastructure as well. Whilst during Soviet times there was only one bus travelling to Almaty each week, now a number of shuttle buses (*marshrutka*) leave several times a day for Almaty and other cities in the region. Additionally, many taxi drivers connect Kyzylzhar to Almaty and other cities. A significant part of this recently emerged transportation infrastructure caters to people working in faraway places, whilst maintaining their homes and families in their native village of Kyzylzhar.

To summarise, the experiences and practices of geographical mobility typical for Soviet times have undergone significant changes since 1991. Importantly

for our research, these changes led to a new kind of collective experience, one analytically worth distinguishing. In contrast to the collective experiences shared by many people who arrived in Kyzylzhar before 1991, the post-Soviet collective experience of mobility seems to be much more translocal, dynamic and in flux.

Kazakhstan's repatriation programme and the Oralmandar

To a considerable extent, this new form of collective experience of mobility is associated with the repatriation and migration of the Kazakh Oralmandar. Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan was the only successor state to the USSR in which the 'titular nation'—that is, the ethnic Kazakhs of Kazakhstan—was not the demographic majority. However, this situation changed in subsequent years when Kazakhs again became the country's demographic majority. This was partly due to the emigration of people belonging to ethnic minorities, for instance, many Russians and Germans emigrated to their 'ancestral homelands'. But it also resulted from the immigration of Oralmandar, that is, Kazakh repatriates born outside of Kazakhstan. According to Kaiser et al. (2017), as of 2016, the number of Oralmandar who have returned to Kazakhstan totals just under 1 million. The overwhelming majority of them have arrived from Uzbekistan (61.5%), whilst others have migrated from China (12%), Mongolia (7.3%), Turkmenistan (3.9%), Russia (3.7%) and a number of other countries (Kaiser et al. 2017: 22).

   The post-Soviet government initiated this repatriation programme with the declared aim of fostering the return migration of the Kazakh diaspora in 1992. By showing a clear preference for a right to immigration based on blood ties and ethnic heritage (*jus sanguinis*), in comparison to rights based on the place of birth (*jus soli*), such new migration laws in part resembled repatriation programmes adopted in Germany and Israel (Zeveleva 2014). According to the Kazakhstani law 'On the Migration of the Population' (*Zakon Respubliki Kazakhstan o migracii naseleniya* 2011), an Oralman is

> an ethnic Kazakh who permanently resided outside the borders of the Republic of Kazakhstan at the time of the acquisition of sovereignty, and her/his children of Kazakh nationality who were born and permanently resided after the acquisition of sovereignty by the Republic of Kazakhstan outside its borders, and who arrived in the Republic of Kazakhstan for the purpose of obtaining permanent residence in the historic homeland and who received the corresponding status in the manner established by this Law.
>
> (§1, section 13; translation by the authors)

The repatriation programme was in part motivated by the government's interest in rebalancing the demographic situation mentioned above. Initially, the programme was accompanied by an optimistic spirit and an official rhetoric that served to legitimate ethnic immigration (Bonnenfant 2012). Proponents of the repatriation programme employed the discourse of victimisation and demographic rebalancing,

pointing to the prospective revival of Kazakh culture and traditions. This discourse has semantically underlined what is understood as ties of blood and historical kinship (Bonnenfant 2012: 33–34). A legislative and institutional framework was established, and Kazakhs born abroad could apply for inclusion in a quota system that provided social and financial benefits to them as returnees. At the same time, it was possible to immigrate as an Oralman outside of the quota system, with the overall rate of this second approach greatly exceeding that of those immigrating within the quota system (Kaiser et al. 2017: 22). The quota is defined annually by the government, and the rate of people included has changed considerably since 1992. In this regard, Bonnenfant (2012: 38) summarised the trend as follows:

> While the number of households included in the quota in 1993 was 10 000, during the period of the economic crisis in 1999, this number dropped to as low as 500. Between 2005 and 2008, 15 000 families have enjoyed benefits as 'quota Oralmans' each year; since 2009, this number has increased to 20 000 families annually.

However, in 2009, for the first time since the system was launched, the number of Oralman families actually immigrating to Kazakhstan fell below the quota (Zakon 2010).

The dynamics of the quota system clearly reflect changes in the country's migration policies and political discourses, since 'Kazakhstan adjusted its repatriation policies as its political needs changed' (Werner et al. 2017: 1569). Whilst at the beginning of the repatriation programme official rhetoric was optimistic, in later years, when the perceived demographic problems had been solved, the initial optimism gave way to a discourse pointing to the social problems associated with immigration, such as an unwillingness amongst the Oralmandar to adapt to their 'historic homeland' (Bonnenfant 2012: 34–35; Werner et al. 2017: 1578).

A public statement by Timur Kulibayev, one of Kazakhstan's most powerful businessmen, and son-in-law of former President Nursultan Nazarbayev, illustrates how these dynamics are reflected in the country's political climate. When, in 2011, oil field workers went on strike in the town of Zhanaozen, the government of Kazakhstan announced a state of emergency and several people were shot by the police. According to Kulibayev, the strikes were instigated by Oralmandar coming from Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Kulibayev eagerly singled out problems that these migrants allegedly had with integrating into Kazakhstani society (Tengrinews 2011). His statement is striking, because in the political culture of the country public denigrations specifically referring to another's ethnicity or nationality are usually frowned upon, whereby an unwritten ethics of 'politically correct' language is common.

However, when one looks at Kulibayev's public statement within the broader context of changes in political discourse that took place after the initial optimism about Oralmandar repatriation faded, his apparent transgression of political correctness makes sense—the Oralmandar had meanwhile emerged

as a problematic social category. Thus, Kulibayev's criticism simply echoed a resentment felt by many Kazakhstanis today. Not coincidentally, the quota system for Oralmandar was suspended for the two years following the strikes in Zhanaozen (Natsuko 2013: 7–9).

Who are the Oralmandar of Kyzylzhar?

We identified repercussions from these political discourses, which associated the term 'Oralman' with a range of social problems, extending to Kyzylzhar as well. Almost one-third of the village's population is Oralmandar. Oralman families have been arriving in the village since the early 1990s. Most came from Uzbekistan's Karakalpakstan republic and from the Xinjiang autonomous region in China. In Kyzylzhar, the Oralmandar seemingly occupy outsider positions, not unlike the 'newcomers' in the social configuration famously described by Elias and Scotson (1965). Through these outsider positions, the Oralmandar stand in stark contrast to 'established' community members, many of whom once came to the village as migrants themselves. Unlike the Oralmandar, however, these established community members, at least their families, have lived in the village for many decades now. Many of them share the kind of collective experiences associated with the Soviet-era mobility we described above.

This social configuration between outsiders and established community members is reflected in the social structure of the village. Kyzylzhar was a large livestock-breeding *kolkhoz* (collective farm) in Soviet times. In fact, many villagers still make a living as herders and stockbreeders. However, herding and stockbreeding are particularly common amongst the village's Oralman families. Yet, the Oralmandar are rarely engaged in small or middle-size businesses, and even less often occupy positions within municipal institutions and administration.

