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Everyday nationalism in Russia in European context: Moscow residents' perceptions of ethnic minority migrants and migration

Natalya Kosmarskaya and Igor Savin

This chapter examines how ordinary residents of the Russian capital relate to the sharply increased influx of migrant workers to Russia, and to Moscow in particular. For several decades now, Western academics have scrutinised cross-border migration to Western European countries through the prism of local residents' perceptions. However, far more attention has been paid to the problems of the migrants themselves than to the attitudes of the host populations.

Similarly in Russia: despite the growing volume of academic literature on diverse aspects of the lives of migrant workers,¹ efforts at viewing this issue through the eyes of the host population are fairly rare. Well-established centres for the study of public opinion (Fond 'Obshchestvennoe mnenie' (FOM), the Levada Centre and others) periodically conduct large-scale surveys nationwide or within specific regions, and the collated 'percentages' are then commented on, above all in the press and online media,² as well as in social media. Less often are such 'official' surveys, or surveys conducted by teams of researchers, analysed in academic literature (see, for example, Leonova 2004; Tiuriukanova 2009; Grigor'eva et al. 2010). There are practically no studies that for comparative or analytical purposes draw on Western experience of studying public attitudes towards migrants, and employ the conceptual approaches used in these works to explain the reasons for various public sentiments.

Instead, research on perceptions of migration in Russia consists overwhelmingly of works of a polemical-conceptual nature, in

which – from a constructivist position – the authors analyse and criticise discursive practices widespread in Russian society (see, for example, Karpenko 2002; Malakhov 2007, 2011; Shnirel'man 2008; Regame [Regamey] 2010; Demintseva 2013). These discourses have an alarmist character – employing concepts of 'territorial ethnic balance', 'ethno-cultural safety', 'critical share of immigrant population', 'ethnic criminality' and the like – thereby furthering the ethnification of social relations and the growing migrantophobia among the populace.

Russian academics have taken the same approach to foreign experience as well. Instead of approaching Western works as concrete sociological studies, they have tended to focus on the specificities of the production of ethnically 'charged' discourses, and on how the authorities and various sectors of civil society in Western countries oppose the discursive and actual practices of discrimination against ethnic minority migrants (see Malakhov 2004; Mukomel' and Pain 2005; Osipov 2013).

For all the significance of the above-mentioned Russian research, we feel there is a gap between the still-prevalent 'view from above' (conceptual-discursive) and the 'view from below' (concretely sociological). To our knowledge, there has been hardly any literature in Russia in which the attitudes of local residents towards migrants have been studied on the micro-level by qualitative sociological methods (various types of interviewing, participant/non-participant observation).³ Here we mean the attitudes of *ordinary citizens*, specifically, and not a particular section of society – football fans, young extremist gangs, various representatives of (un)organised nationalist opposition groups, and so forth.

In essence, what we know may be reduced to a simple conclusion that is repeated, in various formulations, in publication after publication: 'Xenophobic attitudes have spread through all levels of Russian society ... xenophobia is primarily projected at representatives of migrant minorities non-traditional to a given location' (Mukomel' 2013: 199, 200). Many aspects of our theme remain unclear: what selection and hierarchy of factors engender negative attitudes towards migrants? How do these negative attitudes manifest themselves, also within specific socio-demographic groups? Are there regional specifics? And,

finally, do ‘locals’ relate differently to migrants of different ethno-cultural backgrounds?

This chapter attempts to fill these lacunae, analysing material from Moscow. We begin with a comparison (to the extent that available quantitative data allow) of the situation in Russia with that of countries in the West. Then we turn to how factors ‘responsible’ for the negativity towards external labour migrants identified in Western research work in a Russian/Moscow context. To ensure a firm footing for the analysis, we use large-scale quantitative data (the 2013 NEORUSS survey), and our own qualitative research on the attitudes of Muscovites to migrants and migration.

We start by assuming that the two methods are complementary; one of our main aims is therefore to show how, in comparison with respondents’ answers to closed survey questions, unstructured interviews may illuminate and deepen our understanding of the issue under study – and perhaps also serve as a source of alternative interpretations. Here we should recall certain inadequacies of large-scale surveys. Amandine Regamey, for example, has highlighted the ‘magic of negativity’ in the interpretation of results. In particular she notes:

According to Levada Centre survey data, in November 2009 . . . 35 per cent ‘probably or definitely related negatively to the fact that one increasingly encounters workers from various countries of the near abroad on Russian building sites’ . . . This being the case, the use of survey data to demonstrate xenophobic ‘sentiments’ is extremely problematic, since an even greater percentage of respondents (44 per cent) relate to this fact neutrally. (Regamey [Regamey] 2013: 362)

