Migrants—“Caucasians” in St. Petersburg

Life in Tension

This article presents the results of research on economic migrants—vendors at the farmers’ markets of St. Petersburg. The research began as a project of the Center for Independent Sociological Research titled “Caucasians in a Major Russian City: Integration in the Context of Xenophobia.” Fieldwork was almost finished by late 1998, with results carefully analyzed and frequently discussed among colleagues at seminars and conferences during the next two years. Several articles were written based on the collected material (e.g., Brednikova and Pachenkov 2000). This article sums up this three-year research.

At first, we planned for research on the economic strategies of migrants from Azerbaijan. Therefore we ventured to the city markets in search of informants: it is “known” that the fruit-and-vegetables retail trade is the ethnic economic niche of the “Caucasians” [Kavkaztsy]. We knew of such a niche as “residents of a Russian city” (ordinary knowledge), as well as from specialized literature on so-called “ethnic economies.” Later we changed our research perspective from “ethnic enterprise” to “ethnic migration.” Besides the economic strategies of ethnic migrants, we began to study the processes of integration and settlement of the migrants, devoting a lot of attention to studying their everyday life. This allowed us to broaden


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the scope of our research. Therefore not only “Caucasians” but also economic migrants from Central Asia and Moldova, local vendors, and market employees came under our consideration.

This article consists of two parts, ethnographic and theoretical. The first part presents the field data in a reflexive ethnographic account: where possible, we exclude theoretical generalizations or sociological conclusions while including “the anthropologist’s reflections” (problems of “entry” into the field, relationships with the informants, etc.). The second part is strictly sociological and includes some theoretical speculations and generalizations, illustrated by concrete examples from the empirical data presented in part 1. We have tried to represent the data as fully and contextually as possible, to enable judgments concerning the logic and validity of our conclusions.

Methodology and research

At least two reasons prevailed for using qualitative methods in our research. The first is fundamental and pertinent to our notion of the nature of social reality and possible ways of studying it. From perspectives of phenomenology (E. Husserl, A. Shutz), understanding (Verstehen) sociology (M. Weber), and interpretative anthropology (C. Geertz), social reality is intersubjective, constructed by individuals in the process of social interaction (Berger and Luckman 1953). Hence, the task of a scientist is to understand the subjective meanings that individuals invest in their actions (Weber 1990, p. 603) to give an idea of the social reality constructed by these actions.

The second reason for our methodological choice concerns the subject. The economic activities of most of our informants and their residential status in Russian territory are often illegal. The delicacy of their position and the topics discussed required the informants’ trust toward the researchers. Qualitative methods of research allow a researcher to gain trust, observe everyday life, and repeatedly discuss findings.

Participant observation and conversations with informants (interviews) became the main research methods. We think that such a combination allows the researchers to grasp informants’ realities. The accuracy of interpreting events is related to our ability to place a situation in cultural context. This makes the combination of participant observation and interviews even more important, since projecting the researchers’ own meaning onto the informants’ actions is quite possible.

Participant observation

From October 1997 to mid-summer 1998, we were participant-observers among the migrants. We took an active part in the work and daily life of our informants: we worked as their vendors at the market, went to collect merchandise, visited apartment, finding a school for the children, medical care, relationships with the police, etc.). We discussed all these observations and wrote field notes. Afterward, as we accumulated more data and a greater understanding of what was happening, we interpreted our notes.

Interviews

The interviews took place as informal conversations: unstructured, friendly chats without a tape recorder. It was impossible to record interviews on tape due to language problems. Moreover, attempts to use such a method were ineffective. For example, in one taped interview, an informant with whom we had already reached a certain level of trust presented an “official” version of his biography that differed considerably from the version we previously constructed from our informal conversations. Not only was he avoiding “delicate” topics related to possible violations of the law, but he also shortened his account to the elementary structure “came—worked—left.” In contrast, informal conversations have the advantage of allowing the informant to feel relaxed enough to include topics that would not be told on tape. We had such conversations many times in very different conditions and situations: at the informants’ house, at our house, at the informants’ workplace, in restaurants, and so forth. We wrote the contents of these conversations in our field diaries after the meetings were over.

Besides our meetings with informants, we interviewed people with whom they interact: vendors and market administration, real-estate agents specializing in migrant housing; teachers and school officials, our informants’ neighbors, and others. To show the borders of ethnic community life, we talked to official representatives of states that the migrants had left and activists of national cultural organizations. We also conducted five interviews with city residents regarding their attitude to the “Caucasians.”

Case study

The case study is our chosen research approach. A relatively closed, self-sufficient, and internally integrated system can be considered a case. Indubitably, such a system exists in a certain context. However, one can separate a “case” from its context by defining its limitations—functional and qualitative in time and space (Stake 1994, pp. 236–37). Our cases were a migrant from Tajikistan (1) and a family of four who came to St. Petersburg from Azerbaijan (2). The time limits are conditioned by the specifics of migrants’ economic activity, depending greatly on yearly patterns, especially the sale season. Therefore, each case took no less than one year. We studied the migrant from Tajikistan—our first case—from the fall of 1997 to the fall of 1998, and then periodically in 1999. We studied the second case from fall 1997 to summer 1998. In August 1998, one family left St. Petersburg and
Social interactions and social relations of migrants (including their interactions with the researchers), became units of analysis. Based on the methodological approach known as “grounded theory” (Glaser and Strauss 1967), initially we observed any social interactions of our informants. Later, we analyzed the data and identified pivotal topics, such as economic activity and social adjustment. We concentrated on our informants’ relations with business partners and colleagues, buyers, fellow countrymen, other migrants, police, representatives of the markets’ administration, and residential neighbors. Various triangulations (the use of multiple methods and sources of data, research perspectives, etc.) were used, as recommended in case studies (Yin 1992, p. 85 [Kozina 1997, p. 179]).

Methodological triangulation meant we drew on various sources of information gathering, which, consequently, required different methods for their analysis. Research triangulation meant we conducted our research working as a pair. Looking at the data from different perspectives, including gender, and constant discussion proved very useful. Temporal triangulation allowed us to state and verify hypotheses that were modified in the course of the research.

Part 1

“The field”: Research reflections

Every ethnographer is painfully aware of the discrepancy between the richness of the lived field experience and the paucity of the language used to characterize it.

—Edward Bruner

Myths and fears

At the start of the fieldwork, we already had some notions about our future subject. The methodology of “grounded theory” suggests the need to reflect on and write down all relevant concepts that researchers might have prior to fieldwork. This is important because preconceptions influence perception and interpretation. If such preconceptions are not thought through, they become an organic part of the ethnographic text written by the researcher. In contrast, their explanation helps separate knowledge that existed prior to the research and thus allows the researcher to avoid, at least partially, distortion of the “culture text” (Clifford Geertz’s term) written by the anthropologist. To enable the reader to trace the evolution of our knowledge, here is how we imagined our future research subject.

We believed that migrants from Azerbaijan lived surrounded by hostile locals and were subject to discrimination by the authorities and representatives of the law. Under conditions of total xenophobia and discrimination, the migrants choose collective strategies of integration and rely on ethnic networks for mutual support. Members of a united ethnic community occupy certain economic niches, normally and, with their help, becomes integrated into the receiving society.

The beginning of fieldwork and “entry into the field” was hampered not only by our notions and expectations, which were transformed in the course of the research, but also by certain fears, which we had to overcome. The main fears were:

—Criminality of the studied milieu. (Standard reactions by relatives and friends to our project: “they will cut your ears off,” or “Azeri control the drug trade, and you will get killed.”)

—Antisocial conditions. (Usual notions: “the market is a dirty place,” and “they bring all diseases from the Caucasus,” or “blacks are all dirty,” “HIV-infected.”)

—Deeply ingrained stereotypes of “traditional” gender relations. (‘I’ve always expected unwanted male attention and subjects ignoring her role as a researcher while Oleg expected to defend Olga from possible outbursts of aggression, which the public usually ascribes to Caucasian men.)

All these fears were related to concepts of “us” and “them” differences. We believed that a strict border between our cultures existed and we could not conceive of possible punitive sanctions for violating this border, or for behavior not matching “their” rules. We worked together played a crucial part in overcoming our fears; it did away with the feeling of vulnerability, summoned our research spirit, and turned our fears into jokes.

Entry into the field

We tried to combine several strategies of “entry into the field.” While we were looking for informants through our own and our friends’ social networks, we also tried to establish contacts with the “Azerbaijani” market vendors independently.

“Experts”

Finding informants through our own social networks previously proved successful, since we managed to meet and talk with several “Azerbaijani”-“friends of friends.” Two were representatives of Azerbaijani public organizations in St Petersburg: a professor from the State University; and an entrepreneur. Through them we hoped to obtain leads to the rest of the Azerbaijani community in St Petersburg, which we thought existed as a whole within the city.

We turned to these “Azerbaijani” as we would to experts and they efficiently followed their roles; answering our questions, they actively reproduced stereotypical notions of Azerbaijani “national culture”—both “high culture” and everyday culture. (They spoke about Azerbaijani piouasl, strength of family networks, respect for elders, etc. Meanwhile, none of the “experts” was able to help us establish contacts with the market vendors—“Azerbaijani.” University professor S. deliberately distanced himself from his “uncultured” fellow countrymen, stressing cultural social class, and insisting exclusively on “Azerbaijani intellectuals.” S told us
that while visiting the city markets, he frequently rebuked his compatriots, urging them to "dress and behave properly."

We knew from sociological literature that in the United States formal structures organize the life of ethnic communities and defend their rights. We believed that national/cultural societies should be a Russian equivalent to American institutions of civil society. However, despite the point that representatives of "Azerbaijani" community organizations presented themselves as intermediaries between the migrants and the state and offered to collaborate with us, they could not introduce us into the circle of market vendors, because they did not have any contacts with them. Moreover, they complained that "market Azerbaijani disgrace the whole Azerbaijani people by their behavior, ignorance about local conventions, appearance, and indecent behavior," and warned about possible dangers. ("They are not civilized, they have just come down from their mountains," "be careful around them.") One informant—director of an Azerbaijani community organization—was also a co-owner of a café and a grocery store. He admitted that several times he had kicked out his compatriots, working at the nearby market, from his café "for being dirty and for indecent behavior." He said he preferred not to have anything in common with them and after the aforementioned incidents he has not let them into his café.

We also met a consul of the Republic of Azerbaijan in St. Petersburg. He made it clear in his interview that his goal was the strengthening of cultural, economic, and political relations between Russia and Azerbaijan. Nonetheless, he was not interested in the condition of market vendors—"Azerbaijani." He had no intention of taking the responsibility to defend the rights and solve the problems of illegal economic migrants.

Thus, our attempts to locate recent economic migrants selling at the city markets through the networks of earlier migrants and national political/cultural elite proved unsuccessful. Though disappointed, we had made our first discovery: the "Azerbaijani diaspora" consists of different social milieus, which are relatively self-contained, with little interaction. A united "Azerbaijani" community with strict borders, collective consciousness, clearly expressed social interests, and group strategies does not exist. A firm border between at least two communities was revealed. The first consists of people whom we dubbed "Azerbaijani professionals" and "Azerbaijani of leisure." "Professionals," using ethnic identity as a resource, turned it into their career. They lay claim to representing the interests of "all Azerbaijani of St. Petersburg" and played the role of intermediaries between the "diaspora" and state/city authorities. "Azerbaijani of leisure" are residents of St Petersburg who are well integrated and have obtained a certain status in different fields. They can let themselves be "Azerbaijani" (activists of national and cultural Azerbaijani communities, advocates of Azerbaijani culture) in their spare time.

The second community is composed of recent economic migrants. The border between these communities is not contained in an ethnic dimension, but is based on several interdependent criteria: duration of residence in the city, extent of inte-

gration, social status, and so forth. Various social communities are formed on the crossroads of these factors.

The Northern Market

Finally, we managed to find a female friend who worked as a vendor at the Northern Market. She introduced us to several "Azerbaijans," owners of small businesses (stall owners), introducing us as "scientists studying problems of Azerbaijan." The news about "scientists interested in the hardships of Azerbaijans" quickly spread around the market and other "Azerbaijans" joined the conversation. Key topics were complaints about police, tax collectors and other authorities controlling market trade; accommodation and registration difficulties; and unfriendliness of people around them. We concluded that many of these problems are not directly related to ethnic discrimination but are characteristic of small businesses. However, it was obvious that "the wrong nationality" creates additional difficulties for owners of small businesses. Thus all stalls undergo checks by tax and sanitary authorities, but "Caucasian" stalls are scrutinized much more carefully.

"Azerbaijani" stall owners at the Northern Market, more or less successfully integrated economically and culturally, did not look like a sufficiently radical and interesting research subject to us. We still wanted to study recent migrants, strikingly different from the local majority in their dress, speech, behavior, and so on. In our (quite large) social networks we could not find a single lead to "Azerbaijans" working as vendors at the market. This confirmed our hypothesis about the relative isolation of the community of recent economic migrants.

