MIGRANTS IN A POST-SOVIET CITY. *Introduction*

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The idea for this special issue of the journal emerged several years ago, during my first year working on a project focused on the integration of migrants from Central Asia in the urban space of Moscow. While developing the research methodology for this project, my colleagues and I had a lot of questions: Is it possible to carry out a study of migrants in a post-Soviet city using the same theoretical frameworks employed by American and European scholars? When we describe the situation in Russia and former Soviet cities, can we apply the methods used by researchers of postcolonial migration? How and to what extent does the post-Soviet urban space influence strategies of migrants' settlement? How do we study migrants in Russian cities?

One of the key topics in sociology and anthropology of migration is how the city space is connected with socioeconomic integration of migrants in the host society. The migrants' place of residence, their use of existing urban infrastructure, and creation of their own affects the pace, fast or slow, of their integration in the host society. Scholars who study migrants in Western cities currently use a number of theoretical approaches, all of which usually deal with urban segregation and specific city neighborhoods inhabited by migrants and people with migrant background. The spatial assimilation theory, developed in the United States in the mid-1980s (Massey and Bitterman 1985), suggests that the arriving migrants are usually forced to live in the neighborhoods where their ethnic community is prevalent. This is attributed to the fact that new migrants use their social capital and take up residence next to their family and friends, which also usually happens to be in cheaper areas. Analyzing the socioeconomic integration of migrants in these urban neighborhoods, scholars suggest that settling in areas inhabited by ethnic minorities and migrants plays an ambiguous role: they can either inhibit integration or, on the contrary, facilitate inclusion for those who wish to integrate into the host society. Urban area with heavy concentration of migrants can become a source of social capital, which enables the migrants' involvement in the socioeconomic life of the neighborhood (Edin, Fredriksson, and Åslund 2003). Therefore, even if some neighborhood's residents have an opportunity to "blend" with members of the host society by moving to a different

part of the city, some of them prefer staying close to their community (Logan, Zhang, and Alba 2002). Others, however, consider moving out of the neighborhood a marker of their success. Researchers suggest that living in such "ethnic" or "migrant" neighborhoods can be a stage in the process of migrants' integration in the urban community (Wacquant 2006; Lapeyronnie 2008).

The place stratification theory, also focused on settlement patterns of various categories of urban residents, explores how city dwellers manipulate urban spaces they inhabit. Studies in this paradigm demonstrate how citizens, municipal agencies, and real estate companies manipulate urban spaces to prevent those whom they consider "undesirable" from infiltrating certain areas (Logan and Molotch 1987; Charles 2003). Scholars analyze the barriers that make it difficult for migrants to move into more advantaged districts, even when they have the financial capacity. For example, real estate agencies may refrain from showing homes for sale or rent to people unwanted by most residents of the area. Likewise, boards of homeowners associations or housing cooperatives may reject offers from buyers of certain ethnic or racial origins (although these rejections are usually justified by other factors).

Yet another model, heterolocalism, describes the socio-spatial behavior of migrants who live in different urban neighborhoods but still maintain membership in their ethnic communities (Zelinsky and Lee 1998). Scholars point out that, due to a host of reasons, migrants could be spread across the entire city and live separately from their "native" community. However, this does not mean that they sever ties with their ethnic communities: New technologies that make communication much easier, such as mobile phones and the internet, allow migrants to stay in contact with their compatriots.

Thus, several factors shape migrants' opportunities to integrate into urban space. Among them is the urban space itself, as it presupposed existence—or absence—of areas of concentration of residents based on their ethnic or class characteristics. Various groups of urban citizens and state agencies can manipulate the urban space, creating or dismantling barriers for certain categories of residents. For migrants, ethnic community is key because it is often the source of their social capital.