Furthermore, surveys often require people to respond to ideas and convictions that may be alien to their way of thinking, in form or content. Alexander Verkhovsky has expressed this concern – that we share – in commenting on the results of the 2013 NEORUSS survey. Evaluating its results as a whole, he notes: ‘The survey creates the outward appearance of a fully developed agenda of Russian nationalism, which the majority of the population supports.’ However, after citing several concrete figures, he concludes:

But it is time to express a most important reservation: the views and suggestions supported by citizens in mass surveys are very often not their convictions, not part of their political views – they are uncoordinated responses to the questions unexpectedly posed by an interviewer. Such surveys do not reveal how serious or stable citizens' views are, what role those views play in their worldview as a whole. (Verkhovsky 2013)

In contrast, qualitative research – especially that based on interviews without such 'unexpected' formulations – is better able to show how people formulate their judgements, and which logical links, made by the respondents themselves, contribute to this process. Here we find more habitual, routine ways of thinking. Of course, qualitative methods also have their inadequacies and limitations. Our preference for 'soft' methods here is not motivated by any faith in their infallibility, but is a reaction to the clear dominance of surveys in the study of our topic – in Russia, survey data (in the form of information on 'percentages' of support for one conviction or another) are almost the sole source of information available about ordinary people's perceptions concerning migrants and migration.

Let us briefly explain our qualitative research methodology. The empirical basis is formed by thirty-two interviews conducted with Muscovites from November 2013 to June 2014.⁴ The average interview lasted in the region of sixty to eighty minutes. By 'Muscovites', or the 'host population', we mean people who have lived in Moscow for at least five to seven years, and who have permanent registration, accommodation and work there. Although our 'sample' is not statistically representative, we have sought to balance interviewees as regards gender, age, educational level, social status and area of residence.

Set against those respondents who have lived in the capital since the Soviet period (or were born here) our sample also includes a group of eight individuals who have arrived relatively recently from various regions of Russia or from former Soviet republics. Since Moscow is the most dynamically growing urban area of Russia, it attracts not only persons from the dominant ethnic groups of those countries of the 'near abroad' from which migrant workers come:

also Russian-speaking residents of the former Soviet republics continue to arrive (although this flow was especially large in the 1990s, and has declined significantly since then) – as do Russian citizens from across the regions of the Russian Federation.

In principle, compared with questionnaires, the genre of interviews is better suited for levelling out the impact of public and political discourse on respondents' state of mind, although one is unlikely to achieve this fully. The wording of closed questions is often deliberately constructed around opposing extreme positions and can thus have a rather provocative nature; moreover, such questions may contain formulations drawn from the mass media. We chose a very 'soft' approach: we did not declare in any way our interest in the theme of migration and associated topics, and there were no direct questions about this.⁵ We described ourselves as researchers of the lives of ordinary people in Moscow – their perceptions of change, their views on the difficulties they face and possible ways of overcoming them.⁶

From the end of 2013 to autumn 2014, one of the authors participated in a pilot project to develop a model for integration through daily interaction between migrants and residents of specific housing estates in various areas of Moscow. He was able not only to record the comments of migrants and local residents, but also to observe their behaviour and mutual contact. Material from this participant observation supplements the empirical base of the work reported here.

Anti-migrant sentiments in Russia and in the West: A tentative comparison

Being situated 'within' Russian discourse about migration and migrants creates a strong impression of the exceptional nature of the Russian experience – 'exceptional' in a negative sense. However, the many academic publications about attitudes to migrants in other countries seem to indicate that Russia is not so unique here after all.⁷

Indeed, some authors note the universality of the phenomenon under scrutiny: 'denigration of individuals or groups based on perceived differences, i.e. xenophobia, is arguably a part of

everyday life around the world. Xenophobic attitudes are not new, nor are they likely to disappear in the near future' (Hayes and Dowds 2006: 458); 'studies from around the world show that the public generally hold negative perceptions of migration and migrant workers' (Tunon and Baruah 2012: 149); 'as immigration continues, conflicts and integration problems between the native population and foreigners will persist. These problems should be regarded as "normal" problems of an open society and should not be dramatized' (Böltken 2003: 253). Others propose existential explanations. As Roger Waldinger writes:

The turn of the twenty-first century has brought a world of mass migration, but this is a reality that the residents of the rich democracies do not like. Often wanting foreign workers, but having much less taste for foreign people who settle down, the residents of the rich democracies want their national communities maintained . . . Keeping membership restricted is of strategic value, especially when the place in question is a wealthy society that attracts the poor. Selfishness is not the only motivation at work; however, the idea of the national community, understood as a broad, family-like group of people responsible for taking care of one another, but *not* everyone outside the circle, is also an ideal . . . governments do what their people want, making strenuous efforts to control movements across the border. (Waldinger 2010: 58, 42, emphasis in the original)