Sennoi Market

Based on our everyday knowledge and the "expert" opinions, we were convinced that the vast majority of vendors at the city markets are "Azerbaijans." For an entire month we walked around different markets, buying fruits and vegetables and trying to meet some vendors. However, it was rather difficult to strike up a conversation with unfamiliar people. The only icebreaker we could come up with, "Where are the fruits/vegetables from? So you are also from there?" did not allow for a full-blown conversation. Yet we found out that: (a) most fruits sold in the city are brought from Italy, Spain, and Latin America (which precluded the possibility of asking our second question), (b) not only "Azerbaijani" sell at the city markets—most vendors turned out to be from Tajikistan. Finally, we decided that the most certain method to establish relationships with vendors was to become their colleagues.

There were two rows of stalls at Sennoi Market allotted for residents of Leningrad region by the market administration. The vending spaces in these rows were free, but only people having permanent residence in Leningrad or its surroundings could
reselling, but would sell fruits and vegetables grown at their dachas as well as berries and mushrooms that they gathered themselves. We used this opportunity to resell cranberries that we had bought near the market entrance, where prices were 15–20 percent higher. Thus we were forced to sell for less than we paid.1 Cold rainy weather and low prices at the market quickly put an end to our participation-observation. Our unprofitable vending was over in four hours. Unable to sell our produce, we had to take most of it home. Nevertheless, we gained some experience and made the following useful conclusions.

As our goal was to communicate and establish contacts with the “Caucasians,” we violated market rules by moving over to the next paid row, where “Tajiks,” “Azerbaijanis,” and “Uzbeks” were among our stall neighbors. Establishing contacts with the vendors while on the same side of the stall proved much easier. Common activity led to common topics of conversation. We introduced ourselves as students trying to make some extra money. Pretending to be beginners, we could ask our neighbors about vending rules, how to organize the stall space, and the relations with the market administration and police. Our neighbors openly discussed some informal trade rules with us (for example, bribe amounts), changed and borrowed money from us, and asked us to watch their produce in their absence. Such relations reflect market vendors’ ethics, including mutual trust and support while “handling” buyers and market administrators.

Ethnic borders did not prevent us from being accepted into the community of professional vendors. We were able to establish contact with migrants vending at the market by being “on the same side of the stall.” However, the practical realization of this research strategy was hampered as the project’s budget did not permit us to sell every day at a loss. It was necessary to find another opportunity. The next attempt to enter the field was visiting the makeshift cafeteria. Tables were placed inside the stalls where vendors usually stand with their produce. The isolated and limited nature of this special professional space created an impression that only market personnel could use it.2 Four men cooked pilaf in two cauldrons and several women were selling pastries, pies, and tea and coffee from thermoses. We defined the men as “Caucasians”; the women, dressed in bright flowered dresses and wide trousers, looked more like natives of Central Asia. Our perception of both cooks and customers sitting at the tables as migrants from southern republics of the former Soviet Union created an impression of more barrier, the ethnic one. We asked if we could have some pilaf and if they could only for those working at the market. One cook replied that they cook for all. We ordered two plates of pilaf and sat at the table.

The conditions of cooking and serving food were far removed from our notions of hygiene and sanitary regulations: the food was prepared outside in grisy cauldrons, dirty dishes were rinsed with warm water from a thermos and wiped with hands or dirty rags. These dish-washing tricks were hidden from “outside observers” (buyers, market administrators), but were obvious to the clients of the “cafeteria” located on the same side of the stall with the cooks and observing the inner

1: This is an ellipsis in the original text. It seems like there might be a reference to something that is not included in the visible text.

2: This is another ellipsis in the original text. It suggests another reference or a continuation of thought that is not visible in the text.

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Case one: Buzor

Biography of a migrant

Before migrating, Buzor lived in a small village in Tajikistan and worked as a truck driver in a kolkhoz. By the early 1990s, kolkhozes fell apart and Buzor lost his job. His kitchen garden did not allow him to feed his family of eight people: Buzor, his wife, and their six children. Following many of his countrymen, Buzor decided to emigrate to Russia [Rossii]. A neighbor gave him a friend's address in Sverdlovsk. In the winter of 1993, Buzor arrived in Sverdlovsk “to the address”3 and found this “friend of a friend,” who helped him find a job as a cook at a restaurant of “an Armenian.” Buzor worked there for about a year, but his salary was very low. He decided to move to St. Petersburg to find a fellow villager, who, apparently, was successfully working at Sennoi Market. Buzor did not have his address or any other information; he knew only the market’s name.

In the spring of 1994, Buzor arrived in St. Petersburg but failed to find his friend at Sennoi Market. He did find fellow countrymen there, who helped him with accommodations and lent him some money to start up. By our meeting, it was the third year that he was coming to St. Petersburg to earn money. The season lasts from March to December, after which he goes home for several months.

Below we describe some aspects of his life, which we observed for almost two years, from the fall of 1997 to the summer of 1999.

Work

Unlike many of his compatriots, Buzor decided not to sell fruits and vegetables.
whole market structure at that moment. It was Khakim—also a migrant from Tajikistan—who came up with the idea of creating a “cafeteria,” and they started working as partners. Both Khakim and Buzor had experience working as cooks. At first, they prepared small quantities of pilaf [plov] at home and then sold it at the market, going around the stalls. In due course they managed to negotiate with market administrators to install the cauldron and tables on the market territory. The administration agreed to set up tables but did not allow cooking pilaf at the market. The cooks found a place to cook pilaf not far away. They negotiated the rent of a small storeroom at a subway construction site in the center of Sennoi Square. Buzor, Khakim, and two other “Tajiks” kept supplies, bought the night before, at these premises. They arrived at the storeroom at 6 A.M. and cooked pilaf. By 8 or 9 A.M. they took the cauldrons to the market and started vending. Around 4 P.M. they went to buy vegetables, meat, and rice for pilaf for the next day, and they peeled the vegetables for it.

Conflicts occasionally arose between the cooks. Sometimes provisions disappeared, and Buzor suspected his business colleagues, who shared the storeroom with him. Relations between the cooks were tense probably for that reason—they shared the same space to divide the rent by four people instead of two.

Selling pilaf at the market involved violations of sanitary, tax, fire, and other rules and regulations. To remain at the market, the cooks paid a monthly sum set by market administrators. They were free to take it or leave it, because the administrators would not make any concessions. Buzor and his partner paid roughly the same amount as five or six women together selling tea and pastries next to them.

Expenses were structured as follows: Buzor spent part of the money to pay for the vending space, a small amount for rent of the storeroom and his room; spending on food constituted a very small part of his budget. Buzor exchanged the remaining rubles into dollars and saved them. He sent his savings to his family with occasional couriers or took it there himself. He told us two unpleasant episodes, related to the transfer of money to his family. Once Buzor sent the money for his family with a fellow villager, but found out that the money was not delivered. Buzor was able to get the money back only by visiting him in person. The second unpleasant situation happened in the fall of 1996: Buzor was taking the train home with Khakim when robbers took everything they earned during the season. Buzor said the robbers were “Tajiks.” Subsequently he preferred to go home with large groups of friends and colleagues from the market for protection.

In the spring of 1998, Sennoi Market was closed for renovation. Having lost their jobs, some vendors went home; others moved to Tvorzhkovski Market. Some, including Buzor, stayed to work illegally at the territory of Sennoi Market.

At that point, Buzor left the cooking business and became a small business owner. His small amount of capital was not enough to start his own business, so he found a partner. In the course of our research, Buzor changed partners several times, without explaining why. They were mostly “Tajiks,” but for a while he worked and sell them at retail prices at Sennoi Square. The produce was delivered from the wholesale warehouses by cars, which they either flagged on the street or negotiated with drivers at the market. One partner would go to the wholesale vegetable warehouses for produce while the other would work at Sennoi Market, packaging vegetables, overseeing sales, and taking produce to the vendors. Three female vendors worked for Buzor and his partner. In the morning, the “proprietors” handed out produce to the vendors, prepackaged in one- or two-kilo amounts. The vending took place right there, from the crates. This technique provided the mobility necessary for illegal trade: in case of a police raid, a vendor could quickly hide the produce in her bag and look like a customer.

At first, a female migrant from Moldova, who rented a room in the same apartment as Buzor, worked as a vendor for him. Later, conflicts between her and Buzor’s partner led to her termination. Buzor changed his vendors frequently; some left by themselves, unhappy with the low salary, some he fired for laziness. At times vendors disappeared in the middle of a working day, taking all the profits; thus Buzor preferred to hire not unknown women, but only those recommended to him by someone working at the market.

We worked as vendors for Buzor for several days, trying to understand the particulars of trade in such conditions. Each person worked independently. However, in the case of “danger” (e.g., a police raid), they became a “team,” protecting common interests. They could pool their money to bribe the police officer, warn each other about unexpected spot-checks, watch each other’s produce if necessary, and so on.

In the fall of 1998, Sennoi Market was reopened after the renovation. The market was now covered and vending spaces became rather expensive. Yet Buzor found a partner with whom he pooled cash and bought a vending space. Buzor told us his neighbors at the market—“Tajiks,” who purchased spaces in one of the rows before him—tried to dissuade him from buying a space. They claimed that high prices for spaces made trade unprofitable. Later Buzor found out that those same “Tajiks” had just wanted to buy up another place. This created some tension with his stall neighbors afterward. Buzor and his partner spent about $400 for the space. At that moment, Buzor asked us to let him borrow 1,000 rubles for a month—he had used up his savings to purchase the space and had no money to buy produce. We lent him 100 German marks, which he paid us back in a month.

Accommodations

It is extremely difficult for a migrant with “Caucasian” appearance to rent a place in St. Petersburg. Real estate agents told us that people using their agency to rent out their apartments do not want “Caucasian” tenants. (In professional jargon it sounds like “no south,” “do not offer south.”) The following phrases appear in private ads: “RUSSIAN family is looking to rent an apartment,” “Will
and the migrants' dependency on registration, "Caucasians" are usually asked to pay higher rents.

According to our observations, the majority of migrants selling at the city markets prefer to base themselves not far from their place of work. This lets them save time. Moreover, a short distance from home to work allows them to reduce contacts with the police to a minimum. Buzor did not manage to find appropriate accommodation quickly. Fellow villagers working at Sennoi Market, but leaving for Tajikistan for several months, helped him to find his first room. According to Buzor, most "Tajiks" search and find a place with the help of friends who share information, recommend new tenants to landlords if they are leaving, and so on.

Those who work at Sennoi Market often rent from the residents of the neighborhood adjacent to Sennoi Square. Many of those who rent rooms are the "Caucasian" market vendors who belong to fringe groups (alcoholics, unemployed, single mothers with many children, etc.). Thus the landlord of Buzor's first room immediately spent the rent money on alcohol and afterward demanded that he be paid again. At the same time, he threatened to bring in the district police officer and sometimes did so. After several such episodes, Buzor asked for written confirmation from the owner, so that he did not have any reason to complain. Subsequently, the district officer himself suggested that Buzor rent a room somewhere else.

At the time of our encounter, Buzor was renting a place quite close to work, in a house at the corner of Sennoi Square and Moscow Prospect, a communal apartment in which he and two other migrants from Tajikistan shared a room of 10-12 square meters. The rent was fairly low—10 rubles a day. Buzor occasionally brought the owner vegetables from the market. In addition, she ate free of charge at Buzor's almost every day. Finally, Buzor moved to a neighboring building, located several meters away from the entrance to Sennoi Market.

The apartment was extremely dilapidated. Buzor and his partner kept the produce (fruits and vegetables) in the lobby, which made the air stale and musty. A little later, a newly arrived Tajik migrant to St. Petersburg moved in right there—behind the curtain in the lobby. Then the landlord and three children (five, ten, and thirteen-year-old boys) lived in the room adjacent to Buzor's. The other rooms she rented out to migrant vendors from Sennoi Market.

Buzor shared his new place with Masha, the migrant from Moldova, who worked as a vendor for him. Probably thanks to her efforts, the room looked clean and cozy: curtains on the windows, a tablecloth on the table, live flowers in ornate flowerpots on the walls. Only one element of the decor revealed that migrants live in this room: the nails hammered into the walls holding anything from clothes to watches.

Buzor and Masha had separate budgets. Their relationship could be characterized as a "temporary family." Each had another family "at home." Despite their spending most of the year (nine to eleven months) away from home, they considered the families left there as the only "real" ones. They regularly sent money home and when making long-term decisions, they would ask each other.

families into consideration. Although Masha stopped working for Buzor when the market reopened and a "Russian" owner hired her as a potato vendor, they continued living together.

Relationship with the police

One problem for migrants is the necessity to legalize their stay at each new place. Migrants arriving in the city must register with the police and can obtain permanent or temporary registration. In the fall of 1997, temporary registration allowed residency in the city no longer than forty-five days, after which a migrant must either leave the city or extend registration within five days. A different kind of temporary registration allowed living in the city for three months (six months by 1997). One was allowed to obtain this kind of registration only once a year. It could not be extended: on its expiration, one has to obtain a permanent residence or leave the city until the beginning of the next calendar year.

The process of obtaining registration involved many problems for migrants. As Buzor explained, he had neither the time nor the desire to go to the passport office, waste time, or undergo the humiliations typical of the treatment "Caucasians" get from the authorities and law-enforcement agencies. The three- to six-month registration required an investment of even more time, more papers and signatures, as well as the presence in person of the migrant's landlord. Naturally, few residents of St. Petersburg renting out to migrants would agree to wait in long bureaucratic lines to declare that they are landlords and, consequently, have to pay tax on rental income. Thus neither migrants nor landlords are interested in officially registering their economic relations.