In the last few years Russian scholars have begun to study how the structure of post-Soviet cities influences migrant behavior. Analyzing patterns of migrants' settlement, these studies converge on the key finding: today there are no places in Russian cities where migrants and ethnic minorities concentrate (Demintseva and Peshkova 2014; Varshaver et al. 2014; Demintseva 2017; Briazgina et al. 2019). Migrants live in all areas of Russian cities, since affordable housing can be found in all neighborhoods. Studies also show that, despite the lack of "ethnic" or "migrant" areas in Russian cities, in recent years migrants have been creating their own urban infrastructure that includes clinics (Kashnitsky and Demintseva 2018), cafés (Varshaver and Rocheva 2014), and daycare centers (Demintseva 2019). At the same time, migrants are active users of existing urban infrastructure. Researchers identify playgrounds (Rocheva, Varshaver, and Ivanova 2017), schools (Demintseva 2018), and markets (Dyatlov 2014; Grigorichev 2015) as places of integration.

All the articles in this special issue of *Laboratorium* are based on original field research carried out in Moscow, Berlin, Saint Petersburg, and Tomsk. Mark Simon examines migrant integration through the lens of theater. His article considers the links between representations of migrant social experience in theater performances and the institutional position of Moscow and Berlin theaters that address the theme of migration. On the example of several plays Simon demonstrates how productions staged by migrants and refugees are perceived differently by the theater management and the public that comes to see these productions. Simon analyzes the role that theater plays in the relationship between citizens and newcomers as well as in the lives of migrant actors.

Vlada Baranova and Kapitolina Fedorova address the issue of multilingualism in Russian megacities, associated with the arrival of migrants who speak foreign languages. Analyzing commercial signage and advertising on the streets of Saint Petersburg, the researchers consider recent changes in the linguistic landscape of the city and examine how these changes impact the migrants' visibility and their perception by the city's Russian-speaking majority.

Two articles in this issue cover the new Muslim practices of migrants in the urban space. Dmitriy Oparin presents the results of his research in Tomsk, where he studied religious and social practices of Muslim migrants who are considered leaders of local microcommunities and command the respect of local believers. Oparin analyzes how the local Muslim milieu builds itself—outside of mosques—around several key community figures.

Anna Cieślewska and Zuzanna Błajet describe the new Muslim religious services provided by Central Asian migrants in Moscow. The study focuses on how these services are offered and sold, who the clients of the spiritual professionals from Central Asia are, and how the space where rituals and healing practices happen is shaped. Cieślewska and Błajet show how migrants and their spiritual leaders reconstruct their traditions and rituals in order to have an opportunity to provide religious services in Moscow not only to Muslim clients but also to people of other faiths.

Another two articles focus on the arrival of children of migrants into Russian schools in recent years. First, Félicie Kempf investigates how ethnic characteristics of migrant children attending Moscow schools influence Muscovite parents' choice of school for their children. She describes strategies that parents use when selecting educational institutions for their children and recounts the locals' stereotypes about the children of migrants.

The second article, authored by me, is about the emergence of "migrant schools" in post-Soviet cities. I demonstrate that "migrant schools" are a result of informal strategies by school administrations as well as parents—both "native" and migrant. Children of labor migrants usually find themselves in schools that in the Soviet times primarily enrolled children from low-status families. Having a long-standing reputation for catering to children from low-status social groups, these schools now gather under their roofs children of migrants.

The special issue concludes with field notes by Anton Sadyrin, who shares his thoughts on how the method of participant observation influences the relationship

between the scholar and the informant. These reflections are based on his participation in a research project on the migrants' use the infrastructure of Siberian cities. In his field notes, Sadyrin recounts his experience of collecting information from labor migrants and shares the issues of research ethics that he encountered in his part of the study.

To conclude, I would like to stress that all these studies give us an insight into the life of migrants in the cities in recent years. Migration is a process that suggests the movement of people—their relocation, their settlement, or return—either temporary or permanent. The urban space is also constantly changing—not only due to migrations but also because of economic, political, and social processes. Perhaps some examples provided in this thematic issue will be history in several years, while others will be considered as early stages of new urban processes. Our editorial team is finishing work on this issue in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, which has already impacted the mobility of people around the world. Every day, more borders close, more flights are canceled, and more countries enforce strict quarantine rules, limiting the movement of persons. It is hard to make any forecasts now, but we can confidently say that this worldwide crisis will bring about new migration flows and influence the lives of today's migrants across the world. Some people will return home, while others will choose migration as the only solution in the face of a new world.

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