Attention is also paid to the interconnection between migrantophobia and the growth of political radicalism:

During the last two decades, opposition to immigration has become increasingly politicized in many regions of Western Europe . . . It is no exaggeration to claim that the extreme right, for the first time since the Second World War, constitutes a significant force in established Western European democracies at both the local and national level. (Hayes and Dowds 2006: 455, 456)

Further: 'Right leaning political parties tend to promote stricter policies toward immigrants and reinforce negative stereotypes

concerning immigrants being a threat to economic and cultural stability' (Rustenbach 2010: 68). Based on a comparative analysis of material across many European countries, Moshe Semyonov and colleagues note: 'Research conducted across European countries reveals strong and mostly negative sentiments toward foreigners and immigrants . . . Immigrants often are viewed as a threat to economic success, to national identity, and to the social order' (Semyonov et al. 2006: 432).

As regards the dynamics of negative attitudes to ethnic minority migrants, the process is seen as developing in waves (see Bölten 2003; Semyonov et al. 2006). The results of elections to the European Parliament in May 2014, when support for far-right parties grew markedly in many European countries, seem to indicate a phase of intensifying anti-migrant sentiments.

In comparing the European and Russian situations, it is important to identify what phase of the migration cycle each specific country finds itself in. If the history of immigration to a country is relatively recent, and the population is consequently not yet accustomed to the presence of a significant number of ethnic minority migrants (and this is the case for Russia), there comes a swift growth in anti-migrant sentiments – that subsequently slows down (Semyonov et al. 2006: 429, 430).⁸ Initially, the host population also typically exaggerates the number of migrants: 'In the early phase, inflated perceptions of threat may lead to a sharp rise in anti-foreigner sentiment. Later, however, many of these perceptions become more realistic, and the sentiments toward outsiders, although negative, level off and become stable' (Semyonov et al. 2006: 445). On the local level, the length of time the foreigners have been resident is a central factor in explaining the dynamic of negative attitudes: Have they lived there for a long time? Are their numbers increasing? If so, the host population is less inclined to support integration.⁹ We return to the issue of the number of migrants, with regard to the specific situation in Moscow, below.

We view the situation in Russia as comparable with that in Europe also as regards various quantitative indicators (the 'percentages' presented in Western literature). Here we are not talking about literally comparing specific figures, but about comparing

general trends in collective consciousness. Our data allow us to compare three important aspects of perceptions of migrants: (1) Does the host country need migrants? (2) Is a growth in crime seen as connected with migration? (3) Does migration represent an ethno-cultural threat?

According to the 2013 NEORUSS survey data, 51.3 per cent of respondents in Moscow (52.8 per cent in Russia as a whole) agree or somewhat agree with the opinion: 'Russia really needs migrants, because they take on low-paid but important work that Russians are now reluctant to do'. Another 46.8 per cent of Muscovites disagree with this statement (41.8 per cent in Russia in general). Hence, a slight majority among respondents recognises that migrants are needed. In response to different wording, however – 'Given the population decline in Russia, more migrants are needed in order to avert a deficit in the workforce which may endanger the country' – the majority now denies that migration is a positive factor in the development of the economy: only 25.5 per cent of respondents in Moscow (and 31.8 per cent in Russia) agreed, while 64 per cent of the Muscovites (and 59.5 per cent in the all-Russian sample) declared themselves 'against' or 'somewhat against' this opinion.¹⁰

Based on a survey conducted in 2003 by the International Social Survey Programme that included all developed countries, Roger Waldinger has carried out a comparative analysis, studying the attitudes of the part of the population that belongs to the 'third generation [of immigrants] or more' (Waldinger 2010: 45). He concludes that 'in both France and the US, only a minority of ethnic majority respondents agreed that migrants were good for the economy' (ibid.: 54; see also 44). Furthermore, he cites the following data: 67 per cent of US respondents and 72 per cent of French think that there should be fewer migrants (ibid.: 48).

For the most part, however, the reluctance in both Russia and other countries to host large numbers of migrants is not explained by economic reasons. In answering a question posed in the NEORUSS survey about the significance of threats associated with migration, for example, only 15.7 per cent of respondents in Moscow (and 8.1 per cent in Russia) linked such threats primarily

to 'a destabilisation of the Russian economy'. Apparently, the position on 'economic issues' was influenced by other fears evoked by migrants, the most important of which were the threats of 'terrorism or banditry' (25 per cent in Moscow and 30 per cent in Russia), and 'illegal residency' (24 per cent in Moscow and 13.5 per cent in Russia).