Many migrants prefer to live illegally. Buzor explained that it was more convenient and economical for him to pay fines for not having a registration, or simply bribe the police officers. The fine is not that big (in 1997, it was 8,300 rubles), and the receipt from paying the fine allows the migrant to stay legally without registration for the five following days without further fines.

Buzor said he did not have any conflicts with the police: he had been working as a cook at the market for five years and most district police officers knew him by sight. They came to eat at his stall and he fed them free of charge. According to him, that is why they did not check his registration or demand a fine or a bribe. Buzor never provoked clashes with the police: he avoided going far from Sennoi Square, where he knew all the officers, and tried not to ride the metro, where they check papers carefully. When he had to go shopping for clothes at Troitskii Market, some distance from the "safe and familiar zone," he asked us to accompany him. The migrants' desire to escape unnecessary contacts with representatives of the law limits their movements (home—work—home). This permits us to talk about the process of city segregation, when ethnic (economic) migrants prefer not only to live close to their work (city markets) but also not to venture far away from
Buzor told us he was detained twice for not having a registration. We witnessed one of these situations ourselves. In the winter of 1998, Buzor was visiting Oleg, who saw him off at the Aleksandr Nevskii Square station to be sure that the police would not stop him. Oleg left only after Buzor passed the ticket machines and took the escalator down. However, in an hour, Buzor called Oleg to say he had been arrested on the platform and was at the police office at the station. They let him use the phone when he showed them Oleg’s business card. Oleg set off to “rescue” him immediately. He took his passport and a document with the stamp of the “Center for Independent Sociological Research,” stating that he was an employee at the Center participating in a research project studying migrants from the Caucasus region in St. Petersburg. In the police office, Oleg showed his passport and paper to the officers and told them Buzor was our guest with whom the Center works, that we invited him and were responsible for him. However, the officers were adamant and asked Oleg to wait behind the doors, while they wrote up a statement of the arrest and fine for not having a registration. Oleg supposed that they wanted a bribe from Buzor. However, several minutes later after he had left the office, Buzor said that they fined him only 10,000 rubles.25

During Sennoi Market’s renovation, when any trade at the nearby territory was prohibited, police officers regularly raided the neighborhood looking for violators. They fined them for not having a registration and the right to engage in trade, for not having appropriate papers for the products. They confiscated the products and arrested the vendors. Several times the cases went to court, with fines imposed for violation of trade rules. Masha appeared in court at one of these trials. During this period, the vendors established mutually beneficial relations with the police officers controlling the market territory. According to Buzor, all problems with the police were settled in the following way: every morning, one of the local vendors collected a certain amount of money from all vendors and passed it on to the police department through an officer who was a relative of hers. This “duty” guaranteed the vendors against trouble from the district police or, at least, against unexpected raids. (Police would warn vendors about any upcoming raids.) However, police officers could not provide any guarantees regarding actions of the district police, other districts, or OMON [Russian Special Forces]. That is why the vendors, despite paying the “duty” to the police, were not safe against OMON’s raids.

In opinion of our informants, OMON’s arrival at the market is one of the biggest disasters for “Caucasians,” irrespective of whether they violate trade rules. During our research at Sennoi Market, we observed OMON’s raids several times, during which they checked registration. They did not check every vendor’s documents but performed the checks selectively, choosing men with obvious “Caucasian” appearance. (OMON officers themselves determined whose appearance was “Caucasian.”) Those who did not possess registration were taken to the police vehicle. According to Buzor, in contrast with police officers, establishing personal contacts with representatives of OMON is almost impossible. OMON’s raids

gades raiding the markets are always changing. Nevertheless, a certain pattern existed in their relationship. An OMON officer could take a migrant’s passport away and gain total control of the situation after that. The “Caucasian,” deprived of his passport, would either follow the OMON officer everywhere or stay near his car waiting for him. Later on, they put all the arrested people in the car and collected the “tribute.” According to Buzor, in 1997, an average ransom was about 30,000 rubles per person. Those who paid were released. “Well, if they don’t like you, you can kick your butt.” We witnessed situations when they used rubber clubs for that purpose. Those who did not pay on the spot were taken to the police station. These people risked humiliation and even beatings. If they had money on them, the police might take it all. Several times we witnessed situations when a “Tajik”—usually an older and respectable-looking man—approached the head of the OMON brigade and talked to him, after which several people were released. According to Buzor, these were the patrons of the arrested ones, usually relatives or “owners,” for whom they worked.

Relation with the researchers

The relationship between researchers and informants is crucial to anthropological research, influencing data collected. That is why we familiarize the reader with our reflections on how this relationship developed. How researchers should introduce themselves is still open to discussion. While establishing contact with our informants, we were not in a rush to admit that we were sociologists. For quite a while, we did not tell Buzor who we were and why we spent time with him. He did not express interest and we were not sure how he would react to this confession. We thought he saw us as aficionados of “Caucasian” cuisine. Later, he asked us what we did and where we worked. Casually, we said worked as sociologists and researched the “problems of newly arrived migrants from the Caucasus and Central Asia, their settlement and their hardships.” We believed that presenting ourselves as people interested in helping migrants to solve their problems would help us win friendship. After this conversation, nothing seemed to change in our relationship.

With time, our relationship with Buzor became quite close and trusting. We were almost like friends. We visited each other: he came to our place and taught us to cook pilaf, we frequently visited him and Masha. Once Masha invited us for some Moldovan holiday for which she prepared “national Moldovan” meals.26 They gave us small presents for New Year’s. Buzor frequently hid money in our presence, which was probably a sign of trust.

At the same time, we realize that his relationship with us was in some way beneficial to him. Buzor borrowed rather large sums of money from us, used to settle his problems with the police, and so forth. A local resident could be a “security guarantee.” For example, Buzor asked us to accompany him in longer trips.
“Russian” is less suspicious for representatives of the law. Becoming a resource for our informants allowed us to establish contacts with them fairly easily: they needed us just as we needed them.

Buzor was interested in us as a source of information about “appropriate” organization of life in St. Petersburg. In conditions of xenophobia (migrant-phobia, Caucasian-phobia) widespread in this society, people inevitably perceive actions of a migrant violating conventional norms as “not knowing how to behave.” Migrants are aware of this problem and try to learn to behave according to society’s conventions. For those working at the market, “clash” with another culture occurs only when “crossing a boundary” when visiting somebody or going to some public place, given that the space of their everyday life is limited by the sector “market/home.” Close interaction (friendship) with local inhabitants plays an important role in their mastering everyday restrictions: for example, Buzor asked our advice whether it was possible (that is, acceptable) to visit someone wearing particular clothes. He would hardly need this advice at home, where he is familiar with all the rules.

In the fall of 1998, the fieldwork stage of our research was supposed to end officially. Our trips to the field and interaction with Buzor became less frequent. Phone interaction was possible only in one direction—he didn’t have a phone in his apartment. We visited him at the market several more times, but gradually our communication stopped.

Case Two: Farkhad and his family

Studying Buzor’s case, we continued to look for “Azerbaijanis” selling at city markets. Drawing an “ethnic map” of St. Petersburg’s markets on our request, Buzor said that, to his knowledge, many “Azerbaijanis” worked at Kuznechnyi Market.

It turned out that the majority of the vendors there, as well as at other city markets, were migrants from Tajikistan. The “Azerbaijanis”’ exclusive niche was selling fresh herbs. To strike up an acquaintance, we tried our successful “gastronomic” strategy. We decided to ask the spice vendors which spice is better to use for cooking pilaf. We addressed them as “experts,” because “no one knows better than Caucasians how to cook pilaf.” The vendors started an animated discussion among themselves, and two women said they would cook a real pilaf and invite us to try it. We gladly accepted the offer and left our business cards. After several days, a man who introduced himself as Farkhad called Oleg and invited us to his daughter’s birthday party. That is how our acquaintance started. Below we quote an extract from Oleg’s field diary to provide an idea of how difficult field entry was and reveal our first impressions of the migrants’ private life.

I was invited with the following note attached: “if I’m not back before morning, tell the police to go to this address.” Knowing that I was going “to a birthday party,” I bought a bottle of vodka on the way. On arrival, I discovered the door to the apartment was open and so was that of the neighboring apartment. People were going back and forth, carrying dishes, utensils, chairs, and so on. I asked somebody how to find Farkhad, and they said he was. When a man came to meet me, I recognized him as one of the vendors from Kuznechnyi Market, with whom we had discussed the details of cooking pilaf. I hadn’t left him my business card, so he must have taken it from one of his colleagues. They were about to celebrate the birthday of his little daughter and—mentioning our conversation at the market—he decided to invite me to the party, for which they cooked “real Azerbaijani pilaf” and other “national” dishes. Farkhad led me into the room, where there were already several “Azerbaijanis” sitting at the big table. He introduced me as a distinguished guest, who came to savor national dishes of “Azerbaijani cuisine.”

The guests, among whom I was the youngest (excluding children), greeted me and introduced themselves. Due to my fear and the unusual-sounding Azerbaijani names, I didn’t manage to remember any of them.

They put me at the head of the table and looked after me in every possible way. They played “Azerbaijani national” music especially for me. (It turned out to be Turkish music, which Azerbaijanis consider “practically theirs.”) I felt I was the center of attention for both the guests and the hosts, and I was made to feel uncomfortable and anxious. When they started bringing dishes, they tried to arrange them so that I could have every kind of dish within my reach. Then everybody started eating and saying toasts in Azerbaijani. They translated the toasts into Russian especially for me and for another person, an “Armenian” named Martin (short version of Martiros). (Later Martin told me that if I hadn’t been there they would not have translated the toast just for him, because they had never done that before.) They constantly mentioned in the toasts how glad they were to have me at that party. Farkhad said in his toast it was a great honor for him and his spouse to have me there. I could not find any reasons for such an expression of respect and attention. The only explanation I could come up with was the demonstration of classic “Caucasian” hospitality and cordiality. The high point of the party was the moment when they solemnly carried in a huge platter with pilaf. They made me get up and accept the platter from the hosts. Farkhad started taking photographs of the pilaf being passed to me. In reality, it was for show because they didn’t actually give me the pilaf dish. After they had taken the pictures, they let me return to my place accompanied by rounds of applause and cheers while the hostess carried the pilaf to the table. Gradually, I started to get used to my role as a distinguished “foreign guest” and asked how the pilaf and other dishes were cooked. I said I would return, thanking the hostess for hospitality with all my heart. Maybe I should not have done this. The guests were very inspired by my toast. At the request of one of them, they put on Turkish music and made the children dance “national Azerbaijani” dances for “the guest.” The children reluctantly danced for several minutes, after which some of the guests also started dancing. While I hoped I could remain an outsider, so as not to appear too passive, I started clapping to the music. Hosts and guests didn’t think this was enough. They made me get up from the table and, having demonstrated several simple movements, they or-
to dance something resembling the lezginka, accompanied by exclamations from the audience and rhythmic clapping.4

When I decided to leave, it was not easy. Two hours passed from the moment of my first declaration that it was time to go home until the moment when, accompanied by Farkhad, I left the party. They simply didn’t want to let me leave. Finally I managed to “break the chains” of Caucasian hospitality and run off. They gave me some food and fresh herbs for “my wife and kids.” While saying goodbye, I agreed with Farkhad that soon we would visit him at the market and then visit him at home together with Ol’ga.

Biography of a migrant

Farkhad was born and raised in Armenia. He and his family were forced to escape to their distant relatives in Gandja (Azerbaijan) during the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. They received an apartment there in a new unfinished building without light or hot water. Farkhad got a job as an engineer at the telephone company. However, the salary was always late and he could not feed his family. In 1997, he decided to emigrate. At first, Farkhad went to a relative in Moscow. He tried to work at the Kiev Market, selling the fresh herbs he received from Gandja. However, he found the competition and pressure from the police too tough. At the same time, his former neighbor from Gandja, Salman, invited him to St. Petersburg, where the latter had been working at Krasnoe Selo Market for two years. Farkhad moved in May 1997, and by July, Salman’s and Farkhad’s wives and children came to join them. The husbands were not happy about this, but they were presented with a fait accompli. Both families rented places in Krasnoe Selo.

Work

Before Farkhad’s arrival, Salman was selling fresh herbs: he bought small amounts wholesale at Kuznechnyi Market, tied them in bundles, and sold them at retail prices at Krasnosel’skii Market. On Farkhad’s arrival, they tried to sell vegetables together, buying them wholesale at Vvedensky Market and selling them at retail prices at Krasnoe Selo. However, given the expenses, especially transportation, the price of the produce turned out to be too high. They had to raise prices, making their produce uncompetitive. The business proved a loss, and Farkhad was thinking about returning to Gandja, but Salman convinced him to stay. They changed their strategy once again. An old acquaintance of Salman, who worked at Kuznechnyi Market, helped them to find a job there. Farkhad told us vending spaces were available when they arrived, yet they still had to bribe the administrator by giving him “a small present” (expensive chocolates). By the time we first met, Farkhad and Salman were still working at Kuznechnyi Market.