Moreover, this social configuration of outsiders and established community members is also reflected in the hospital's social structure. A handful of Oralmandar from Karakalpakstan work in the lower strata of the occupational hierarchy, for example, as cleaners, cooks or electricians. Amongst the medical staff, there is only one Oralman working as a paramedic. By contrast, in the higher occupational ranks, such as amongst medical doctors or medical assistants, there are no Oralmandar. In other public or state institutions such as schools, the 'house of culture', the police or the municipal administration, the situation looks quite similar.

In addition to unequal access to prestigious positions in the community's social structure, this social configuration is discursive as well. Although the Oralmandar are viewed as keepers of the Kazakh language, culture and traditions, they are often shunned by established members of the community—that is, by Kazakhs and non-Kazakhs born in Kazakhstan. From the perspective of many of the established community members, the Oralmandar are perceived as uneducated, unhygienic, either too religiously zealous or individuals who drink too much alcohol. Thus, amongst established community members, the term 'Oralman' has taken on a pejorative connotation. This is especially true with regard to those Oralmandar

who are 'paperless persons' (*dokumentter žoqtar*)—that is, people referred to as Oralmandar, but who actually lack the legally recognised status as an Oralman. From a juridical point of view, the category of 'paperless Oralmandar' is a paradox. The term 'Oralman' in the strict sense of the law signifies an individual's ownership of a special status (and, thereby, in possession of official papers). However, the same category used in everyday language and in connection with the attribute of 'paperless' denotes an understanding that the person's residence is illegal.

As Diener (2005: 334) observed, partly due to migration laws fraught with inconsistencies, the term 'Oralman' has taken on a range of different meanings since it was devised in 1994. It is, thus, analytically important to distinguish between different domains in which the term is used today. From the range of different domains, we only single out two here. Firstly, there is the juridical domain, defined in the aforementioned law 'On the Migration of the Population'. Secondly, there are situations during which people speak of the Oralman in everyday life, using ordinary language, in which they mostly do not orient towards the juridical definition of the term. In contrast to the juridical definition, in the domain of everyday life, the term carries a broad range of dimensions, such that in each individual situation its meaning may remain highly ambivalent. Unlike the official, or juridical, designation, community members use the term to refer to a number of different categories of people. Consequently, people referred to as Oralmandar are not necessarily Oralmandar in the juridical sense. For example, there are cases where families were granted the juridical status of Oralmandar but then failed to obtain Kazakhstani citizenship within the restricted time frame reserved to do so. In this case, they lost their legal status as Oralmandar. However, in everyday life, they continue to be referred to as Oralmandar, notwithstanding their actual legal status.

With regard to the origins of individual migrant families, the term 'Oralman' is primarily reserved for Kazakhs coming from China and Uzbekistan (especially from the autonomous region Karakalpakstan). Ethnic Kazakhs who migrated from Kyrgyzstan tend not to be referred to as Oralmandar. Furthermore, internally migrating Kazakhs born in Kazakhstan (i.e., Kazakhs coming to Kyzylzhar from another place in Kazakhstan) are not referred to as Oralmandar. In all of these cases, the designation of the term 'Oralman', as used in everyday life, can contradict the meaning it carries in the juridical sense.

In short, the term 'Oralman' was once devised by government officials and introduced into the public discourse with rather precise political intentions. The term held a quite specific juridical denotation. Today, it has taken on a range of different meanings depending on the contexts and domains of its usage. Thus, the use of the term in ordinary language is often independent of its juridical or official political meaning.

Registr prikreplennogo naseleniya and the emergence of new informal practices in medical treatment

One of the problematic issues within the domain of medicine in Kazakhstan concerns free PHC. It is in this domain that informal practices become analytically

salient, partly because of their existential significance for people in need of basic healthcare services. In an attempt to compensate for the decline in public funding for healthcare after 1991, many post-Soviet countries introduced a distinction between, on the one hand, free benefit packages of health and, on the other hand, health services for which a fee is charged (Rechel et al. 2013: 1151). In Kazakhstan, this distinction, first of all, concerns its citizens. By contrast, foreign citizens are guaranteed healthcare services on a pay-per-use basis (Riekkinnen et al. 2015). In this regard, it is important to remember that the Oralmandar are legally endowed with a legal status placing them on equal footing with citizens of Kazakhstan across several domains. Accordingly, the 'Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the People's Health and Healthcare System' (*O zdorov'e naroda i sisteme zdravoochraneniya*) states that every citizen of the Republic of Kazakhstan as well as the Oralmandar are guaranteed the free benefits package— that is, the so-called state-guaranteed health benefits package (Jones et al. 2017).

In this case, the term 'Oralmandar' clearly denotes those persons who fall under the category 'Oralman' by virtue of the law 'On the Migration of the Population'. However, cases have been reported wherein PHC, even in emergency situations, was denied to non-Kazakhstani citizens and Oralmandar alike (Zakon 2013). In the Kyzylzhar hospital, one important reason medical professionals withhold, at least formally, the provision of healthcare services is connected to a recently introduced electronic database system. This system dates back to an attempt to simplify and centralise procedures in the healthcare field in 2010. At that time, the Ministry of Health of Kazakhstan issued a law regarding the creation of a unified healthcare information system (*Registr prikreplennogo naseleniya* or RPN). RPN was intended to contain data on individual patients attached to local healthcare organisations (Katsaga et al. 2012: 29).

Prior to the introduction of RPN, a close connection existed between patients' permanent residence and the medical organisations to which patients were attached. The idea behind tying the provision of healthcare to local residence dates back to the Soviet *propiska*, a system for managing internal migration and cutting off unregulated migration flows (Buckley 1995). With the new RPN, the government's intention was to detach patients' residence from the local medical organisations to which patients had been attached. This would offer citizens more opportunities in terms of individual choice in the provision of healthcare. From the perspective of lawmakers and policy experts in faraway Astana, Kazakhstan's capital (renamed Nur-Sultan in 2019), this seemed like a reasonable decision for a country with an increasing rate of internal migration. As we argued above, since 1990, increasing numbers of people had adopted translocal and mobile lifestyles. Thus, the new migratory realities conflicted with the inherited Soviet institutions and their specific bureaucratic practices.

RPN stores information on each patient in a central, countrywide database. It enables individual medical organisations and healthcare professionals to retrieve information about a particular patient, regardless of whether the patient is already registered in that organisation or not. Moreover, the procedure of registering patients has now become centralised. Thus, from the perspective of policymakers,

it should have become much easier for patients and hospital administrators to detach patients from one hospital and attach them to another hospital in which they intend to undergo medical treatment. That is, registering new patients goes hand in hand with detaching them from the hospital to which they were previously attached. Thus, ideally a few clicks on a computer screen would achieve what previously involved much time-consuming paperwork.

But, in reality, the transition to the electronic RPN did not proceed as smoothly as planned in Astana. At least for Kyzylzhar, we find substantial evidence suggesting that the hospital's medical professionals experienced a range of problems with the new system. One of these problems resulted from a lack of technical knowledge and resources. Since the average age of staff members was relatively older, many experienced considerable problems with regard to the technical know-how and skills associated with computer-assisted administrative work, to which they were not accustomed. For instance, for Olga Stanislavovna, the hospital's oldest physician in her seventies and who still sees patients full-time, working on a computer frequently results in unpleasant experiences. We observed on one occasion that some intractable problems with the computer software literally brought her to tears. This is only partly due to her advanced age, but also due to the fact that the digitalisation of patient data only recently began in the village hospital. Previously, only a few offices and surgeries were equipped with personal computers. Even today, when most offices in the hospital are equipped with a desktop computer, the computer's hardware is outdated. Consequently, even younger medical professionals frequently experience difficulties when processing piles of patient files from paper to the new electronic database.