One of the fears shared worldwide is connected with crime, which allegedly increases with migration. As a small experiment, one of the present authors asked five sociologists what country was being talked about in the following quotation: 'There is a widespread impression that migrants are disproportionately responsible for crime; and legislation may be introduced that has little impact on crime rates, but stifles migrants' freedoms and rights. It is therefore important that attitudes should be informed and based on fact rather than on misinformation or misinterpretation'. All responded confidently that, naturally, the subject was contemporary Russia – whereas in fact the quotation begins 'in many countries' and is taken from an English-language article in which attitudes to migrant workers worldwide are subject to comparative analysis (see Tunon and Baruah 2012: 151).

As to quantitative evaluations, in France, for example, only 'a minority' do not agree that 'immigrants increase crime' (Waldinger 2010: 54).¹¹ In Australia, over the period 1998 to 2007, 49.1 per cent of 'white' residents agreed with a similar statement (Bilodeau and Fadol 2011: 1095). In the USA in 1997, 43 per cent of those surveyed agreed that migrants 'significantly increase crime', although, by 2006, this share had dropped to 33 per cent (Tunon and Baruah 2012: 156). In the NEORUSS survey, 48.7 per cent of respondents in the all-Russian sample (and a full 74.1 per cent of those surveyed in Moscow) agreed that 'many migrants come to Russia not in order to work honestly, but to steal from Russians and weaken the Russian people', whereas 42.7 per cent disagreed with this statement. However, that the survey uses stronger and rather provocative wording here should, we feel, be taken into account.

There is a clear analogy in the degree to which migration is perceived as an 'ethno-cultural threat' to the host society and its

(variously conceived) values. In France a majority of respondents agreed with the statement that immigrants' ideas and culture do not improve the country (Waldinger 2010: 54). In the USA, public opinion was divided as to the influence of migration: there were about as many respondents who saw migrants as a factor that strengthens American society as those who saw them as a threat to traditional American values (Tunon and Baruah 2012: 151).

What, then, of Russia? Choosing among the various responses to the statement 'the ethnic diversity of the Russian population strengthens our country', 57.1 per cent of the NEORUSS respondents in Moscow (56.6 per cent in Russia) said that it 'in some respects strengthens, and in some respects weakens' Russia; 30.4 per cent in Moscow (22.1 per cent in Russia) felt that ethnic diversity weakens the country; whereas 10.1 per cent of respondents in Moscow (11.3 per cent in Russia) agreed that ethnic diversity 'strengthens our country'.

Of particular interest are data about various host-societies' perceptions of Islam and Muslims – considered an especially difficult issue for Russia. Pieter Bevelander and Jonas Otterbeck's work on young people's attitudes towards Muslim immigrants in Sweden also includes data on other countries. Thus they report that a 2006 study found that about 30 per cent of respondents in Switzerland displayed Islamophobia, and, similarly, 20–25 per cent of respondents in Germany (Bevelander and Otterbeck 2010: 409). In Sweden, according to a nationwide survey, in 2005 and 2006 39 per cent and 37 per cent of respondents respectively felt that the number of Muslims entering the country should be restricted (*ibid.*: 408). In the Netherlands – according to a 2007 study – 54 per cent of young respondents expressed negative attitudes to Muslims (*ibid.*: 409). Here one should take into account that young people are generally far more tolerant than older generations (see below). In Moscow, 30 per cent of the NEORUSS survey respondents 'agreed entirely' with the rather provocative statement 'Islam is becoming a threat to social stability and Russian culture'; a further 43 per cent 'agreed somewhat'.

Thus, even a swift glance at the comparative data on attitudes to migration allows us to draw distinct parallels between Western

and Russian experience. This makes it appropriate to use conceptual approaches originally developed by Western academics for understanding the reasons for migrantophobia and xenophobia, in analysing the Russian situation.

How do factors influencing perceptions of migrants 'work' in Russia?

In Western research on the causes and manifestations of migrantophobia, two groups of fundamentally different factors are usually identified as independent variables, hypothetically influencing the position of the local population.

The first group of factors is contextual, or structural: these factors describe the state of the society in which the individual or group lives, and to which s/he belongs. The number/proportion of migrants (index of threat) and the economic situation in the host country (index of competition), measured by growth/fall in gross domestic product (GDP), unemployment levels, regional development levels and so forth, are often tested out as potential 'provokers' of negative attitudes to migrants (see Semyonov et al. 2006; Rustenbach 2010; Bilodeau and Fadol 2011; Careja and Andres 2013).