The market space was divided into several parts according to type of produce. The boundaries between different parts coincided with “ethnic” boundaries: “Russians” sell vegetables grown in Leningrad, Pskov, and Novgorod regions, milk etables; Azerbaijanis mostly sell fresh herbs from Gandja. Therefore, ethnicity, as well as the organization of physical space, specialization, and origin of the product influences the formation of the market structure.39

Every vendor is “assigned” to a defined vending space and has to pay for it, regardless of whether he actually works there. Otherwise, the space might be given to a different vendor. Every morning, the administrator records the quantity of the produce and the vendor’s name and checks the registration. They record the place of registration, not the place of habitation. According to Farkhad, a vendor will not be admitted to work without this registration.

At this time, every vendor had the following daily expenses: 10,000 rubles for rent of a space, 25,000 for the market administrator (Farkhad was not sure where this money actually goes); 1,000 for entry to the market in the morning (later we learned this fee was the invention of the security firm; the director claimed he did not know anything about it); and 1,000 in the evening for cleaning services (paid directly to the cleaning lady). Several thousand more went for sanitary and radiation control depending on the produce weight, all totaling about 40,000 rubles a day. According to Farkhad, at the end of each month, the tax police collect 50,000 more rubles from each vendor.

Farkhad and Salman were vending at adjacent stalls, yet each had his own family business. Husband and wife shared the work, and a certain division of labor existed between the two. Curiously, the division of labor was not the same in Farkhad’s and Salman’s families. Farkhad’s wife usually worked at the stall, bundled the herbs, and sold them. Farkhad was busy with hard physical labor (produce delivery) and conducted “marketing”: throughout the workday, he talked to other vendors, found out prices at the market, negotiated with wholesale buyers, and so on. Since Farkhad was not tied to the vending space and had more free time, he took care of the children—for example, he prepared lunch for the children, took them to school, and picked them up. It turned out that gender roles, which we are used to associating with “traditional Eastern and Caucasian cultures,” are not so firmly fixed in reality. This was demonstrated in issues of family budget: both spouses were the keepers of the money. Farkhad usually had cash on him, but we often observed his wife giving him money to buy food and alcohol. It is possible that each of the spouses was in charge of the money for different budgetary needs.

The division of labor in Salman’s family was different. Not only was he doing hard physical labor, he was also selling. He and his wife were rarely at the market together. Generally, Salman was vending, but from time to time his wife replaced him. The reason for such division of labor was that his wife hardly spoke Russian. The wife also replaced Salman when there was a danger of police or OMON raids, because they never checked women for registration.

The herb vendors selling at St. Petersburg markets usually received produce from Gandja. The plane from Gandja to St. Petersburg flew twice a week. The day before the flight, the herb vendors called Azerbaijan and ordered the neces-
ferred through couriers, whose job was to fly from Giandja to St. Petersburg and back with the money. In fact, those who worked in St. Petersburg received produce before they paid for it, the need for more produce serving as a guarantee that they would pay back. Farkhad told us that the supplier would not send a new batch of produce before receiving the money for the previous one. If something happened to the product or it was necessary to sell it at lower prices due to the market, the herb vendor had to borrow money to settle accounts with the supplier and receive new produce.

Each vendor orders, receives, and delivers produce to the market independently, without cooperating with others. The procedure deserves special description: this dramatic event always went according to the same scenario. On agreement with Giandja airport authorities, the produce is sent with passenger planes as luggage of fictional passengers. It arrives in St. Petersburg but no one picks it up from the luggage claim. The receivers of the shipment cannot pick it up because they do not have luggage stamps. For quite a while, airport workers adhere to formal rules of the game and do not give the shipment out without luggage documents. Then an "unwritten scenario" is played out: the "Azerbaijani" pool cash—50,000 rubles for one luggage piece—and send someone with the money to the luggage-claim workers. After that, the workers just leave, leaving the door to the luggage claim open. The "Azerbaijani" quickly pick up their bags and boxes and, transforming once again from participants of "collective action" and "ethnic economics" to "atomized individuals," transport the shipment home or to the market independently of each other.

No one explained the "scenario" of the upcoming performance to us, and we almost ruined it by our presence and participation. Proud of his "Russian friends," Farkhad decided, as we thought, to brag about his friendship with us to his colleagues and to save money at the same time. He offered us the opportunity to enter the luggage-claim area and pick up his boxes. The airport workers, probably due to our "correct" Russian appearance, let us in without any questions and were not going to check our luggage stamps. However, we could not find the right boxes immediately and started asking Farkhad through the window what was written on his boxes. Noticing what was going on, one employee told us firmly: "So it's not for you? No, I'm sorry, please leave." We started asking about the possibilities of collecting luggage, but they reiterated some official rules: uncollected luggage will be sent to a storehouse, where we can collect it by presenting appropriate papers confirming our right to this luggage and by paying a fee in the amount of several ects [European currency unit] per kilo. We stopped at the right time and "left the game," while the vendors played out the usual "scenario" and received their shipment. Later one of the "Azerbaijanis" came up to us and said something like this: "thank you for trying to help, but it's no use. They want money—it's always the same thing."

The second source for obtaining produce is in small-scale wholesale batches from local producers of the Leningrad region. This occurs during the first hour and a half after the market's opening: from 6 to 8:30 A.M. Leningrad-region farmers bring the produce to the market and sell it in batches of 200-300. While vendors buy them to sell at retail prices, making up to 100 percent from each kilo in profits. During the morning small-scale wholesale event, the market resembles a stock exchange: general excitement, noise, shouting prices, and constant movement. Our informants also participated in the morning sales: they bought fresh herbs from local suppliers and sold them to some of their colleagues at a higher price either immediately or in a short while. According to Farkhad, the "game" of morning sales paid the administrative costs, allowing vendors to start earning a clear profit with the opening of the market.

Attending these small-scale wholesale transactions, we once witnessed an interesting situation. Three "Azerbaijanis" stood in the middle of the market and shouted at each other, gesticulating wildly and trying to snatch a bag with fresh herbs from each other's hands. Each time one tried to leave, the others ran after him and continued shouting. Quite atypical other "Azerbaijanis" gathered around watching the scene with great interest. We were amazed by the calmness of the observers because we thought something extraordinary was going on. It seemed that the quarrel could turn into a fight at any minute, and cold steel, at the very least, would be used. However, after fifteen minutes, the shouting stopped as abruptly as it had begun. The opponents peacefully drifted apart and it looked like everyone was happy with the outcome. Confused, we turned to Farkhad for explanations. He explained we had seen a common transaction between merchants: one was selling five kilograms of cilantro to the other and they could not agree on the price.21

We were surprised at the lack of established price policy at Kuznechnyi Market. From everyday conversation and the mass media we "knew" that "the Caucasian mafia operates at all of the city markets, raises prices, fixes unified high prices for the whole market, and, threatening local Russian vendors, forbids them to lower prices." For all that, we discovered an incredible disparity in prices. For instance, the difference in prices for herbs in different parts of the same market row reached 100 percent. Disparity may be related to different sources of produce (some get the herbs from Giandja, some from Sukhumi, while others buy from local suppliers in the morning), as opposed to the intervention of criminal organizations.

Relationships among market vendors

At our request, Farkhad told us about relations within the market community. No "chief man," an informal indisputable leader, was recognized. Such a man existed at Kiyev Market in Moscow, where Farkhad worked before moving to St. Petersburg. The leader's functions boiled down to "restoring justice," including "justice" in relations between different groups coexisting at the market. "He comes up to a person and says: 'Why do you do this?—and the others listen to him.' The absence of such a leader, in Farkhad's opinion, led to serious conflicts. He told us, in particular, about one case when the "Tajiks" beat up an "Azerbaijani"
seen this himself, but “everybody knows about it.”) The “Tajik” remained unpunished: “He didn’t show up at the market for three days, and then he came as if nothing had happened.” Farkhad also mentioned cases when “Tajiks” took produce and didn’t pay for it. He believed that “it’s worse for “Azerbaijanis” at Kuznechnyi Market because there were more “Tajiks” there. Farkhad explained that as a conflict arises, the “Tajiks” “all come running, ready to fight with anything they can get their hands on, they grab everything, sticks, picks, and so on.” There is no such solidarity among the “Azerbaijanis.” They fear for their lives because they are fewer than the “Tajiks.”

We received information about conflicts with “Tajiks” only from Farkhad’s and Salman’s accounts. The view of the “Tajiks” as a cohesive community, ready for joint actions, is only our informants’ view. While we did not study the “Tajiks” at Kuznechnyi Market, several times we observed incidents that made us perceive widespread convictions about solidarity within “ethnic communities” more critically. For instance, Farkhad had conflicts with his apartment roommates, also “Azerbaijanis” who sold herbs. An argument occurred when we were visiting Farkhad, who said the problem was that he and his wife kept part of the produce at home, trying to preserve it from the cold. One roommate opened the window in the corridor, which spoiled the herbs. Farkhad was positive that this was done deliberately. This incident seems to indicate economic competition among “Azerbaijanis” working in the same niche.

Registration and accommodations

Farkhad frequently reiterated that he was careful about timely renewal of his registration because “one cannot survive without a residence permit.” He met an “Azerbaijian” at Kuznechnyi Market who helped him obtain temporary registration for three months. According to Farkhad, one of the by-products of his man’s income is helping temporary economic migrants, in particular, market vendors, with residence permits. As an intermediary, he finds St. Petersburg residents who are ready to register “Caucasian” at their place for a fee. In the context of the present level of Caucasian phobia, it is not easy to find such a person in St. Petersburg. The registration cost Farkhad 300,000 rubles, but he was not sure exactly where this money went.

As opposed to Farkhad, Salman did not always renew his expired temporary registration, creating difficulties with permissions for sale at the market. For several days, he was able to live without registration, “negotiating” with the administrator of the market stall. However, later, he still had to obtain the registration. Salman registered himself at the address of one of the city dormitories, where, according to him, many of the market workers were registered. The wives of Farkhad and Salman lived without registration, because no one checked them, whether on the street or at the market.

During our acquaintance, Farkhad and his family rented a room in a four-room

Market. Salman’s family occupied the other room, and an older “Azerbaijanian” vendor, also selling green herbs, lived in the third room. The inhabitants of the fourth room changed several times, but they were also migrants from Azerbaijan and worked at the Kuznechnyi Market.

We frequently visited Farkhad at home and observed the everyday life of his family. The attitude to the living space, including its organization and design, reflected the temporary and unstable nature of the migrants’ condition. The furniture—table, chairs, armoire, and various sleeping places (a bed, a couch, a folding bed, mattresses)—were all bought dirt-cheap and second-hand. The key objects were sleeping places and a table, which served as the center around which everyone gathered. The rest was peripheral, less significant. The many sleeping places were not hidden but “pushed into the shadow” of the respectively central table. The entire life activity concentrated around it: for guests, eating, children’s homework, and so on. All objects functioned to their limits without esthetic considerations. Despite the apparent poverty, objects of “prime necessity,” for example, a TV, were purchased. The unstable and temporary accommodation prevented them from being tied to “major” items that make domestic life more comfortable. Farkhad described his life as follows: “We live like Gypsies!”

Farkhad tried to cover up for his present lack of domestic comfort by recalling his interior design in Azerbaijan. He took pleasure in telling us how he “decorated his ceilings and lampshades with gold” (he probably meant gold-colored paint) in his apartment in Gondja. This explanation seemed to reflect migrants’ notions about their world being “split”: “real” life is left in Gondja and will be resumed upon their return. What we see here is only a short episode, the “unreal” life. Migrants tried to justify their unsettled life, perhaps revealing that the organization of domestic life is not important for its own sake, but as a marker of social status. The old couch and sunken folding bed are one status, and the lampshade painted “gold” is a totally different one.

Relationship with the researchers

Although our relationship with Farkhad and his family was a close one, it required a great effort to establish it. It took us a while to choose an appropriate moment to talk about topics that interested us. At work, he did not have enough time and was constantly distracted. The market environment was not favorable to long and intimate conversations. We tried to avoid these problems by visiting him at home. Other difficulties kept arising: Farkhad diligently lived up to the image of “Caucasian hospitality.” Every visit ended up with his wife going to the kitchen to cook chicken thighs with garlic sauce (the main dish they always treated us to), while Farkhad sent the children to the shop for vodka and beer. To our question whether the Koran forbids drinking alcohol, Farkhad replied with a smile that, of course, it does, but he doesn’t care about this, he likes vodka and beer and his favorite kebab is pork.
to maintain the usual table talk about related topics (delicious food, quality of the vodka, etc.). Farkhad, his wife, and her brother Idris, who arrived later, preferred to tell us about the "great Azerbijani culture." The most popular characters in our table discussions were Nizami Gishzhi, the world-renowned Azerbijani poet from Gishizhi and [President] Gidjar Aliy. Farkhad and Idris recounted the "wonders" he performed with admiration and awe, calling him a shaitan [capricious or evil spirit]. We kept trying to change the subjects to issues of interest, but we usually failed. Our hosts were more numerous, we were the guests, and the feast environment was more favorable to philosophizing about such general topics as the cultural proximity of Gishizhi and St. Petersburg, rather than informal practices of economic relations, interaction with the police, and so forth.