This lack of technical knowledge and modern equipment accounts for some of the difficulties the hospital staff experienced with the electronic RPN. But other problems emerged as well. Prior to the introduction of the new system, patients who lacked official documents, including the 'paperless' Oralmandar, were primarily treated by circumventing official regulations. With the introduction of RPN, some hospital patients who previously received treatment with hardly any bureaucratic hurdles were suddenly cut off from medical services.

However, even before the electronic RPN was introduced, the free provision of medical services to non-citizens and 'paperless persons' had not been envisaged by Kazakhstan's legislation. As the hospital director and others explained to us, providing care to patients not officially registered by bypassing official regulations had become much harder due to the centralised electronic storage of patient data. Prior to the introduction of RPN, patient files had not been assigned unique numbers directly associated with citizen ID cards (the so-called *individual'niy identifikacioniy nomer* or IIN). Since medical cards and ID cards had previously been independent of each other, an individual's lack of Kazakhstani citizenship could not be deduced from her/his medical card. According to several medical professionals with whom we talked, in the period prior to the introduction of RPN, they had mostly tried their best to somehow provide healthcare services even to 'paperless' patients, sometimes free of charge, sometimes for a small compensation such as a good chunk of meat, goat's cheese, a bottle of milk

or a small amount of money. These kinds of informal practices can hardly be categorised as outright acts of corruption. Instead, these represent practices of gift giving, making it acceptable for physicians to transgress certain regulatory lines and for patients to reciprocate these same transgressions with an act of gratitude.

With regard to the perception of the informal practices in question here, they can be understood as in line with the aforementioned social configuration of established community members and outsiders (see the section 'Who are the Oralmandar of Kyzylzhar?' above). On the one hand, an ethos exists amongst the village's doctors, who all belong to the group of established community members, according to which all patients have a right to be helped, regardless of their official status or the documents they do or do not possess. On the other hand, those same doctors may think that, when helping such patients, they actually provide a rather generous, albeit undeserved, service to patients whom they consider as outsiders and often as culturally and socially inferior to themselves. This kind of thinking has likely stabilised the previously described social configuration of established community members and outsiders, since almost all patients who fall under the aegis of informal practices for healthcare provision are also positioned as outsiders within this configuration.

Of course, apart from the Oralmandar, some other categories exist, consisting of patients who cannot be treated within the framework of official regulations. For instance, there are a handful of people in the village who still have not exchanged their Soviet passports for the new passport of the Republic of Kazakhstan. From a legal point of view, these individuals are foreigners or stateless persons. Furthermore, there are non-Kazakh migrants from neighbouring countries, who have not yet obtained permanent residence permits. Nonetheless, the bulk of the beneficiaries of the informal healthcare provision practices described here are the 'paperless' Oralmandar.

In view of this complex situation, it may seem surprising that the aforementioned informal practices have persisted following the introduction of the RPN system. But the new system seems to reinforce the existing differentiation between established community members and outsiders. In particular, this concerns those outsiders who have neither Kazakhstani citizenship nor the legally recognised status of Oralman. For the 'paperless' Oralmandar, it is impossible to register within the RPN system. As Gauhar Kayratovna, one of the doctors, explained to us, the network of official monitoring and budgeting in the healthcare system has become more closely interconnected than ever before. Furthermore, the hospital's budget is now tightly linked to the number of officially registered patients. As she explained,

> They [the 'paperless' Oralmandar] are not on the list of the RPN, they are not our patients. Therefore, we are not allowed to provide any medical services to them. We don't get paid for such people and, besides, if we will treat them, we will have problems with the higher ranking medical authorities afterwards.
>
> (Interview with Gauhar Kayratovna, October 2015)

Throughout our time in the hospital, we observed that, despite such assertions, which appear to be accounts of how things *should* be according to official regulations, the informal practices in question have indeed persisted. That is, the 'paperless' Oralmandar continue to receive medical treatment. However, providing healthcare to them has become much more clandestine than before, whereby doctors officially deny it (but not unofficially) to the beneficiaries. Meanwhile, the Oralmandar continue to be perceived as a problematic social category in the context of the village community.

Here, we wish to provide an illustration of this perspective characteristic of healthcare professionals using an excerpt from a discourse in one of the daily case conferences. This case demonstrates how medical professionals from the hospital reflect upon the question of who will be granted PHC and under what conditions. One of the tasks of the hospital's nurses involves monitoring certain categories of people in the village, such as children and the elderly. But this monitoring also includes keeping track of the number of 'paperless persons' in the village. Each nurse working in the hospital is responsible for monitoring the population of one street in the village (usually this is the street where the home of the nurse is located). Nurses regularly brief on their monitoring duties during the daily conferences.

Immediately prior to the following discussion transcribed below, one of the nurses, Nazgul (NA), reported to her colleagues—in particular, to the doctors Gauhar Kayratovna (GK) and Kudaybergen Curbashevic (KC)—about three Oralmandar living on the street she monitors. According to Nazgul's description, the three Oralmandar had a residence permit but did not intend to obtain Kazakhstani citizenship.

Transcript 20160414 (simplified version, translated from Kazakh and Russian)

1	GK	Because they are citizens of China and they receive certain social benefits there.
2		(3.0)
3	KC	No, a residence permit, for example–
4	NA	They have it, they have it.
5	KC	One can have a residence permit for their whole life!
6		(1.2)
7	KC	But they should not ask us for anything!
8		OK, tell all of them, 'Those who don't have legal documents for
9		the Republic of Kazakhstan are served on a fee basis.'
10		'Go to the district centre, pay your fee and then come back!'
11		(0.4)
12	KC	All of them have to learn this!
13		(2.0)
14	KC	No, if it is for children, they are innocent, we don't mind.
15		But there are those who trample over you, damnit!
16	ST	Right.
17	KC	The Karakalpaks and the Turkmens. I'm talking about these people.
18		Ask us decently, and we won't reject anybody.
19		They play the boss, but actually they don't have any rights!

In line 1 of this transcription, Gauhar Kayratovna explains the motives underpinning the Oralmandar's decision to retain their Chinese citizenship. Since they are unwilling to relinquish their Chinese citizenship, they cannot obtain Kazakhstani citizenship. However, it turns out that they have residence permits and, thus, reside in the village legally (lines 3–4). Hospital director Kudaybergen Curbashevic, then, reflects upon how to deal with these Oralmandar and instructs his subordinates accordingly (lines 5–19).[2]

This discourse shows how the mode of translocal mobility we described as a characteristic feature of post-Soviet times is framed as a highly problematic issue here. Kudaybergen Curbashevic refers to presumably official regulations in the provision of healthcare services (lines 7–10). Simultaneously, he specifies the conditions under which the official rules should be circumvented (lines 14–19). Importantly, he mentions the possibility of circumventing the official regulations not merely as a discursive statement. That is, his discourse is consistent with ethnographic observations we repeatedly made throughout our fieldwork: in almost all cases where, from an 'official' point of view, the provision of healthcare services would not be possible, due to, for example, the lack of citizenship or another suitable legal status, medical professionals from the hospital actually did provide the healthcare services deemed necessary. The excerpt above, thus, exemplifies how medical professionals create room to manoeuvre, which exists despite the official regulations regarding providing healthcare services. In other words, there is a discrepancy between, on the one hand, the official discourse and legal regulations and, on the other hand, the actual provision of healthcare services under practical circumstances.