In comparing the Russian and Western situations, however, we are mainly interested in the second group of factors: characteristics of the individuals themselves. Generally, socio-demographic indicators are tested for influence on negative attitudes towards migration: age, sex, education level and social status (availability of work; level and dynamics of income). Political orientation is also seen as a factor. There is almost no disagreement over its influence: in various countries, holding right-wing political views is highly likely to be accompanied by negative attitudes to migrants (see Rustenbach 2010; Waldinger 2010; Bilodeau and Fadol 2011; Careja and Andres 2013). The human capital explanation is also frequent. Education levels are linked to anti-migrant sentiments: people with higher education are usually found to be more tolerant (Bilodeau and Fadol 2011: 1092, 1104; Rustenbach 2010: 56, 66; Careja and Andres 2013: 383).

Regarding age, for various reasons, older people are seen as holding more negative attitudes towards migrants (see Careja and

Andres 2013; Martinović 2013). As for gender, some authors discuss the influence of gender within the framework of the concept of ‘cultural marginality’. It is suggested that women, like members of other (potentially) discriminated-against groups (members of religious minorities, children of mixed marriages), view migrants more positively. However, not all researchers support this hypothesis.

Similarly, the relationship between migrantophobia and various indicators of the socio-economic position of individuals is also open to debate. Several works fail to find significant relationships, and have also shown that respondents do not conceive of migration in terms of ‘economic competition’ (see, for example, Hayes and Dowds 2006; Escandell and Ceobanu 2009; Rustenbach 2010; Waldinger 2010; Bilodeau and Fadol 2011; Careja and Andres 2013).

No specific questions about potential economic competition from migrants were posed in the NEORUSS survey. According to the interview materials, respondents are not particularly pre-occupied with this issue. Their comments reveal why there is no sense of competition for workplaces between Muscovites (as well as newcomers from the other regions of Russia) and labour migrants: this hinges on the division of labour that has arisen in the city, entirely in line with the international pattern: ‘Because of the size, age, education and skills of the native population, there is a demand for migrant workers in specific jobs and sectors. These are mostly low-skilled and labour-intensive jobs – often classified as 3D: dirty, dangerous and demeaning’ (Tunon and Baruah 2012: 152).

Noting this factor, respondents stress the different motivations of Muscovites and ‘migrants’:

I. Some people think that migrants take work away from Russians. Do you agree with that?

R. If Russians worked in those lines of work for that money, then nobody would take anything away because there would be no positions open. But a Russian who thinks he’s mighty clever won’t go to work . . . won’t go to work for 15 thousand [roubles] to mix concrete on a building site, to carry bricks or work as a fitter-welder . . . Better

to do nothing at all than to go [to that sort of work]. But a migrant worker can work from morning till night and at weekends, because he has an aim, and the aim is achieved only by hard work, not only by learning, but by working hard overtime. But a Muscovite doesn't need this. 'Ding! – five o'clock, and it's home time. It's hardly a matter of life and death if they sack me, I'll find something else. Or mum and dad will keep me.' (Man, aged 63, higher technical education, security guard in a private company)

Also important here is the particular socio-psychological atmosphere in a large city with high standards of living and a range of possibilities:

I. Have you thought about why local residents don't want this [sort of] work?

R. It's simply that social status is really important for us. For a start, being a Muscovite is already a pretty significant status for a person. Moscow is a motivational town; you see how luxuriously people can live, and you want to somehow copy that. People are aspiring upwards, and such lowly jobs, even if they were well paid, no one would take them.

I. And if someone is retired, without great pretensions?

R. When you're on a pension there are other options – for example, go to [work in] a museum. Here physical labour is considered a relic of the past, now we have intellectual labour, and everyone aims, above all, at that. (Woman, aged 24, higher education, manager in the education sector)

The connection between the economic status of the respondents and their attitudes to migrants does not emerge very clearly from the NEORUSS survey results. It is evident from the responses to a majority of questions that people who worked part-time took stances that were slightly harsher in relation to migrants – but it is difficult to detect any unambiguous tendency, as the numerical differences were small. Similarly, the better-educated respondents were not always distinguished by greater tolerance. As regards age, younger people more often displayed greater tolerance, especially students (with some exceptions) – a trend observed elsewhere as well.