Undoubtedly, our visits, in some ways, ruptured Farkhad's and his family's everyday life. However, we tried to visit them often enough and at different times to "route" our visits to some extent. Becoming a part of our informants' everyday life, they were forced to solve their daily problems while we were there.

Communication between researchers and informants in the participant-observation mode is a process, during which the relationship changes. A certain "career of the researcher," through several role changes, can be discerned. Initially, we were "strangers" perceived with suspicion. Later, we became "honored guests"—people respected but not admitted into the private sphere, that is, to the "real" life as opposed to the show of life. (A striking example was Oleg's first visit to Farkhad.)

The next stage was the role that could undoubtedly be defined as "social workers." Informants engaged us in solving their social problems, with us playing the role of "guides" into an "alien world." For example, Farkhad asked us to go to an outpatient clinic with him. He felt insecure, despite his command of Russian. At the clinic's reception desk, Oleg explained the situation, got Farkhad's personal file started, and obtained an appointment card to see the doctor while Farkhad was simply standing by. The next day, OI'ga accompanied Farkhad during his visit to the doctor. He entered the doctor's office by himself, but called her in after ten minutes. The situation was quite absurd: with Farkhad there, the doctor addressed himself only to OI'ga and asked her to "pass on" some recommendations to "the patient." OI'ga immediately "translated" everything for Farkhad, repeating everything the doctor said word by word. Farkhad also addressed OI'ga when asking the questions. The same "translation" situation took place again at the clinic's accounting office, where Farkhad paid for the visit. However, this time the situation became confrontational. Having paid, Farkhad didn't want to take his change. The accountant requested, in an irritated tone, that OI'ga explain to him that "we have different rules here, and no one needs his money," while Farkhad stood nearby and she could have told him this directly. Our role was not only translator but also cultural interpreter. We were necessary for both sides, because the communicators believed they would not be able to understand each other "correctly" without our help. The communicators related potential failure to understand each other not so much to language,

We decided that the real achievement in our "researchers' career" was the moment when our informants began perceiving us as "equals." For example, OI'ga received the women's permission to help them with cooking, whereas previously we were only allowed to take honored seats without being able to approach the kitchen, observe the "seamy" side of life, and participate. At the same time, Farkhad suggested we become his business partners. He was ready to lend us the initial capital, let us use his connections with suppliers in Gishizhi, help us find a stall at the market, and so on. The opportunities that Farkhad volunteered are described in Western studies of ethnic economics as typical services offered by an ethnic diaspora to newly arrived migrants (initial capital, connections, and information). The fact that, while not "co-ethnics," we received an opportunity to enter an economic niche on an equal basis with the rest of the members, made us question the role of ethnicity as the defining factor for community formation in the given economic niche.

Selling green herbs did not bring in enough profits for Farkhad. His financial situation was poor, while the economic situation in Azerbaijan, where they still held an engineer position for him at the telephone station, began improving. In the summer of 1998, Farkhad and his family returned to Gishizhi.

Part 2

Theoretical interpretation of the empirical data

We now move from ethnographic description to analysis of the collected material. We discuss our interpretation of field observations and also how empirical material changed our views on the use and heuristics of certain theoretical concepts, in particular those of ethnic migration and ethnic enterprise.

Initially, interpreting field data sociologically, we concluded that ethnicity orientation among recent economic migrants was situational and was not a defining factor for the choice of life strategies. Our view was that in real life and in business the migrants help and trust each other not because they are "co-ethnics" but because they are "friends," "colleagues," "neighbors," and so forth. For all this, for various reasons, the social circle of the migrants also largely consists of migrants. Therefore "friends," "colleagues," and "neighbors" also turn out to be migrants, belonging to various ethnic groups. It means that shared ethnicity, "objectively" present from the standpoint of an outside observer, in reality, often is not a meaningful social characteristic for the migrants' subjective orientation (see Brednikova and Pachenkov 2000).

The data we collected was not conducive to a traditional "ethnic" view of the nature of migration and migrant economic activity. Nonetheless, the influence of ethnicity on the "Caucasian" migrants' organization of life is of great importance. The most vivid example confirming the role of "ethnicity" for migrants was their relationships with the law. Choosing a "victim" among street people and
sian” appearance, which is an unmistakable marker of ethnicity in their eyes.

It is not enough to say simply that ethnicity plays or does not play an important role in the “Caucasian” migrants’ life. The migrants’ life, as opposed to the theoretical concept of ethnicity, should be the focus of the research. It is not necessary to define where ethnicity “starts” and “ends.” More crucial is to provide a “thick description” of “Caucasian” migrants’ life. Undoubtedly, such description could include concepts about the place and role of ethnicity, as long as ethnicity is relevant to the studied people.

Analyzing our field data, we aspired to theory grounded in our field material, avoiding obvious stretches and violations of the empirical data. Our empirical material gave us enough reasons for a critical attitude to existing theories of ethnicity, ethnic migration, and ethnic enterprise. Nevertheless, for a long time we were unable to generalize our conclusions or to insert them organically into the existing scientific discussion. Eventually, we concluded that the most heuristic, adequate way would be to describe the lives of the migrants we studied in terms of “imagined communities” (Anderson) on the one hand, and in terms of “primary groups” (Cooley, Shils) on the other.

**Benedict Anderson’s concept of “imagined communities”**

In his book *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson divided social communities into two: “communities of personal interaction” and “imagined communities” (Anderson 1998, p. 5). He believes that all communities beyond primordial villages, where all residents have face-to-face contact and/or are related to each other, are “imagined.” Anderson posits several types of imagined communities, with the nation as only one of them.

Defining nation, Anderson departs from Seton-Watson’s definition (Seton-Watson 1997, quoted in Anderson 1998, p. 5): “a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation or behave as if they formed one.” Anderson notes that “consider themselves” can be replaced with “imagine themselves.” Nation is an imagined community as long as members of these nations will never know the majority of their members, meet them, or even hear about them, yet each member has an image of a united society.

Anderson’s concept is close to the positions of such authors as Max Weber (Weber 1999), Fredrik Barth (Barth 1969), Ernest Gellner (Gellner 1991), John Armstrong (Armstrong 1982), and Eric Hobsbawm (Hobsbawm 1983, 1990).

**Edward Shils’s interpretation of the concept of “primary groups”**

American sociologist Edward Shils studied German army soldiers, Soviet deserters, prisoners of war, and American factory workers. During his research, he concluded that in both the army and factories small groups form, bound by close

similar to the *bund.* According to Shils’s observations, the members of small army units or factory brigades orient themselves above all to the values of the small group, far removed from official ideology. For example, it was important for soldiers to be loyal and devoted to their immediate commander and friends. They oriented themselves to certain ideals, cultivated within the group, and took upon themselves certain responsibilities toward their groups (Shils 1957, p. 128). Translating these results into the Weberian terminology of “value orientation,” Shils notes that values of small (primary) groups and those of large communities are strikingly different and, therefore, the values of primary groups cannot be borrowed by large communities, since often they do not correspond and even contradict each other (p. 141). The members of small groups with high dedication to the ideals of this small group can remain completely indifferent and apathetic to the values of larger communities (p. 143). One of Shils’s key ideas is that society is not made up of enthusiasts, fond of abstract ideas, but of ordinary people with everyday interactions in real-life contexts: at work, in school, within the family circle, and so forth. If we want to understand how a society becomes possible, how people live and orient themselves in their everyday life, it is necessary to pay more attention to members of primary groups, their concerns, values, and orientations, as opposed to the “high” ideals of large communities (p. 130).

**Possibilities to apply and combine Shils’s and Anderson’s approaches**

According to Shils, several events can make an individual turn to the values of a “large community.” He mentions elections, times difficult for a nation, and coronation among them (Shils 1957, pp. 130–31). At least two of these three events often appear in the works of theoreticians of nationalism. “Times difficult for a nation” refer us to Anderson’s concept of “imagined communities,” “coronation”—to the theory of nation as “introduced tradition.” According to Hobsbawm, coronation enables the ritual building and reproduction of an imagined (introduced) tradition for a nation-state. Therefore, when discussing a “large community,” Shils means a nation-state or a nation. We believe that this quote probably justifies combining Anderson’s and Shils’s approaches. Coming from different perspectives, both authors study the behavior of individuals as members of certain groups and value orientations influencing this behavior. Subsequently, combining the authors’ terminology (not a contradiction), it is possible to state Shils’s position as follows: the life of an ordinary person consists of routine everyday actions, oriented toward the values of small primary groups, and from time to time, this life is interrupted by certain events, for the duration of which people demonstrate their loyalty to an imagined community/nation.

**Adaptation of theoretical approaches for research purposes**

Our thesis follows: migrants’ life (including economic activity) can be described
small primary groups, on the one hand, and to those of large imagined communities—ethnic groups or nations—on the other.

It is important to us that imagined communities exist as long as they are imagined: people believe in their existence, believe that they as well as other people belong to a certain “us-group,” despite the absence of immediate (face-to-face) contact among the majority of community members. This characteristic feature can be extended to nations as well as ethnic groups (see Smith 1986, chap. 2; Weber 1999, p. 19). Specifics of the imagined community as a nation are not that important in this case.37

As far as primary groups are concerned, important for us is an individual orientation to the values of small groups of interpersonal interaction rather than “economic attachment.” We leave aside the relationship of primary groups to Gemeinschaft, emphasized by Cooley. We view migrants’ orientation toward the values, norms, and rules of small groups, in which they truly interact, as basically functional, as opposed to orientation toward “high” societal values of imagined communities/nations.

Undoubtedly, migrants’ membership in both types of groups is important not for its own sake, but because they are guided by subjectively felt belonging to these groups. The social action category is fundamental to our approach (see Brednikova and Pachenkov 2000). That is why we emphasize not so much the moment of an individual’s self-identification with a small group, its values and norms, as the role of a specific occupation and practical interests, around which a small group is formed. We believe that, rather than talking about identity, it is necessary to discuss Volkov’s “technical loyalty to a mode of action,” typical for a primary group, united by specific behavior, in our research, by the work at the market.8

Ethnic economic migrants: Between “imagined communities” and “primary groups”

Thus we claim that migrants simultaneously represent/behave as members of imagined communities (nations/ethnic groups) and as members of “primary groups” of interpersonal communication, patterning their actions in accordance with these notions.

Migrants as members of “primary groups”

In the relevant cases, we can identify at least two “primary groups” of interpersonal interaction: “original” and “accompanying” primary groups (1) and primary groups “acquired” at the place of emigration (2).

Primary groups of the first type are friends, relatives, neighbors in the home country, fellow villagers, and so on. These groups, which allowed the migration to happen, help the migrant to survive the emigration in the beginning until new strategies is obvious in the cases we researched. Both for Buzor and Farkhad, migration became possible when a primary group (friends, neighbors, fellow countrymen) offered a solution pattern, migration, for a difficult economic situation. To organize the trip, the help of relatives and friends was necessary. They helped borrow money and obtain financial support, “gave addresses” where to stay in the beginning, and provided necessary information for finding a job.

Our knowledge about migrants’ relationships in primary groups of the first type is based entirely on their words; this type of social interaction was not a subject of our observation. Migrants’ adjustment at a new place, mechanisms of creating and using primary groups of the second type by migrants was of much greater interest to us.

Primary groups of the second type are new groups of interpersonal interaction emerge in emigration. These are, in the first place, the communities of markets where the migrants work; as well as new neighbors and friends not necessarily related through work.8 The specificity of these groups lies in the fact that they (as opposed to the groups of the first type) are not “primordial”: their members interact as long as they have common practical interests.

Social capital acquired by the migrants at their new place is considered “personal property” of the owner, earned by oneself. The same is expected from every newcomer. “The rules of the game” in conditions of migration are established as follows: to become a full member of the new primary group—the community of market vendors—newly arrived migrants must become independent as soon as possible, finding their own accommodations, organizing their own business, finding partners, creating social networks. The help of friends, “friends of friends,” and distant relatives is available to migrants only in the beginning.

The next example illustrates the claim that primordial primary groups of the first type gradually lose their meaning. Several times, Buzor refused to “feed his nephews all the time,” who came to him in hope of help settling in a new place. He followed the notion of mutual responsibilities between “old migrants” and “newcomers” accepted in the migrants’ community and offered them initial help—money, information, and contacts. The relationship “uncle—nephew” turned out to be less significant. In turn, he expected them to become independent, considering that he was helping them only for a short period of time. He didn’t hire them to work for him, because it would put his business at a loss.

Gradually, migrants establish new contacts and social relations, a rule emerging around work, in the process of immediate face-to-face interaction. The role of these primary groups that migrants join in emigration turns out to be more important than previous social networks. On arrival in St. Petersburg, Buzor used his previous social capital to look for a job—he used the networks that existed in his home country. However, later he received job offers directly from his clients. While he was working as a cook (he had several offers to work as a cook in a café), he found all his future partners among the market vendors, the majority of whom
Migrants as members of “imagined communities”

Interpersonal interaction in everyday life is an important characteristic of “primary groups.” This distinctive feature permits distinguishing them from “imagined communities,” which are groups not involving personal contact. While there is no immediate interaction in imagined communities, what is important in this case is an idea, a faith that people who never had any personal interaction together nonetheless constitute an entity with common values, norms, and rules. Crucial is solidarity among the members. It is assumed that migrants as members of ethnic imagined communities have to orient their actions toward values and norms of these communities. It is vital that not only migrants but also representatives of the local majority around them do not question the existence of such communities as nations or ethnic groups and the possibility of “objectively” belonging to any of them. Therefore, discussing the role of ethnic imagined communities in migrants’ life and behavior, two aspects are relevant. The first we will call “imposing of ethnicity,” and the second aspect is related to the phenomenon of internalizing and picturing the world in terms of imagined national/ethnic communities by ethnic migrants themselves.