For people at risk of being excluded from PHC, like some of Kyzylzhar's 'paperless' Oralmandar, this may turn out to be favourable. However, the informality created through this means of providing healthcare services introduces an element of arbitrariness into medical practitioners' decision-making when determining who they will or will not treat. Thus, the kind of informal provision of healthcare we observed in the hospital of Kyzylzhar is likely to reinforce existing inequalities, which can be conceptualised according to Elias and Scotson's (1965) social configuration of outsiders and established community members.

Our own observations are confined to one rural village in the east of Kazakhstan. Thus, we can only make educated guesses regarding the situation in other rural communities, let alone other regions of the country. However, the provision of healthcare services seems to remain an unsettled issue, especially in Kazakhstan's 'remote, loosely populated countryside areas' (Riekkinnen et al. 2015: 127). The precarious situations of the Oralmandar, particularly those who are 'paperless', have been described for other regions of Kazakhstan as well. We would, therefore, expect to find social configurations similar to that we have described in this chapter, with their specific problems related to practices of informality existing throughout the country.

Conclusions

In this chapter, we evaluated a selection of data from our fieldwork in one rural hospital in Kazakhstan. In doing so, we have attempted to contribute to the growing subfield of informality studies in post-socialist countries. We situated the ethnographic site of our research within the broader historical scope of biomedicine in Kazakhstan. We argued that many of the biomedical institutions and their practitioners during the Soviet era were characterised by a specific mode of mobility associated with collective migratory experiences, such as that of 'being sent' far away.

Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, a different mode of mobility emerged. This mode is translocal, much more dynamic than the typical Soviet mode of mobility and is characterised by its recurrence over individual lifespans. Kazakhstan's Oralmandar represent one of the social categories particularly affected by this post-Soviet form of mobility. As people whose family networks and mobile lifestyles are often spread across several countries, healthcare systems, labour markets and jurisdictions, they are also especially affected by the respective regulatory frameworks in each of these contexts.

We examined the emergence and persistence of informal practices vis-à-vis the provision of PHC using the example of one rural hospital. Whilst from a strictly juridical point of view the 'paperless Oralmandar' are not legally entitled to treatment, they have actually been provided with free PHC services here. Following the introduction of a new healthcare information system, the informal provision of healthcare services became more difficult. However, these informal practices have actually persisted. For the 'paperless' Oralmandar, this persistence is favourable in a certain sense. However, in the long term, the persistence of informal treatment practices may become a barrier to the integration of the Oralmandar—and other vulnerable minorities—into local communities, such as Kyzylzhar. Without the possibility of claiming their rights to PHC on a substantial legal basis, these groups will depend upon the arbitrary decisions of local healthcare providers.

Notes

1 We have used pseudonyms for all names of places and persons used in this chapter.
2 He refers to the Oralmandar from Karakalpakstan and Turkmenistan as Karakalpaks and Turkmens, respectively.

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12 Dual citizenship and twofold informality

The interstices of state power and transnational lives amongst Meskhetian returnees in Georgia

Jvan Yazdani

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine 'informality' in interactions amongst state institutions, non-governmental organisations and the Meskhetian diasporic communities/ returning migrants in Georgia and Azerbaijan. In doing so, I take advantage of the ambiguity inherent in the concept (Misztal 2000: 17), applying it to different levels of analysis and, further, employing it as a label for the interpretive frames imposed by Meskhetians on immigration and citizenship regulations. In other words, I rely on the category of 'informality' when I describe my research participants' practices as 'informal', as well as when I describe *their* interpretation of practices and systems that negatively impact their resettlement and civic membership projects. Although I consider an assessment of intent beyond the scope of my research here, 'informal governance practices' were indeed identified within the rationale of Georgian state policies during the period in which the citizenship regimes pertinent here took shape (Rekhviashvili and Polese 2017). Furthermore, devoting attention to informal practices regarding mobility in particular is, I argue, called for given the peculiarly spatial and geographical dimension of informality (Polese et al. 2016: 16).

The specific citizenship regime developed during the post-communist transition in Georgia is characterised by some as purely civic (rather than ethnic), since the new republic granted citizenship rights to all Soviet citizens permanently residing in its territory—perhaps a side effect of the highly contested politics of national identity within Georgian society (e.g., Shevel 2009: 287). Others argue—more consonant with the material presented here—for continuity between the 'ethnic hierarchical' conceptions of citizenship that underpinned Soviet-era policies on nationalities and today's 'ethnic nationalist' citizenship (e.g., Khazanov 1997: 18–45). Furthermore, the Meskhetians' peculiar position within Georgian society has resulted from the strongly felt association of Georgian national identity with Orthodox Christianity (Shurgaia 2008: 250–300), and given that the Georgian language has emerged as the main element in the formation of a national identity in what is described as a 'highly language-conscious' society (Smith et al. 1998:

167–196). The Meskhetians, a Turkish-speaking, Sunni Muslim population, have, therefore, been identified as an 'internalised Orient' (Cherchi and Manning 2002: 32; Tlostanova 2012: 137).

What I observed, and hope to describe adequately here, is a grey area, where informal practices of citizenship 'from above and below' interlace with each other. I characterise the interactions and endeavours within this area as informal practices of *dual* citizenship, because I am primarily concerned with a typology of return migration not resulting in a thorough separation from former communities and countries of residence. My research participants' lives possess an indisputable transnational quality, exhibited perhaps most comprehensively in family formation processes and in their eccentric relation to canonical, geographically sanctioned national identities.

Their choices, and the informal practices employed to carry them out, are framed—as subsequent sections make clear—by motivations and circumstances that have roots in a present of disempowerment and a past of deportation, dispossession and a loss of civic rights, a past that looms ominously over their present. Indeed, the failures to realise projects of diasporic return and mobility are ordinary. The consequences range from moving back to the country from whence migration originated, to spending years in the host country without the rights associated with membership or being forced to give up the project of return entirely. To put it bluntly, the majority of the Meskhetian returnees I met are disillusioned, embittered and weary because of the impasse in which they have found themselves.

The question that informs this chapter is thus: Does the category of 'informality' help to understand Meskhetians' interpretation and handling of the legal and mundane arrangements (which, in turn, rely on informality) that obstruct their projects of return?