Thus, the results of the Moscow survey did not demonstrate a clear-cut relation between anti-migrant sentiments and the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. This ‘diffusion’ of results agrees quite well with the findings of Western researchers. There is, however, one exception: the gender factor. In almost all questions, Moscow women displayed more negative attitudes towards migrants – whereas Russian women on the whole displayed greater tolerance. The most sweeping, but hardly sufficient, explanation is an argument *a contrario* – that in Moscow, as a developed contemporary metropolis, the idea of the ‘cultural marginality’ of women simply does not apply. That said, the question of whether women from other Russian regions consider themselves ‘marginalised’ also remains open. On the whole, as regards whether non-acceptance of migrants is dependent on socio-demographic factors, the survey gives somewhat fuzzy and contradictory results. The results may, however, be supplemented and clarified with the help of interview materials that can reflect the specificities of the particular Moscow context (see below).

Apart from socio-demographic factors, there are also individual factors of a different nature. For researchers of inter-group/interpersonal relations, personality characteristics (attitudinal factors) are important. These are manifested on the level of trust towards people, readiness to live in a multi-ethnic environment, to interact with people of different races and cultures. The hypothetical link between these factors and perceptions of migrants is tested in terms of concepts such as social contact, social exposure and interpersonal trust.

Contact between migrants and Moscow residents

Important among the many social theories seeking to explain the growth of migrantophobia in Europe is ‘contact theory’ (Hayes and Dowds 2006: 456). It holds that interaction itself, in various ways (living as neighbours, friendship – and, even more, marriage – with migrants) creates more tolerant perceptions of migrants among the host population (see Böltken 2003; Escandell and Ceobanu 2009; Bevelander and Otterbeck 2010; Martinović 2013).

The qualitative research conducted by the present authors does not contest the main propositions of contact theory. Those of our interlocutors who had extensive experience of interaction with migrants demonstrated a more balanced and welcoming position towards them. Among local community activists (property owner councils, local veteran councils and so forth), the most active in all integration initiatives were people who due to their professional service or life circumstances had lived and interacted with people from Central Asia and the Caucasus – the regions from which most migrants to Moscow come.

Here we are concerned with positive or neutral contact. However, even if an individual's experience of interaction with migrants has been not solely positive, it still helps him or her to regard migrants with greater equanimity, neither idealising nor demonising them. One respondent who himself had come to Moscow from Kazakhstan, for example, sees migrants not as a 'scary mob' but as people who are obliged to work in a different social setting:

Personally I don't have any complaints against anyone; I understand them, they have to feed their relatives back at home, earn something for themselves. Of course, 80 per cent of these people are honest and hardworking, who don't even imagine how people here are conning them, they are forced to accept that, without even thinking. But 20 per cent and even more come to commit fraud, engaging in various illegal activities . . . (Man, aged 53, secondary education, driver)

The criticism expressed is rooted not in the very presence of migrants or their having some sort of characteristics that the respondent finds unpleasant, but in concrete situations that involve certain 'migrants' and 'local inhabitants' in connection with, for example, supervising markets, wholesale vegetable trade and so on (see below for further details). The denunciation of illegal activities is not extended to all migrants.

People who have no contact with individuals from other cultures demonstrate a different attitude. One respondent empathises with street cleaners who live under difficult conditions: 'I feel bitterly sorry for them, although I don't respect this nation,

all Asia . . . nor the Caucasus . . . I've never been there' (Man, 66 years old, secondary education, retired, now watchman). Here empathy is expressed by overcoming the barrier of a personal attitude to migrants as fundamentally alien, since there is no personal experience of interaction that could allow 'them' to be perceived as oneself or 'one's own'.

Personal interactions can significantly influence, even change, attitudes to migrants. We know of cases where residents who initially opposed a 'foreign' café in their building changed their attitudes to the establishment and the people (for example, from Uzbekistan) after having been invited to participate in regular events at the café, and came to recognise these people's right to work in the neighbourhood.

In the case of repeated or lasting positive contact, a person perceives 'others' not as an undifferentiated mass, but as specific individuals, with idiosyncrasies and individual reasons for behaviour. Where there is no such foundation, a negative contact may influence the next interaction with migrants. A person becomes more sensitive to information that 'confirms' the already formed negative attitude than to information that may contradict and destroy this schema. One of our interviewees displays such a chain of inference. Negative experiences of being neighbours to a family from Azerbaijan ('a crazy amount of yelling, the children yell, these blokes yell . . .') led to the respondent's more general conclusion about migrants as a whole: 'They are noisy, and it's impossible to reach agreement with them. They give the impression that we are guests of theirs . . .' (Woman, aged 35, secondary education, hairdresser).