Imposing ethnicity

By imposing ethnicity in contemporary post-Soviet society, we mean the popularity of the nationalist discourse, which eventually breeds xenophobia and discrimination based on ascribing people to a certain ethnic, national, or race group. To understand this phenomenon, we have to introduce a dimension of power, because migrants belonging to an ethnic minority and representatives of the ethnic majority of the receiving society possess different resources of power.

We believe it is possible to talk about imposing of ethnicity, because for migrants, who in the eyes of the locals undoubtedly belong to an ethnic minority, ethnicity is often not significant. Economic migrants emigrate in order to earn enough to feed their families. However, in everyday life they confront the way other people define them and single them out based on their belonging to the imagined community of “Azerbaijanis,” “Chechens,” and so on. “Singling out” implies not only the existence of preconceptions and ethnic stereotypes, but also certain behavior, including discrimination. Migrants are regularly reminded that they belong to a certain imagined community. Others expect them to behave in a certain way, ascribe certain personality traits to them, or as they like to say, “mentality.” Yet it is necessary to remember that often ethnicity is not meaningful for migrants themselves until the majority ascribes it to them.

We singled out at least three agents that impose ethnicity on migrants: (1) official authorities, (2) representatives of the local majority, (3) researchers studying problems related to ethnicity and nationalism.

Official authorities

Authorities’ role in imposing ethnicity is especially significant because its representatives retain exclusive rights to legitimately define a situation, or, using Pierre Bourdieu’s term, have “legitimate nomination.” According to Bourdieu, legitimate nomination not only gives names to social phenomena, but also creates them, brings them into being (Bourdieu 1993, p. 72). We observe social reality as it is “named” (created) by those who have the power of official nomination. This is how we come to see reality so that those who coexist, interact, find common interests, and have conflicts are not “people,” “entrepreneurs,” “wholesale and retail merchants,” “vendors and buyers,” “neighbors,” or “those who trust each other,” but “ethnic groups” and “nations” or their representatives. Ethnicity or nationality is perceived as the key characteristic, most suitable for interpretation of social reality, surrounding people and their actions or events. An ethnonational view consequently dominates and defines the behavior of those who consider this definition of reality legitimate, that is, the majority of society’s members.

The definitions produced by authorities are objectively recorded as laws and social institutes of the state, forming the institutional and juridical context in which migrants live and interact. Yet it is known that formal institutional and juridical requirements do not always define the organization of everyday life: real and immediate interaction has its own informal rules. Typically for migrants, direct relations with local authority representatives are vital. That is why we are primarily interested in how imposing of ethnicity occurs at this level.

Practical realization of existing registration rules illustrates the existence of a “double standard”: “Caucasian” migrants are subject to sanctions (checks, fines, bribes) in situations where representatives of other ethnic groups remain unpunished. The basis for such subjective implementation of controlling and punishing functions is nothing but migrants’ ethnicity. The discrepancy between real life and official laws is evident. Many with “Russian” appearance come to St. Petersburg and stay for long periods without registering, because no one checks them. Therefore, they can violate the passport laws without being punished, while migrants with “Caucasian” appearance (according to policemen) usually are not able to go from home to the closest metro station without being stopped and checked. It is obvious that “Caucasian” appearance is the key distinction, which allows some violators of registration laws to avoid punishment, but not others. Appearance, that is, racial characteristics, proves more important in real life than the “objective” fact that registration laws exist or the “objective” fact of registration possession. Thus, representatives of the law regularly remind “Caucasians” about their belonging to the “wrong” ethnic group—“Caucasians.” That is how imposing of ethnicity occurs.

Other examples are relevant. According to “Caucasian” migrants, if a local police officer knows that a “Caucasian” is registered and lives on his territory, he
regards him as a potential threat to order and safety in his district. The local police officer can visit "exposed" migrants at home without any explicit reason and intrude into their private lives. This is not only offensive to "Caucasian" migrants but also creates problems in relationships with landlords unhappy with police visits. This in turn has a negative effect on their attitude to migrants.  

Selective implementation and violation of the law, obvious for both subjects and objects of this violence, allows us to discuss the imposing of ethnicity on "Caucasian" migrants by representatives of the law, and in particular, controlling and punitive bodies.

Representatives of the local majority

At the everyday level, imposing ethnicity occurs only if an "ours"/"alien" [us/them] distinction is drawn along ethnic or national lines. To ordinary people, it seems obvious that ethnic groups, nations, national cultures, as well as distinctive psychological traits of certain ethnic groups "objectively" exist. They also perceive rigid and impenetrable boundaries between these cultures, ethnoses, and nations. Behavior based on such notions varies from a desire to eat kebabs or pilaf cooked only by "Caucasians" to expressions of hostility and xenophobia, accusing "Caucasians" of "being inhumanly violent." These types of behavior appear very different but are based on the same premise: an ethnomental interpretation of reality. Ascribing to a person a particular ethnic group is a condition of everyday communication, indispensable in the same way as a notion of gender can be. The way of ascribing certain behaviors, personality traits, abilities, and so on to "Caucasian" migrants is based on "objective" criteria (distinctive appearance, surname, accent, etc.). Let us quote some interviews with St. Petersburg residents regarding their attitude to "Caucasians."

Respondent: Well, you can tell Caucasians right away by their faces.
Author: Really? How... what faces... what's wrong with their faces?
R.: Like you don't know! [laughs] Well, what do you want from me, to describe what they look like?
A.: Sure, why not.
R.: Well, once you see a Georgian, that's enough, you'll know right away. They all look alike, it's impossible to tell them apart. (Male, fifteen years old)
R.: I could tell right away. I don't know why. Then you can tell by names: although the name of one of them was Volodia, and the second one, I can't recall it, but it was a pure Armenian name. But the fact that Volodia spoke with such a terrible accent [giggles]. . . . (Female, forty-eight years old)

Imposing of ethnicity creates certain expectations, according to which ordinary people pattern their behavior while interacting with someone they consider "Caucasian":

Well, I don't know about these Caucasians. . . . I'm afraid of them! Not be-

act kind of emotionally. I don't know what they are going to do in an hour or later. I'm scared. If I see them in the evening, I try to cross to the other side of the street. (Female, thirty-six years old)

Let us quote several examples of how the representatives of the receiving society impose ethnicity on "Caucasian" migrants in everyday life.

We worked at Kuznechny Market as vendors for our informants. We were the only "Russians" in the row of "Azerbaijanis" selling fresh herbs. Our sales were quite successful; the buyers often stopped by our produce, although it was not any different from the produce of other vendors. We saw one of the buyers, choosing herbs in our row, point toward Ol'ga: "Let's buy from this Russian girl." This statement can be interpreted as distrust of the "Azerbaijani" vendors and solidarity with "one's own people"—the "Russians." Therefore, defining the situation in terms of ethnicity influenced the buyers' actions.

Our informants complained about biased treatment by others: "As soon as we get together to chat, all the old women around start screaming that the whole of Azerbaijan has come here!" (from conversation with the grocery stalls' owners at the Northern Market). These preconceived negative notions make them avoid unnecessary contacts, and become "inconspicuous" to others: "We carry bags with foodstuffs at night to hide from the neighbors" (from the conversation with the grocery stalls' owners at the Northern Market). Our informants believe their behavior is interpreted incorrectly and against them. Research shows that their fears are not unfounded. Relevant is an interview with a phone receptionist for a cargo shipment company:

We advertised, found clients, and are now waiting for orders. As soon as I hear an accent.
Over the phone? You know by accent?
Yes. I know immediately who is speaking, especially if there's an Azerbaijani, I don't take their orders. (Female, forty-eight years old)

It is obvious from this quote that the very fact of "belonging" (ascribed based on an accent) to "Caucasians" and "Azerbaijanis" in particular, can be a sufficient reason for a "Russian" ordinary person to refuse to communicate, for example, to decline business relations or to refuse to rent an apartment.

Researchers

Another example of "imposing" ethnicity comes from the work of researchers studying ethnic and international relations. Researchers of ethnic and national problems, like official authorities, have a legitimate right to define and "diagnose" social reality. In contemporary society, researchers have the status of experts, enabling them to give recommendations to authorities regarding the "nature of ethnic and national phenomena."

As a rule, researchers studying ethnicity "produce" ethnic communities with
tatives of other ethnic groups, or how many “Tajiks,” “Azerbaijanis,” or “Talysh” work at a certain market, we reproduced the discourse of imagined ethnic communities with our questions. Even if we avoided using ethnic categories, we would not be able to change the situation, which was predetermined by the very fact of our entry into the field. While in the field, sooner or later, we introduced ourselves as “researchers studying Azerbaijan” or “migrants from Tajikistan” (although we could have introduced ourselves as “researchers studying farmers’ markets”).

Migrants, for their part, often try to live up to researchers’ expectations. Our informants sincerely wanted to help us and considered it necessary to explain what a “real Azerbaijani” was. In doing so, they reproduced stereotypes far removed from the real life of the migrants, their social networks, and relations with others. Carefully choosing our words during an interview with our informant Farkhad, we deliberately did not include any ethnic categories in our question. However, answering our question, Farkhad used them anyway:

Do you have a lot of friends at the market?

A good person is always good [laughs], but if he is bad, then he is not my friend. Lots of different ones: Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Russians, Tajiks.

This is, in our opinion, a very typical example, demonstrating the researcher’s influence on the results. With all the interviewer’s precautions to avoid using ethnic categories while choosing words for the question, the informant grasps that the conversation takes place in the framework of ethnic discourse. The fact that no ethnic categories were in a question is not significant for an informant, who knows the topic of the conversation and the researchers’ interests (for example, “ethnic relations”). It is necessary to be aware that if informants mention ethnic categories, it means not only that they think with these categories and that they are meaningful, but also that informants successfully, sensitively communicate and are able to define what the researchers really want to know.

The discourse of imagined communities is thus reproduced and imposed on “Caucasian” migrants, influencing their lives. However, one shouldn’t think that the role of migrants is completely passive. Migrants actively employ the categories of ethnic/national imagined communities. Relevant are migrants’ reproduction of the discourse of imagined communities/nations/ethnic groups, as well as particular social actions (of nondiscursive nature) enabling migrants to orient themselves to personal concepts of the importance of imagined communities.

Migrants as members of imagined communities: self-presentation and real behavior

Today’s migrants adopted the discourse of quasi-national communities back in Soviet times. Soviet internationalism, based on nationalist discourse, was expressed mostly in adorning the USSR map with the national costumes of Union Republics

the Georgian lezginka or Ukrainian gopak, in concerts devoted to different national (all-Union) holidays. However, Soviet discourse is still used by our informants today. Farkhad emphasized his attachment to an imagined quasi-national community, the “Soviet people.” He frequently said that he was “just like us, a Soviet citizen.” He told us (we can only form an opinion about this based on his words) that he still celebrated Soviet holidays. However, he didn’t know exact dates for many of “his own” national and religious holidays and he indicated that he did not follow religious proscriptions against pork and alcohol.”

He perceived the refusal of former members of the same imagined community to accept him as “one of them” as “injustice and betrayal.” He judged political and social transformations in the post-Soviet space as “collapse” and “breakdown,” and “the end of the old happy life.” He put all the blame for this collapse on Gorbachev: “Gorbachev let everything collapse. He is a criminal.”

Farkhad appealed to pan-Soviet cultural codes, thus creating a “common” space for successful communication with us. For example, while telling us about an Azerbaijani singer during a meal, he compared her to [Russian popular singer Alla] Pugacheva so that we could understand better. (His “reference” was known and understood by all.)

The discourse of the USSR—a quasi-national community—is combined (in the minds of “Caucasian” migrants) with the post-Soviet discourse of imagined communities/national/ethnic groups. Farkhad tended to present himself as an “Azerbaijani” in conversations with us. He talked about what a “real Azerbaijani” was, about “great and ancient” Azerbaijani culture, with which he clearly identified.

Our informants from the Northern Market usually interpreted their actions in terms of ethnic imagined communities. They demonstrated the “reality” of the group, emphasizing strong internal group solidarity of “all the Azerbaijanis”: “an Azerbaijani will always help another Azerbaijani, with money and all.”

We expected that besides presenting themselves as members of certain ethnic or quasi-national groups, migrants should orient their actions to imagined membership in ethnic communities and to the rules and requirements of these communities. First, we should define the communities. While the vast majority tends to consider “Caucasians” to be one group, defining them as “blacks” [черные] in a racist way, this group is not relevant for migrants themselves. A “Tajik” would never identify himself with an “Azerbaijani” and vice versa.

Our informants tried to avoid ascription into the most discriminated group, most negatively viewed by the majority. During the first war in Chechnya and antiterrorism campaign, when a real “hunt” for Chechens was taking place, “Azerbaijani” insisted that they be distinguished from the “Chechens.”