Prior to analysing more recent issues, I provide an outline of the history of the 1944 Meskhetian deportation by Soviet authorities, the ensuing exile imposed on its members and the subsequent formation of its diaspora. It would be difficult, otherwise, to appreciate the current Meskhetians' predicaments. Next, I focus on the research setting, especially the legal-institutional framework of return migration: the 'Law on Repatriation', adopted by the Georgian government in 2007 and the 2014 'Law on Georgian citizenship'. The latter was passed whilst I was in the field and represented a legal shift with potentially significant repercussions for returnees' status. Describing my research participants' narratives around these issues is meant to shed some light on how their field of action is partially structured by legal-institutional frameworks as well as by their everyday encounters with different sorts of boundaries: some unambiguously geographical, and some pertaining to the interplay of history, identity politics and group narratives.

In order to better situate their historical and political plight, I also provide an argument that subsumes their experience of deportation, exile and dispersion under the definition of postcoloniality. Finally, I elaborate upon the hypothesis of formalising their status of dual citizenship as a way to accommodate the

repatriates' cultural and civic horizons and already extant *informal* practices of dual citizenship.

Soviet deportation and the formation of a diaspora

Muslim Meskhetians lived in villages along the Georgian–Turkish border until November 1944, when the Soviet army deported them en masse to Central Asia. The rationale for this operation can be traced to the Soviet collectivist policies of 'demographic engineering' (King 2008: 186), one tenet of which was the belief that 'primordial ethnos' were so durable they would survive even after the eventual demise of classes and ideologies (Slezkine 1994: 449). The Muslim population of Meskheti, a southwestern region of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic (today, a region in the Georgian province of Samskhe-Javakheti), were thus targeted as an undifferentiated whole. According to official figures, 92,307 persons were rounded up, forced into cattle train wagons and—after a journey which lasted more than two weeks—placed under special settlement restrictions in Central Asia. These individuals included Muslim Meskhetians (Turkish-speaking Sunni Muslims), as well as Hemshins, Batumi Kurds and Terekeme.[1] Additionally, nearly 30,000 soldiers from these four nationalities, returning from the war, were, in turn, also deported (Trier and Khanzin 2007: 2), something that amongst my research participants exemplifies the blatant inequity of their collective treatment.

In the eyes of the Soviet government, this likely served as a preventive measure, since Muslim Meskhetians were seen as potential collaborators with Turkey. Their removal was, thus, meant to establish a more 'reliable' border population (Nekrich 1978: 103–105). As Hasanli (2011: 3) points out, Turkey and Russia indeed shared a historically high-friction border, known for periodic conflicts dating back centuries.

The Meskhetians' fate was, therefore, decided on the grounds of imperial claims, security concerns and collective allegations. A note by the Head of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD), Lavrenti Beria, stated the following: 'A considerable part of this population, related to the residents of Turkey, was engaged in smuggling, expressed their wish to emigrate and served as a recruitment ground for spies and gangsters' (cited in Hasanly 2011: 20).

Whether or not these allegations reflected any truth, the 1944 deportation order led to the relocation, in military fashion, of the entire population irrespective of sex, age, individual responsibilities or political affiliation. During the first years of displacement and exile, thousands died (Pohl 1999: 132), with some scholars reporting mortality rates reaching 14.6% (Pohl 2008: 207). Until 1956, the deportees lived confined in 'special settlements'—very limited zones they were not permitted to leave without official permission. After the special regime was abandoned, they were still barred from returning to their homeland. Instead, starting in 1958 and throughout the 1960s, about 25,000 deportees were permitted to move to Azerbaijan, a country they perceived as transitory towards an eventual return to Georgia (Trier and Khanzin 2007: 3). Again, in 1990,

following ethnic strife and the targeting of their communities in Uzbekistan, more than 50,000 Meskhetians arrived in Azerbaijan as refugees (Yunusov 2007: 176). The (small) number of returnees who have settled in Georgia since 2007 (the focus of my ethnography) originate from these Meskhetian communities in Azerbaijan.

The Meskhetian diaspora can, therefore, be considered a 'victim diaspora' (Cohen 2008: 39–59), given the coercive and violent nature of its inception in 1944 and successive instances of their discrimination or overt persecution. Beginning in the early 1990s, for example, thousands of returnees were forced from Georgia again. Since 2004, thousands have been accepted as refugees by the United States from the Russian province of Krasnodar.

Their 1944 mass deportation by the Soviet government and the successive episodes of victimisation, forced mobility and discrimination form a core repository for their collective narratives, alongside their personal and familial stories and their diverse and often conflicting identities. The decisive factor for the advancement of the Meskhetian cause in Georgia would be, eventually, the country's aspiration to join the Council of Europe. Throughout the 1990s, the fact that deportation had been perpetrated by (and within the then boundaries of) the USSR was still considered reason enough to exonerate the government of any responsibility. However, when, in April 1999, Georgia became a member of the Council, the Meskhetian cause was taken up as an official obligation and commitment (Trier et al. 2011: 39; Overland 2007: 534–540).

A bumpy political path led to the adoption, in 2007, of the 'Law of Georgia on the Repatriation of Persons Forcefully Resettled from Georgia by the Former Soviet Union in the 40s of the 20th Century'.[2] From its inception, this law was met with criticism by advocacy groups and Meskhetian organisations on the grounds that it provided too limited time for the submission of applications, imposed cumbersome requirements and left too much room for interpretation by government officials; it also required legal provisions that many potential repatriates found economically insurmountable (Trier et al. 2011: 37–49). By 1 January 2010—after a two-year application period that included two deadline extensions—a total of 5841 families (8900 individuals) had applied for repatriation to Georgia, of whom only 412 were granted 'conditional citizenship'.[3] In the wake of the adoption of the 'Law on Repatriation' in 2007, a few hundred Meskhetians, mostly from Azerbaijan, settled in Samskhe-Javakheti of their own accord without following the formal procedures. Some took advantage of an exception to the principle against dual citizenship and managed to become Georgian citizens. This exception was no longer available already by late 2009, when the authorities' change of attitude towards this parallel repatriation led to incidents at the border (Trier 2011: 676–677 and note 73). My research focuses on those who did not manage to obtain Georgian citizenship, neither through the 2007 'Law on Repatriation' nor through the aforementioned exception. In addition to this rather tiny group in Georgia, my research also focuses on their communities in Azerbaijan and organisations related to the Meskhetian diaspora, which played a significant, albeit contentious, role in the process of repatriation to Georgia.

Research and institutional setting

The majority of my fieldwork took place over a one-year period in Caucasian Georgia, between 2014 and 2015. It consisted of two stays, lasting eight and four months, respectively, in the village of Nasakirali (founded by returnees in the late 1970s) and the town of Akhaltsikhe, where the majority of Meskhetians arrived after 2007. My research draws upon qualitative research methods such as semi structured interviews and participation in family and community activities (e.g., harvesting, tea plucking, seasonal work trips to Turkey, etc.) as well as through small surveys and genealogical analysis. The vast majority of the 59 individuals living in Akhaltsikhe (nine households) arrived from Azerbaijan. During the time of my fieldwork, no one had yet obtained Georgian citizenship. They had repatriated independently of the legal framework laid out by the Georgian government and, thus, had not made use of the relevant laws. Most held the official 'repatriate status', a situation they denounced as unjust in view of their history and collective memories of deportation and dispossession, and of the Georgian government's unfulfilled duty of rehabilitation. Indeed, a 2015 motion of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe describes the repatriation programme as 'mostly focused on providing a legal repatriate status to the eligible applicants and not on facilitating the actual repatriation itself'.[4] My analysis, therefore, takes into account that the explicit, public aims of governance should be investigated in combination with their (un)intended effects, brought forth through informal practices as well. As Castles (2004: 854) warns, thinking exclusively in terms of the 'success' or 'failure' of migration policies limits our capacity to deconstruct agendas and goals that might be hidden or inexplicit. What (if anything) lies beneath the regulatory framework of the laws, however, is beyond the scope of this work. However, a disenchanted attitude towards state powers is resonant with the inclinations of many Meskhetians I met and with anthropology's vocation.