In the absence of personal experience of interaction, external factors become increasingly important: the dominant assessment of migrants in the public sphere, rumours and fears. Then information is accepted uncritically, further deepening people's negativity, even when they cannot explain this. For example, one respondent admitted that 'a person of Slavic appearance and a Tajik evoke completely different emotions in me'. However, she was unable to recall a single incident in which she, or those close to her, had experienced rudeness or aggression from a migrant. Speculating on why she has such views, she concludes: 'It is

because they are different . . . they look different, they came to our country, they came illegally, they are after something.' This respondent does not know what they are after, or how to distinguish 'legal' from 'illegal', and confesses that it is precisely the inexplicability of her feelings towards migrants that makes her feel most stressed (Woman, 28 years old, secondary education, manager).

It is well known that negative information about migrants may be used to manipulate public consciousness for political ends – for example, to mobilise the conservative part of the electorate. This happens in Europe (see, for example, Escandell and Ceobanu 2009; Bevelander and Otterbeck 2010), as well as in Russia, a recent Moscow example being the 2013 mayoral election campaign.

During the implementation of the project 'Integration through daily interaction', one of the authors also encountered managers of companies that attract migrants, for example, to work in the housing and public amenities sphere, who were not interested in their directly interacting with the neighbourhood residents: 'Our Tajiks have no need of integration', declared one of the lower-level supervisors of such a company.

It is highly likely that such a reaction is evoked not by any subconscious dislike of interaction between Muscovites and, say, street cleaners, but by fear of losing the monopoly on the organisation of employees' social contacts, a monopoly that allows them to keep the migrants' conditions of engagement, accommodation and so forth in the dark. The non-transparent procedures by which these companies are selected as service providers, the absence of mechanisms by which residents may control budget expenditures set aside for construction and so on, are well known. However, regardless of what is the basis for such strategies, they lead to alienation and opposition between local residents and the migrants who are busy providing public amenities – they coexist in the same housing estates, but inhabit parallel worlds, having no occasion to interact.

Similarly, there is a dearth of information about the contribution that migrants make to the construction of the new residential blocks, the social, cultural and educational institutions that

Moscow needs, and their contribution in providing public amenities. This is especially important where construction is underway in close proximity to residential areas: on a daily basis, local residents observe dozens of strangers, talking in an incomprehensible language, near their homes, for reasons which are unclear to them.

The sharpest reaction to such a situation expressed during the interviews occurred when a respondent related how she was standing on the street with a friend when the work shift ended: 'we froze, because it was just like a plague of locusts, when you open the cupboards and some sort of black cockroaches rush out. They were all dressed the same, in stain-resistant black. They have a traditional, local style; these hats, pushed to the back of the head . . .' (Woman, aged 30, higher education, philologist). Such identification of migrants with insects is clearly offensive. However, this sort of imagery arises in situations where local residents do not connect the activities of migrants with themselves or their world in any way, because they have no information about where 'these people' – who do not resemble 'us' and who were not 'here' earlier – work, and what work they are doing.

Among our respondents, especially the younger ones, some doubts about the desirability of living next door to migrants were explained not by the characteristics of 'migrants as a whole', but by the potential difficulties that people accustomed to living in small families may experience living near to populous communities. This circumstance, in itself neutral, may become a source of hidden and often unconscious anxiety about some neighbours, including migrants. For example, one respondent answered a question about whom she would not want to live near (in the same building, on the same floor) thus: 'Probably, first of all, alcoholics, drug addicts, naturally. I also wouldn't want Tajiks, who settle themselves as a whole collective farm' (Woman, aged 45, higher education, doctor).

Another respondent says: 'I probably have an image of exactly such a flat, rented out to a whole brigade, sleeping in shifts on mattresses. I wouldn't want such a flat near me' (Woman, aged 50, higher education, designer). Interestingly, in responding to a clarification question about whether these features were connected

with the fact that these people had arrived fairly recently, the respondent answered with conviction that it was connected to their culture (or rather, lack thereof) – without directly identifying migrants as people without culture.

From the answers to this question it becomes clear that the majority of respondents do not especially aim at excluding migrants from the pool of potential neighbours. Alcoholics, drug addicts and noisy people evoked far more hostility. However, migrants often accompany the latter in the ‘blacklist’ of undesirable neighbours, are unwittingly associated with them and, consequently, assume a share of the unfavourable images and associations. Here is a typical answer:

I wouldn’t want, first of all, to live with those who create a great deal of disturbance, who, for example, hold drunken concerts at three in the morning, so that the whole building jumps. It doesn’t matter to me who’s in there, what nationality. Be they Turks, Mongolians, be they from Sicily. People may be quite different – that’s even, on the contrary, interesting. When everyone’s the same, sorted by type, that’s also hard. (Man, aged 57, higher education, university teacher)