Our observations show that imagined communities, both nations and (quasi-) ethnic communities (e.g., “Caucasians” constructed by the Russian majority) exist in the migrants’ experience as referents for appeal, to obtain certain benefits.
we observed at Sennoi Market illustrates: an “Azerbaijani” customer requested a discount from “Tajik” vendors. However, the “Tajiks” refused, sending her to an “Azerbaijani” colleague who also did not give her a discount.

In the context of discrimination against “Caucasians” by the authorities and police, we expected to discover examples of ethnic solidarity. We imagined such solidarity to be a natural defense strategy for the discriminated group. However, in contemporary Russian conditions, the discrimination is not a sufficient basis for the formation of a group. Our informants united and helped each other in critical situations, but they did so most likely based on belonging to local primary groups. Small local groups are the locus of mutual aid; vendors help each other. Common occupation and practical interests turn out to be more important than ethnicity.4

The cultural factor of an ethnic/national imagined community turns out to be more important in migrants’ everyday life. Their ethnicity is emphasized and thus becomes the basis for certain actions as long as they find themselves in an unusual cultural context, where routine cultural practices become problematic and become the subject of conscious choice for the migrants.

For example, “Azerbaijanis” listen to certain music, usually defined as “national.” They don’t pay attention to this practice at “home”; this is a part of their everyday life. The situation changes in emigration, when a migrant must make an effort beyond the usual to look for places to buy tapes with national music, borrow tapes from “Azerbaijanis” friends, and so on. This reinforces their feeling of belonging to the imagined community of a certain “national culture.”

Despite his alleged ignorance of national and religious holidays, Farkhad still celebrates some of them. With his neighbors and other “Azerbaijanis,” he celebrates not only the “international” New Year but also the “national” Kurram Bairan, when the “Azerbaijanis” kindle a fire, cook kebabs, and dance to national music in the inner court of the house on Ligovskii Prospect.

Buzor mentioned that if a migrant cannot go home to attend the funerals of a close relative in the home country, a wake takes place at Sennoi Market, where relatives organize a “dinner” for everyone. In theory, any “stranger” can come to such a funeral banquet, but in reality only “Tajiks” attend. It is a “matter of honor” for them to pray for their dead compatriots, although most likely they never knew them personally. The migrants have to arrange everything themselves, finding a large space, since it is impossible to invite several dozen people to the small rooms of communal apartments. They must locate special food and spics to cook ritual dishes, negotiate with market administrators, and so on.

The difficulties that migrants, who find themselves in an alien cultural context, have to overcome are obvious in all of the above examples. The reproduction of usual cultural practices is problematic, reinforcing ethnic/national identity. Why does violation of the usual course of life have such an effect? The framework of “ethnic/national imagined communities” implies a correlation between cultural tradition and a particular nation or ethnic group. The expression “national culture” is practically idiomatic in our language, whereas “national identity” is not.

other. The difficulty of following usual cultural practices, associated with “national tradition” results in the reinforcement of migrants’ ethnic identity.

Between imagined community and primary groups: life in “tension”

We believe that the life of ethnic economic migrants should be described not only from two different perspectives but also as “life in tension” due to their belonging to imagined ethnic communities, on the one hand, and to primary groups, on the other. “Tension” here means that in their everyday life, migrants have to orient themselves to the rules and requirements of these communities. While goals, values and rules may be accepted, say, in an ethnic imagined community, they can contradict values and rules accepted in primary groups to which a migrant belongs and vice versa.

Boundaries of ethnic solidarity

As discussed, migrants’ “membership” in imagined communities and in primary groups is important for us as long as individuals subjectively orient actions to the requirements demanded by the given communities. Situations arise when a migrant violates expectations of the surrounding people within a community. Such a violation can be provoked by the desire to correspond to the requirements of one of these communities to the detriment of the requirements of the other. That is why we say that tension, which exists between requirements demanded by each community of members, constitutes a social phenomenon of “the life of an ethnic migrant.” Some examples are appropriate.

Considerable tensions existed between Buzor and his colleagues at work—cooks preparing pilaf on the second cauldron. The migrants, belonging to the same ethnic group, shared the same economic niche and, supposedly, had a certain social relationship, conventionally called “ethnic solidarity.” Yet not only did they not show solidarity, they were rivals, keeping a certain social distance and interacting only when it brought mutual economic profits. Buzor and his colleagues united only to save on the rent of their vending stalls and pilaf-cooking place. Therefore, their solidarity was of an economic nature. Their relations were oriented more to the practical requirements demanded of them as members of a particular primary group. Primarily, they are “vendors, employed at a particular market, cooking and selling food.” Here we can probably discern “technical dedication to a mode of action,” characteristic of primary groups united around specific practices. Yet their actions did not correspond to behavior expected from members of an ethnic imagined community toward each other.

Positive expectations from coethnics are often destroyed in practice. Thus, Buzor sent money to his family with his compatriot, a villager from a neighboring town. The courier never delivered the money, and Buzor, on returning home, found him
ties, Buzor borrowed the money not from his coethnics (although there were such cases too), but from us—local “Russians”—and his Moldovan roommate, also working at Sennoi Market. Undoubtedly, ethnic categories look rather irrelevant here, because the basis for financial relations and duties was not ethnicity but membership in the same primary group of interpersonal interaction. The orientation to the values of primary group, based on interpersonal connections, supposedly requires strict observance of its requirements and is under strict control. The sphere of influence of an imaginary ethnic community ends where the sphere of interests of the primary group begins.

Let us look at Farkhad’s case. Farkhad, an “Azerbaijani,” lived in Armenia and escaped with his family to Azerbaijan due to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. By pure chance, his apartment neighbor in St. Petersburg turned out to be an economic migrant from Armenia—Martin “the Armenian.” Farkhad and Martin often visited each other and organized joint family celebrations. All the “Azerbaijanis” (four families), who lived in a communal apartment, used the phone of Martin, “the Armenian.” Thanks to their good relationship, the reverse phone communication was also viable: it was possible to call “the Armenian” and he would summon the “Azerbaijanis” from the apartment near by the phone.

In this example, we used ethnic categories in order to highlight the meaningfulness of such usage. The described actions do not fit into the framework of relationships based on imagined communities. Most likely, the relevant choice is interaction at the level of membership in a small-group neighbors.

However, readers should not presume that ethnic economic migrants always prefer to follow the rules of primary groups in detriment to the requirements of imagined communities.

The role of ethnicity in the formation of primary groups

During our research, we gained an insight into the life of market vendors’ communities at Kuznechny Market in St. Petersburg. We can discern interactions between the vendors and market administrators, the vendors and the police, the vendors and market security; among vendors of different profiles (wholesale, small-scale wholesale, fresh herb vendors and fruit-and-vegetable suppliers, vendors with access to wholesale suppliers of fresh herbs, those without such an access, etc.). Altogether they make up a specific community of people, working at the same market. This community is based on interpersonal interaction, it has its own rules and makes demands of those who wish to become members. The vendors pay the market administrators for stall rent, they pay for security, unofficially pay the cleaning lady, and bribe policemen. The administration, in turn, lets them keep their vending stalls and allows them to keep produce on the market territory. Vendors help each other, watch each other’s produce, borrow money from each other, etc.

forming a community around a certain occupation. Yet describing market life, it is impossible to avoid the categories sending us back to the imagined communities/ethnic groups. Thus, Farkhad was using ethnic categories when recounting how wholesale suppliers of fresh herbs—the “Azerbaijanis”—sell them to “Tajiks,” who don’t have access to produce sources. He recalled that “Tajiks” always violate agreements, do not pay for the produce they received, and the “Azerbaijanis” cannot do anything because they are fewer in numbers and have practically no rights; endless conflicts arise between the “Azerbaijanis” and the “Tajiks” at the market. The administrator of the market stalls admitted to us in informal conversation that he did not like his present “subjects,” recalling good old times when “Belarussians, Ukrainians, and Moldovans were selling here instead of the blacks.”

The community united around selling at the market breaks down into several groups; internal borders appear, drawn according to subjectively felt membership in imagined ethnic communities. Yet a certain unity, reproduced in everyday work practices, undoubtedly exists inside the “behavioral community” under the code name “working at the market.” The migrants’ membership in imagined communities is not a myth. Constant reminders occur; a “small-scale wholesaler” or “wholesale vendor” instantly turns into a “Tajik” or an “Azerbaijani.” They can allow themselves to violate the internal unity of the market community because they feel the force of their coethnics behind them.4 The market community splits into several groups under pressure from the dominant concept that it is important to belong to an imagined ethnic community. Thus primary groups of “Tajik”/“Azerbaijani” market vendors, in which the ethnic element is very strong, are formed. Ethnicity in this case constitutes primary groups and turns out to be important in the formation and functioning of each of them during their interaction with other primary groups.

“Russian” female vendors working for “Caucasian” business owners are a good example of this thesis. This situation exemplifies the working of an “ethnic business,” when an individual’s social action is oriented mostly to the ethnicity of the participants of social interaction. The “Caucasian” business owner deliberately hires a vendor with “Russian” appearance, knowing that customers, also thinking in categories of ethnic imagined communities, prefer to buy produce from the “Russians” while the police prefer to fine the “Caucasians.” Therefore, a primary group of social interaction—“vendors working at the market”—is formed based on conscious orientation toward ethnicity.

We find similar examples, demonstrating the role of ethnicity in the formation and functioning of the market vendors’ primary groups, at Sennoi Market. Buzor claimed that the “Tajiks” constituted a specific community, although it did not go outside the market’s boundaries. At the same time, the “Azerbaijanis” also working at the market, according to Buzor, are not members of this community, do not obey the unofficial “Tajik” leader, and do not participate in possible collective
Conclusion

In this article, we have examined in great detail the organization of everyday life of economic migrants from Azerbaijan and Tajikistan in St. Petersburg. We tried to avoid using the traditional category of ethnicity “blindly,” a common issue in similar research projects. In our opinion, “ethnicity” as such does not possess sufficient explicative strength. During its existence, this concept absorbed an enormous number of various meanings, representing today a rather cumbersome and obscure scientific category.

One should also avoid using the concept of ethnicity for one more reason: this category has become political, because it cannot be practically separated from nationality and the project of “nationalism.” Therefore, ethnicity is drawn into the field of political struggle, which complicates the situation, in particular the relationship between the migrants and receiving societies.

These reasons make us especially careful around the category of ethnicity. We avoid using it when it is not pertinent to reality we describe. Even in cases where the definition of reality by the participants of the events includes elements of ethnicity or nationalism, one should not reproduce ordinary notions, claiming them to be scientific. In our opinion, a sociologist has to deconstruct ordinary worldviews, dismantle social reality as “objectively given,” and reveal the processes of its creation and reproduction.

We tried not only to decipher and make the category of ethnicity functional, using concrete empirical material, but also to understand what constitutes the life of “Caucasian” migrants and to provide, where possible, its “thick description.” Understanding the role of ethnicity and its place in migrants’ lives appears in this description as long as it is significant for the life of the migrants we studied.

Guided by the migrants’ real life and economic activities, we offered our view of the migration phenomenon, analyzing it with categories that cannot be reduced to ethnicity unambiguously. We believe that the most adequate description (in sociological terms) of the life of “Caucasian” migrants in a contemporary Russian city is to give a picture of their life as an existence in tension due to belonging to imagined ethno/national communities, on the one hand, and to primary groups formed around certain occupations and practical interests, on the other.

On a daily basis, “Caucasian” migrants find themselves in situations where they have to pattern their behavior according to one of these communities. It is impossible to imagine a recent “Caucasian” migrant not included in either of these groups of interpersonal interaction. Primary groups are formed around particular occupations and practical interests, ignoring their members’ ethnicity in the course of everyday activities. At the same time, it would be erroneous to forget that migrants themselves and, most importantly, representatives of the receiving society see themselves, the people they interact with and the world around them through

is happening around them, first of all, in terms of ethnic/national cultures (“mentalities,” “traditions,” “national character,” etc.).

Failure to acknowledge one of the abovementioned communities as a subjective orientation, defining social actions of a migrant, is a mistake, which entails both scientific and practical consequences.

Editor’s notes

a. The authors maintain sociological distance by calling their interlocutors “informants.” But this paragraph indicates an impressive range of interlocutors and shows varying degrees of depth for the interviews. Their text reveals the five city resident interviews were “problem-oriented,” with the further implication that they were short and designed to test prejudice. References to “market administrators” are also revealing: the authors’ Russian often uses a more passive, almost sinister, abstract concept “the market administration.”

b. As translator Anna Bernstein, a former Soviet citizen, notes, this means “residence permit” (propiiska), the valuable stamped and updated document needed to verify that a person is legally registered in a particular city. Valid resident permits, part of one’s passport or visa, are needed for apartment rental or purchase, work, marriage, school, and other social services. Soviet-style systems are still in place in most cities of Russia concerning residence permits and monitoring, with varying degrees of strictness.

c. Beret-wearing OMON special police forces are highly trained, disciplined, militarized units sometimes used to quell demonstrations, protect major politicians, and provide emergency security. Blatantly visible when they are used as urban patrols, local residents (Russians and non-Russians alike) become particularly wary. Because their administration goes beyond the heads of local police forces, they are quite powerful.

d. The kezinka is a lively exhibition-style dance with roots in the North Caucasus mountain traditions of the Lezgin people, who speak a Samurian language and now live predominantly in Dagestan and northern Azerbaijan.

e. This extraordinary insider’s story may reveal state security weaknesses that have since been corrected, given difficulties of creating “fictional passengers” in the current antiterrorist milieu.

f. A shaitan in Turkish and Persian folklore is a potent spirit historically rendered especially negative after Muslim influences. A mixed signal political message comes across here, logical for those who are maintaining options of return to their “homeland.”