Within this theoretical framework, parallel to examining informality as a way to realise rights and achieve incorporation into the country of immigration by means other than institutional paths (Berenschot and van Klinken 2018: 97; Rigo 2011; Sassen 2002: 6), I also consider it as part of local theories regarding the management of mobility by states. My primary preoccupation is, thus, informality within local interpretative narratives, which thrive in an atmosphere of expectation and distrust. As such, research participants attributed informality to the state as a way of surreptitiously 'getting things done', instrumental to conspiratorial schemes against their collective return to what they consider their homeland. Often, when return migration and full membership projects failed at the individual or family level, these narratives posited the state's intentionality and hostility. A direct consequence has been growing mistrust in institutions governing citizenship and immigration. What emerges as chiefly pertinent here is the inclination of survivors of deportation or subsequent generations to read past and present suffering as programmed, and to reject explanations that postulate accidentality (Mann 2005: 8).

At the time of my fieldwork, the tiny community of Meskhetians in Akhaltsikhe consisted of nine households, with a total of about 60 to 70 people. Typically, each household included three, sometimes four generations: an elderly, possibly direct witness of the 1944 deportation; her/his daughter/son, with their spouse, both of working age, who provided the practical impulse to repatriation; and their teenage children and, often, grandchildren.

From the strictly normative view often expressed by the government, Meskhetians' predicament is, in essence, a form of deranged, reckless migration, since they dispensed with some of the formal requirements of the law that should have allowed their settlement and naturalisation in Georgia, thus leaving Azerbaijan 'too soon' and finding themselves in legal limbo. Needless to say, opinions of this sort have generated resentment, since most Meskhetians understand their right of return as a form of historical compensation that cannot be circumscribed solely through legalistic arguments.

To complicate things further, a new citizenship law was adopted by the Georgian government in April 2014 during my fieldwork. This law introduced a more restrictive visa regime, which abolished the pre-existent ability of foreigners to reside in the country for 360 days without requiring a residence permit.[5] For my research participants, the law's effects were potentially disruptive, since most were citizens of Azerbaijan.

This sudden and largely unexpected change in the legal framework exposed the fragility of Meskhetians' presence in a country to which they claimed a moral–historical right of collective return. At this particular juncture more than ever during my fieldwork, the theme of citizenship seemed charged with emotion, and conjured imaginative new forms of membership frameworks (Shafir 1998: 23). This imaginative effort was, needless to say, fraught with fears, since the new law could potentially shift the ground under the feet of people whose citizenship and sense of home lacked a formal status in the country. Memories and collective narratives of suffering at the hands of the Soviet state were, thus, mobilised along a continuum of persecution culminating in today's legal framework for repatriation. Arguably, an internalised sense of deportability played a role in this, since the relationship between their citizenship rights and the state (Peutz and De Genova 2010: 15) was promptly structured along narratives similar to those ingrained in their group identity for decades.

My fieldwork extended to their sending communities in Azerbaijan as well. Here, the failure of the repatriation programme has generated frustration and inspired the spread of conspiratorial interpretations of the procedures adopted by the Georgian and Azerbaijani governments in handling repatriation.

From a broader perspective, the circumstances of these communities—both in Georgia and Azerbaijan—fall within the peculiarities of contemporary human mobility and the restructuring of nation-states in globalisation. Indeed, the latter has led to an increase in modes of governing borders and populaces, which favour discipline over repressive state control (Geiger 2013: 34; Zolberg 2006: 443). In this sense, Meskhetians' relationship with borders and citizenship systems suggests that the reach of the states can affect latent, informal control through

forms of graduated or partial membership that withholds the rights accorded to full citizens (Ong 2006: 82; Krujit 2002: 37; Schonburgh 2007: 17). These regulatory grey areas, in this case at least, seem to be perpetuated by a variety of mechanisms—at the interstices of two or more citizenship regimes—which include the mere disregard for repatriates' conundrums as well as informal, yet seemingly institutionalised practices. It is against such a theoretical background, and the experiences of my research participants, that I advance the idea of dual citizenship as an imaginative horizon, and, possibly, a practical solution. Holding two citizenships (their country of origin's as well as Georgia's, their elective homeland) would accommodate the actual life circumstances and aspirations of those (very few) in the Meskhetian transnational diaspora who opted to repatriate.

New laws and informal practices

The total number of Muslim Meskhetians in Georgia today is thought to range from 600 to 1000 (Aydıngün et al. 2006: 13). They are a politically marginalised group, whose plight, like that of other Georgian minorities, has often been perceived through the lens of ethno-political categories and national security concerns (Sabanadze 2014: 120–132; Tournon 2007: 101, 203), to the detriment of their pleas for rehabilitation and return. Meskhetians are also part of what has become a transnational diaspora dispersed throughout the former Soviet Union, Turkey and the United States. The majority of those who live in Georgia began arriving in the late 1970s, and most have become naturalised citizens. In this chapter, however, I provide examples from a small number of Meskhetians who only recently repatriated and whose status in Georgian society remains tenuous both socially and legally. I use the term 'returnees' despite the fact that most were born after the 1944 deportation. Returnee ('*repatriant*') is a term used by my respondents themselves. A *repatriant*, according to an 'emic reading of return', is someone whose family socialisation was characterised by ethnic capital and a strong ideology of return to the homeland, regardless of their place and date of birth (Christou and King 2010: 639).

Unsurprisingly, Soviet deportation was such a foundational experience that it is ingrained in today's repatriates' ethos, and is still of importance when we consider the problems they face with contemporary institutional regimes of mobility and citizenship. Mann (2005: 8) actually argues that amongst surviving victims the idea of accidental suffering is commonly unacceptable. Thus, amongst Meskhetians in Akhaltsikhe, intentionality is projected onto occurrences that lie beyond an individual's control and fall within the scope of governments.

On one particular occasion, I witnessed a bitter argument about the high mortality rates amongst the deported, which involved the son of a deportee born in the 1950s and an acquaintance of his. The Meskhetian man contended that the high mortality rates had been caused by a specific plan implemented by the Soviet authorities. His acquaintance's opinion, instead, was consistent with the theory of 'abandonment in deportation', which attributes the deaths to an unintentional lack of coordination between the place of departure and the destination (Werth 2003:

227). Similarly, Uehling (2004: 94–95) describes how Crimean Tatar deportees challenge the deportation accounts suggesting that the operation was carried out in a 'human' way or that, at least, there was a sincere effort to do so on the part of the Soviet leadership.

These collective narratives give testimony to Meskhetians' history of abuse by the state, deployed as interpretive frameworks on today's predicaments. They offer meaning whenever the workings of the state or other political entities resist interpretation or appear to function through 'informal' mechanisms of exclusion and control.

The majority of Meskhetians who recently resettled in Georgia originate from Azerbaijan, as outlined above. Here, Meskhetian organisations, especially Vatan, strove to assist potential repatriates with application procedures. Vatan ('Homeland') was established in 1990, with the aim of promoting the return to Meskheti (currently situated roughly within the province of Samskhe-Javakheti). Testimonies from Vatan's leaders and members of local branches of the organisation, in this sense, reflect the perception of the repatriation programme and emerging notions attempting to grapple with its ambiguities. At the heart of these narratives lie the criteria utilised by the Georgian government to vet applications, and the alleged arbitrary exclusion of Vatan's members.

This is clearly exemplified by the following excerpts from interviews with Rehman and Yusuf[6]:

> Rehman: To this day, no one who works for *Vatan* has obtained the status of repatriate, not even one status have they given us! This law … this law of 2007, has only damaged us, it has been adopted in order to create obstacles for our return to Georgia. … Look at this guy, to his mother and his father they haven't given it, neither to this brother and sister, in his family they only gave it to him. What is he supposed to do? To those who work for the fatherland, they don't give the status; they give it to those who don't really care!

Another member of Vatan went even further:

> Yusuf: When I speak about a filter, I mean this, for example: they learn that someone's dead, and then they send him the status!

In order to analyse these narratives, it is useful to consider the relationship between the modern state's securitarian preoccupations and its technologies of population control. Ultimately, the system of repatriation elicits political and ideological support in the public arena, but also emotional responses amongst subjects by evoking the promise of a status, the acquisition of which presupposes a wilful commitment. Thus, a space of programmed informality is generated and sustained by means of informal practices and unspoken rules of behaviour. Within this civic limbo, full membership in society is suspended—that is, postponed until the formal criteria are met (chiefly, having renounced one's original citizenship).

Still, informal fields of action seem equally important, since they pertain to domains that escape planning, control and, sometimes, cognition.

Informality should, thus, be understood here as the modality of behaviour adopted by a range of actors, from individuals to state and community institutions. A space is constituted in which citizenship can be conceptualised not only as a practice but also as an interpretive framework. The examples above reflect the application of such framework to bureaucratic and legal procedures which are enigmatic or raises legitimate doubts. We can argue that the condition the repatriates enter represents one in which the friction between their status of incomplete citizenship and partial, informal incorporation into society takes place within the law itself, rather than outside it (Chauvin and Garcés-Mascarenas 2012: 243). What this perspective allows us to see, I believe, is also the ongoing relevance of the nation-state as the source of citizenship rights in this era of globalisation (Tölölyan 1991: 5; Oommen 2006: 34). This is a crucial point since the field of informal practices I consider is not beyond the reach of—or necessarily in defiance of—the state(s) across whose boundaries the Meskhetians move and live their lives.

The work of state institutions, therefore, also depends upon informal instruments: in order to vet repatriation applications, the Georgian government instituted a Council of Elders[7], composed of senior members of the Meskhetian community. This council's work relies on ethnic and kinship networks, and its legitimacy is based on the respect elicited by its members amongst Meskhetians. In the words of Nino, a Georgian nongovernmental worker:

> The Council of Elders … an institution which was created … to make sure that the individuals are identified, those who cannot demonstrate they were deported. Basically, there were cases of individuals who claimed to have been deported, but neither them nor their ancestors had been.
>
> But what kind of documents can they provide?
>
> When these people were deported, they were given papers which stated when and from where they were deported, a tiny piece of paper with their name and date …
>
> A document 70 years old is difficult to come by …
>
> It's true. … Since the main criterion for repatriation is that the person, or his ancestors, were deported, and many could not prove it with a document, the government had to verify that they really were deported, or their ancestors were. That's why they created this Council of Elders, which is an organism comprising three elders who verify the requirements of each person. The Ministry sends them the documents when everything else is verified and they ask them to make sure these people are truly deportees. They have personal networks, personal connections with the deported communities in Azerbaijan and elsewhere; it's enough to make a call, be in touch with these communities, they have personal contacts, they know someone, and so on. … Thanks to this process the government managed to give more than 1000 individuals a status. Otherwise the applications meeting the prerequisites would be 75. … They

are leaders within their communities, respected by other Meskhetians, and for this reason they were chosen. … They have contacts, know many people.

If the defining element of 'informal citizenship' is the role of personal connections in dealing with state institutions (Berenschot and van Klinken 2018: 99), the institution of the Council of Elders reflects the very embodiment of this principle. Informality compensates, in this case, for the lack of proper documentation, and, as clearly explained in the interview excerpt above, made it possible for a much larger number of people to access the application procedure. Nonetheless, it is also a source of conjecture and distrust, often directed at the very members of the Council, who are sometimes negatively associated with the Georgian government and accused of personally benefiting from their role.

Postcoloniality: nationality, naturalisation and transnational horizons

The question of whether the experiences of Meskhetian deportation, exile and dispersion, as well as their current relationship with their *homeland*, could be subsumed under the definition of postcoloniality is tied to the wider debate on whether the post-Soviet space itself should be included in postcolonial studies. Although the second question lies beyond our scope here, a number of elements speak in favour of answering the first question affirmatively, at the very least from the point of view of the Meskhetians' experiences. For one thing, mass and arbitrary relocations of entire collectives and Soviet nationality policies and practices qualify as postcoloniality (Chioni Moore 2001: 123). Given the defining character of deportation for Meskhetians' collective identity, the category of postcoloniality seems appropriate. Possessing an equally colonial tint are those 'cultural technologies of rule' (Hirsch 2005: 307), such as the census and passport systems, integral to the project and implementation of collective relocation, as a colonial means of constituting subject positions through representation (Slemon 2003: 46). Seen in the analytical context of a postcolonial relationship, the status of the Meskhetians who recently migrated to Georgia could be explained as a form of a disaggregated right containing partial recognition and elements of nationality (Cohen 2014: 147–148). The spectre looming in Meskhetians' imagination may represent the 'infinite danger' of statelessness (Walzer 1983: 32), a condition in the postcolonial perspective that must refer to migration as much as to the 'game of citizenship' (Samaddar 2020). To complete this picture, the Arendtian reflection of statelessness highlights avoiding the dilemma of the irrational, stateless nonperson, such that statelessness is avoided from the perspective of the state as well, conferring partial bundles of rights as a means of expressing a difference in an institutional capacity whilst maintaining its control over the population (Cohen 2014: 132–134). The Meskhetian repatriates, particularly those left in legal limbo through the shortcomings of the repatriation programme, appear trapped in a postcolonial space that lacks a proper centre–periphery structure: their direction is not towards their former metropolitan state, but a new one that has only reluctantly

taken on the task of repatriation. Moreover, the very proliferation of international boundaries resulting from the birth of post-Soviet republics complicates, at least symbolically, their return (Martin 2001: 333), leaving a bittersweet taste to their appraisal of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the post-Soviet transitions to democracy.