Notes

1. The research continued and was developed as individual projects, more specifically, O. Pachenkov’s project “Caucasians in Russian Cities: The Problem of Discrimination of Ethnic Minorities (Case of St.Petersburg),” supported by IOO, Soros Fund, RSS program (RSS no. 95/61999); O. Pachenkov’s project “The Study of Xenophobia Against ‘Caucasians’ in the Population of a Russian City (Case of St.Petersburg),” supported by the Ger-
2. Quotation marks in this case mean that we are sort of borrowing the terms traditionally used to identify ethnic groups or nationalities from non-scientific discourse; that is, we are "quoting." We do this to show that we might disagree with the meanings and connotations related to the ethnic categories, but use them with the sole purpose that the reader understand who and what we are talking about.

3. For a review of the topic of "Ethnic Enterprise," see Vronov and Osvál’d 1998.

4. Sociolinguistic and discourse analyses were not the aim of our research. Moreover, when informants spoke a different language from the researchers, analyzing the informants' speech was impossible. They expressed their thoughts in Russian with great difficulty and it was often impossible to come to a mutual understanding during a conversation. All this made the subsequent analysis of the conversations' transcriptions very laborious and not very productive.

5. Shared feasts often accompanied such conversations because this situation implied a special trusting atmosphere. On the one hand, this strategy has its drawbacks; on the other hand, for our informants, communication during a meal was an exceptionally important criterion of mutual openness and trust.

6. We decided to include a migrant from Tajikistan as one of the cases, although officially our project was aimed at the study of "Caucasians," and from the geopolitical point of view, Tajikistan does not belong to the Caucasus region. Today, the category "Caucasian" is a racial one, that is to identify someone as belonging to this category, one appeals to "secondary physical features (skin, eye, and hair color, etc.)" (Dictionary of Foreign Words 1981, p. 427). It is no coincidence that in ordinary language the word "black" (chernyi), as well as chernomazy, chernozhupiyi ("black-skinned" as offensive as "nigger") has become a synonym for "Caucasian." Thus it became clear that contemporary average Russian citizens can ignore the differences not only between "Azerbaijanis" and "Tajiks," but also among "Arabs," "Muslims," and "other blacks." Meanwhile, the perceptions and behavior toward migrants depend on the category where the locals place them.


8. The existence of the border between representatives of different social milieus is a widespread social phenomenon, found in all societies. On the other hand, such a situation shows that belonging to one ethnic/national group is not always sufficient for intimacy, mutual aid, expressions of solidarity, and so on.

9. What we mean by social milieu in this case is not only the totality of migrants from Azerbaijan and Tajikistan, but a community of people connected by networks of social interaction and solidarity. Migration from the same country does not necessarily involve the presence of tight social connections: social networks constituting a milieu can be created on various grounds.

10. Later we found out "Tajiks" predominate at the food markets in the city.

11. Popular claims of "Caucasians forcing the local vendors from the markets by buying their produce and reselling it at an exorbitant price" proved untenable. The rows for local vendors at the Sennaya Market were empty (about two or three other vendors besides us), whereas all locals preferred to sell illegally in front of the entrance to the market, charging higher prices to customers who didn't have time to find out market prices.

12. During our observation, we never saw nonstaff using the cafeteria. Those rare buyers who decided to buy rice pilaf preferred to carry out.

13. Thus, using Goffman's terminology, we can talk of "performance" where cooks and vendors appeared as members of one "team" and "played" against the "outsiders" (Goffman 2000).

14. Strategies of economic migrants. We have heard this expression from almost all of our informants. Yet having an "address" does not imply support and help. This is just a "point of reference," a basic lead to find one's bearings on new ground. Very often, the "address" turns out to be wrong or outdated.

15. In response to our question as to why he does not go to work at the Azeri and Georgian Market, Buzor replied that he could not do it, because people who work there are migrants from a different part of Tajikistan and they would not accept him.

16. This created a corresponding niche for drivers, who came to the market in search of offers from the vendors. They also provided market vendors with information about prices at different wholesale markets, which they managed to visit early in the morning. This information was especially invaluable for the owners of the produce during financial crisis of August 1998, when prices could rise several times during a single day.

17. By that time, many women from Moldova were working at Sennaya Market. The strategy of hiring women with "Russian" appearance was quite widespread among "Caucasian" business owners. This is primarily because police officers pay less attention to "Russian women" than to "Caucasian women."

18. Trying to organize a "crisis experiment," during an OMON raid, we decided not to hide in the lobby of an apartment building nearby as did our "colleagues" and "owners," but just hid the produce and stood by. Our experiment failed—we did not attract OMON's attention. Thus we could not fully feel the situation and see it through the eyes of the migrants. The fact that we had residence permits, Russian citizenship, and "Russian" faces allowed us feel reasonably safe.

19. The prices quoted date to the period of research. Thus reference is to the denominated ruble rate after the default of August 1998.

20. This is as of the fall of 1997, that is the prices are quoted in nondenominated rubles.

21. The owner's room made a heavy impression on us: three beds, broken chair, dustcovered TV on a ripped chair; the owner and her children sleeping on sunken beds with out sheets, on top of dirty, hole-covered mattresses and pillows. All this created an impression that the prevailing color in the room was gray; gray dirty mattresses, gray dusty TV, dirty table, gray vegetable crates in the lobby, grey wallpaper, with a pattern that could not be seen due to the layer of dust. The communal toilet also left a strong impression: foul smell, wet rusty pipes, floor covered with used tissue paper. We had to summon all our professional sociological cynicism to remain observers without feelings and emotions in this situation.

22. Masha's family (husband, known sons with their families) stayed in Dubossarsky. For several years, she has been regularly coming to St. Petersburg to earn money, returning home once a year for no longer than a month. In winter, she, like the other migrants from Moldova, receives milk products from Belarus, which she sells at Sennaya Square. When it gets warm and she cannot keep the milk products for a long time, she finds a job as a vendor, also at Sennaya Square.

23. We saw nails in the walls used as hooks or hangers practically at all of our informants' places. One can assume that this is an attribute of any room inhabited by migrants—a certain symbol of unstable and temporary residence.

24. It was probably caused by economic reasons: Masha earned more at her new job than Buzor could offer her. Moreover, with her new legal job at the market, she no longer had to hide from the police, pay fines, bribe the police officers, etc.

25. The exact amount of the fine, as stated above, was 8,300 rubles, however, usually the chance is not given, which is why the fine was always 10,000 (after valuation, 10
26. Following main fieldwork tenets (Girler 1997, pp. 14–15), we ate (and, as it will become clear from case 2, drank) "anywhere and in any quantity." Sharing food is not just a rule of etiquette but also a condition of getting closer to informants.

27. The text of the diary entry is partially edited, but corrections concern only style issues.

28. Salman also became our informant; however, our relationship with him was not as close as the one with Farkhad and his family. Our insufficient knowledge of Salman's everyday life does not permit us to describe him as a "case." However, the information we received from Salman as well as our observation of his life and work also became a part of our knowledge about the life of economic migrants and constituted the context of "case 2.

29. Thomas's theorem could probably serve as an explanation of the role of ethnicity: ethnicity actually ("objectively") becomes one of the components defining the structure of the market and what is happening in the economic niches as long as it has the status of an objective and meaningful factor in the minds of traders and the market administration.

30. As a rule, male migrants know Russian better than females. This is largely because almost all men served in the "Russian-speaking" Soviet army.

31. From the viewpoint of an ordinary person (as we were at that moment) the situation could reinforce opinions about the "natural violence" of the "Caucasians" and the danger that they represent. Therefore, the "wrong" reading and interpretation of the situation help to reproduce the myth about the "threat of Caucasians." It confirms once again the correctness of the methodological statement that adequate reading and interpretation of what is happening is related to the researcher's ability to place a situation in the cultural context in which it belongs.

32. "Tajiks" sold green herbs, but because they do not have their own suppliers, they buy their produce from the "Azerbaijanis" or local producers.

33. It was very difficult to persuade Farkhad that Olga does not drink vodka in the amount offered. Oleg did not manage to refuse any vodka: Farkhad urged him, felt offended, and insisted. The only compromise we achieved after some time was the right to drink less. This allowed us to stay sober at least for a while to be able to pose questions and keep the conversation on subjects that interested us.

34. For a discussion of ethnic enterprise and its criticism, see Voronkov and Ovlood 1998; Brednikova and Panchenko 2000.

35. The concept of "primary groups" was suggested by Charles Cooley. Referring to the dichotomy of "communities" (Gemeinschaft) and "societies" (Gesellschaft) suggested by F. Tennis, Cooley says that within Gemeinschaft, with depersonification and atomization, relatively small groups form on the basis of immediate interaction and expressed feeling of us-groups. Cooley calls them primary groups and emphasizes personal emotional attachment as typical for them (Cooley 1994, p. 330). The concept of "primary groups" greatly influenced Shils, who revised Cooley's approach, basing himself on the German tradition of studying small groups (for example, Hermann Schmalenbach).

36. In 1920, Hermann Schmalenbach proposed that the concept of Gemeinschaft consisted of at least two main distinguishable parts. The first is primordial (based on common place of birth and origin, marital relations, blood ties, etc.). If this primordial element is removed, what is left is what Schmalenbach called bund (union, association, brotherhood). The essence of this unity lies in close mutual attachment of its members, which does not depend on primordial ties (Shils 1957, pp. 133–34).

37. An obvious contradiction could be discerned: we use the concept of ethnicity and, describing relations among the locals and migrants from Azerbaijan and Tajikistan, talk about ethnic groups and ethnic relations, whereas Anderson contrasted ethnic groups with nations. However, in our context it is very difficult to separate nation from an ethnic group.

38. The specificity of economic migrants lies in the fact that they dedicate most of their time and attention to work. Due to this fact, their new social networks emerge in relation to work, or tend to be included in the sphere of work.

39. The term was suggested by D. Draganški (1993). We share his understanding of the process of assimilation by people to certain ethnic groups, which took place both in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia.

40. Nationalism in contemporary Russia is largely based on ethnic hostility and has strong racist undertones.

41. The description of this context is beyond the scope of this article; many articles exist on this topic. Compare the work of S. Garnskhtina.

42. Information about such practices among district police officers has been confirmed not only by migrants but also by one of our informants, an "Azerbaijani," working as a district police officer for twenty-five years and knowing this system firsthand.

43. One more group, not included in our list of agents, imposes ethnicity on ethnic migrants and deserves mention: representatives of national/ethnic elites. For them belonging to a certain imagined community becomes an occupation, for example, employees of the Consulate, national cultural communities, teachers of national culture (literature, history, etc.). We did not include this group because the influence of representatives of national/cultural elite on their "ordinary" emigrant compatriots is limited. There is a firm boundary between established ethnic professionals and their co-ethnics—market vendors and small business owners (stalls, shops, etc.). "National intelligentsia," "professionally" representing its ethnic group in a foreign country, deliberately distances itself from compatriots who came to earn money. However, ethnicity professionals, to some extent, impose a worldview of imagined communities/nations on the society where they live and act.

44. Only once we observed how "Caucasian migrants" appealed to belonging to the same imagined community while interacting with each other: Buzor asked an "Azerbaijani" vendor to lower the price for his produce at the market, to which the vendor replied: "Nah, I'm already giving you a discount; when I see one of us—I always give discounts!" However, it remains unclear how to interpret this situation, as well as the words of the "Azerbaijani" vendor: first, he was very likely to be guided by considerations of profit and claiming that he lowered the price, did not really do so; second, saying "when I see one of us," he possibly meant a "migrant," a person in a similar life and economic situation.

45. We have already singled out several factors defining the organization of migrants' social networks. We named them: easiness (simplicity, lack of problems), rationality (profit), trust/control, pressure from the outside (exclusion), and space. Since social networks are stable interactions between people, these factors were distinguished while analyzing social actions and interactions of the migrants. Choosing these factors was based on the formula: "they interact with people when it is…" (easy, beneficial, when they trust them, when they
have to, when they meet in the same space). In our opinion, these (and possibly other) factors structure migrants’ activities and form the basis for their use of social networks. We have already addressed the mechanisms of migrants’ organization of life in accordance with these principles (see Brednikova and Pachenko 2000).

46. It is necessary to mention that in emigration, belonging to a large ethnic/national community, among other things, creates a feeling of being protected.

47. However, we know nothing about such actions of the entire “Tajik” community of Sennoi Market. Moreover, despite the words of our informant, we have great doubts concerning the possibility of such an action. It is most likely that combined actions of several smaller groups united by a common practical interest take place. For example, we know that a group of “Tajiks,” occupying a niche of “cooking food for the market vendors” (the member of which was our informant Buzor) delegated representatives to the market administration to settle the issue of the amount of payment for renting a space at the market.

References