It comes as no surprise then, given the (at least perceived) threat of statelessness and the possibility of ushering in a liminal state, that giving up their Azerbaijani citizenship (an official requirement to naturalise as Georgian) becomes a nonviable, seemingly irrational option.

The arbitrariness of informal bureaucratic practices manifests in the uncertainty surrounding the very amount of money to be paid to the Azerbaijani authorities in order to give up one's citizenship (ranging 'from USD 250 to 170'[8]). In addition, other uncertainties surround one's rights including, for instance, the inability to inherit and possess property in the country of origin—an unreasonable prospect for people whose lives have become practically transnational. All these factors contribute to the failure of most to naturalise, a problem that could potentially be addressed by allowing for dual nationality (Hammar 1985: 442). This would represent a gesture of practical as well as symbolic compensation for people who have been historically disempowered and victimised through policies around nationality.

One conclusion I draw, then, is that informality should be seen as an idiom and a code of conduct not necessarily relegated to the margins of state practices, but rather implicated as a part of the very rationale for state power. Navigating around the obstacles it poses involves a capacity to act along a transnational horizon of mobility and lifestyles. Several Meskhetian men, for example, engage in seasonal work in Turkey, new families frequently create a bridge originating from a Meskhetian community abroad, remittances are sent from kin abroad and participation in the informal economy is also common through, for example, the sale of products from small plots of land or dairy products. These and a myriad of other practices that exceed the formal expectations of national communities coexist within groups that continue representing themselves as culturally bounded and self-sustaining. Yet, these practices are pragmatically enmeshed in relationships of economic and political interdependency necessary for reshaping notions of citizenship (Thunder 2014: 79–80). In this sense, the pursuit of naturalised citizenship is but one facet of a more complex strategy, wide-reaching in a literal, geographical sense and involving unique understandings of transnational contexts (Gutiérrez 2008: 196). What the subjects substantiate here is a procedural, civic idea of citizenship, rather than a holistic, romantic, cultural one (Rapport 2005: 205), which subjectively dilutes the nationalist, formal core of conventional citizenship (Zolberg 2000: 517). Where repatriates' and state practices interact, overlap and enter into conflict, informality plays out publicly in the 'game of citizenship'. Still, it retains its shadowy qualities as a cognitive lens through which hegemonic manifestations of regulatory powers are interpreted.

A shrewd look at these migratory policies might blur the boundaries between 'success' and 'failure', or 'formal' and 'informal' practices, attributing informality

to a grey area wherein citizenship is negotiated. Such a relativisation of citizenship entails a circumspect assessment of the naturalisation path afforded by the 'Law on Repatriation'. The perceived trade-off they are offered, between renouncing their citizenship of origin and the promise of a new one, becomes disempowering for people living a de facto transnational life (Iordachi 2004: 135). In a sense, the moral and spiritual implications, as well as the practical impact, of the 'national order of things' (Malkki 1992: 26) are at odds with aspirations that still retain an echo of the Soviet cosmopolitanism of ordinary life (Humphrey 2004: 151), albeit embodied in its Caucasian variant as a continually 'deferred project' (Grant 2010: 124). Personal and collective memories of violence and dispossession instilled a sense of vulnerability within the Meskhetian diaspora's sense of self, possibly explaining their unwillingness to accommodate return and mobility projects. Thus, naturalisation is impossible lest one severs citizenship ties with their nationality of origin.

Dual citizenship, however, would recognise the inscription of the repatriates' existence within a transnational order, granting it legitimacy. As Spiro (2010: 127) points out, a regime that suppresses plural citizenship incentivises individuals to select the one with the greatest personal salience, based on a number of practical as well as symbolic and emotional factors. Such choice seems to represent an insurmountable obstacle to realising the repatriates' rights. Mobilising this concept functions, in my opinion, as more than a mere speculative exercise. Repatriates' informal practices of citizenship are, in fact, informal practices of *dual* citizenship. It is in this direction that reluctance to strip themselves of their nationality of origin, rather than mere economic considerations, becomes intelligible. Naturalised citizenship in both countries would, thus, recognise their transnational lives (Kivisto and Faith 2015: 139), and perhaps achieve a form of historical compensation.

Conclusions

This chapter reflected on the informal practices of (dual) citizenship (Sassen 2002: 6) amongst disenfranchised individuals. At the same time, it utilised the category of informality vis-à-vis local interpretations of legal frameworks, notably of the (un)intended effects—or implicit aims—of norms regulating mobility and membership in the national polity (which, in turn, often rely on informal practices of exclusion). Informality has, thus, been understood as a principle of action, thought and perhaps governance, used to describe the actions of disempowered, marginal individuals and communities as well as policies. On the first level, it works as a way of 'getting things done', of gaining something by compensating for the restraints imparted by laws and regulations, by one's status in society, such as what I have described in this chapter as 'informal practices of dual citizenship'. For the Meskhetian repatriates in Georgia, this means cultivating a fractured sense of home, bifocal at least and perpetually incomplete.

In this chapter, I investigated Meskhetians' perceptions of state powers in redefining the boundaries of the legal (echoing historical experiences of the

betrayal of established norms of citizenship (Levin 2017: 4)) drawing from the impact of the 2014 'Law on Citizenship'. On the second level, informality serves as a means of achieving particular goals through ambiguous forms of governance that generate grey areas. Meskhetians' informal citizenship practices, therefore, arise through a dialogue with the informality of the institutional and legal framework of the repatriation programme. Undoubtedly, this represents an unequal relationship, within which their life projects and the accomplishments of everyday work appear open to revision and possibly stripped from them at any time. It is a state of things in which people perceive—and are affected by— structures of inequality inscribed in their imperfect membership status, rendering them vulnerable to social and embodied forms of suffering. The question of purpose is relevant here, chiefly as part and parcel of local interpretative frameworks, arising from histories of victimisation and a quest for reparation. In this light, the principle of informality qualifies one dimension through which the returnees experience the state(s): time and money-wasting bureaucratic hurdles, loopholes in the legal framework and so on. These everyday complications force one to conduct their lives in grey areas and through informal practices of citizenship. The idea of 'dual citizenship' is, therefore, advanced again in this chapter. But here it represents a formal embrace of the contradictions of the returnees' transnational lives. Through dual citizenship, multiple memberships and histories would be brought to light and legitimised. The informal principle could, thus, offer analytical tools via which to address immigration and citizenship law, primarily—as we have seen—by bringing local interpretative models into our analysis. Furthermore, looking through the lens of 'informality' sheds light on certain modes of governance, especially in the fields of migration and citizenship, which generate uncertainty and vulnerability.

Notes

1 A shared history of deportation, resettlement and exile has blurred the boundaries of the groups within the deported population.
2 https://matsne.gov.ge/ru/document/download/22558/6/en/pdf.
3 http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=21750&lang=en.
4 http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=21750&lang=en.
5 https://www.gov.uk/government/news/georgia-new-visa-regulations; http://www.refworld.org/docid/53835fe14.html.
6 I use fictional names to protect my interlocutors' privacy.
7 https://ge.boell.org/en/2011/11/02/repatriation-issues-muslim-meskhetians.
8 From my field notes.

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