Another example shows how negative impressions may be created in people who have no distinct anti-migrant orientation:

Naturally [I wouldn’t want to live with those], who are migrants, who have many relatives. That goes without saying. It may seem more or less a normal family, but there’s noise, commotion, visitors constantly. They don’t have [families with] few children. Noise, visitors constantly. On different floors, but it’s stressful, all the same. I don’t have other aversions. Absolutely no aversions based on ethnic features, and the same for educational qualifications. When there is noise and commotion from six until midnight, it’s already inevitable . . . Only for that reason. I wouldn’t even have known them, if they had behaved quietly. (Man, aged 63, higher technical education, security guard in a private company)

It is likely that if the respondents had interacted with migrants in some way, they would have perceived them less as a source of

disturbance and more as ordinary people with individual characteristics. In turn, the migrants themselves (and the researchers) may link this apprehension towards ‘newcomers’ with already developed anti-migrant sentiments, and draw conclusions about an unfriendly environment for migrants. If, however, there were regular contacts between local residents and migrants, spontaneous or organised, involving them in some sort of communal activity with neighbours connected with community safety, resolving communal problems, creating a space for shared leisure, this could create the basis for reducing migrantophobia and surmounting negative stereotypes about ‘migrants in general’.

Our material, however, suggests the presence of selectivity in the views that Muscovites hold about various migrants. One criterion is ethno-cultural. Thus, for example, in a focus group organised by one of the authors and consisting of young male Muscovites from one housing estate, participants demonstrated differing attitudes to migrants from Central Asia and from regions of the North Caucasus. Briefly put, the presence of migrants from Central Asia in Moscow did not bother the participants, since they had come to work, that is, to be ‘like us’, and did not display arrogance. But ‘*kavkaztsy*’ (people from the Caucasus), participants felt, wanted to be ‘above us’ and to ‘humiliate us’. As Russian citizens they have certain rights, and they use them in order to command a special position, according to the focus group participants. But ‘Tajiks’ come in order to earn that same status ‘that we have’.

The second criterion is social status. Respondents who talked about their close relationships with migrants (neighbours, a daughter’s girlfriend and so forth) stressed that these people – despite having come from countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus – are ‘just like us’ (as to the length of time having lived in Russia, having a stable position and a respected profession and so forth). This topic, which touches on the important issue of the relationship between ethnic and social divisions in post-Soviet societies, requires further investigation.

Contextual factors according to interview findings

We mentioned above that in Western literature certain general characteristics of the socio-economic system, reduced to formalised, measurable form, are used as independent variables potentially impacting upon public attitudes to migrants. In analysing the interview materials, we found that in Moscow the theme of migration (migrants) is also wrapped in ‘context’ – but here this ‘context’ has a different meaning: the topic of migration arises, and is accompanied, interpreted and understood by respondents in connection with other, more general, themes. Moreover, judging by the persistent presence of such themes in many interviews, by the length of time spent considering them, as well as by the degree of emotion accompanying them, we see these themes as in fact more significant for our interlocutors than the migrants themselves and everything connected with the latter. The answers to the NEORUSS questions eliciting an evaluation of the socio-political system that has developed in Russia provide a conceptual ‘bridge’ to understanding what really worries our respondents. People displayed a high level of consensus in their dissatisfaction. For example, 72 per cent of Moscow respondents agreed with the statement, ‘Those in power are indifferent to what is going on for people like me.’ Further, 70 per cent agreed that the participation of ordinary people in elections does not change anything (few of the questions related to migration as such received this level of support).

Respondents were able to express their dissatisfaction freely in interviews, and specific matters that vexed people emerged: these included corruption and the shady business connected with this; schemes for recruiting illegal labour; malpractice by bureaucrats and police; and also the ineffective work of social, housing and utilities services. Migrants invariably featured in discussions of these themes – because they embody these ‘sore points’ of Muscovite/Russian social life; they are an irritating or distressing reminder of them. Evidently Moscow, with its many specificities – the variety of legal and illegal forms of economic activity; the enormous volume of financial and also personnel resources, including ‘imported’ ones; as well as the city’s recently revitalised

programmes for construction and improvements – represents a showcase.

Narratives in which ‘migration’ is inserted within the context of ‘corruption’ are present in many interviews, usually constructed in one of two ways. The first of these goes as follows: some socially significant urban problem or other is being discussed, then the respondent shifts over to the topic of migration, which is seen as a ‘natural’ and expected continuation of the long-established unfortunate situation (from generalisation to case). For example, in discussing why the roads cannot be repaired in a way so that they would remain in good condition for many years:

R: That’s no good for the boss who runs this construction and repair company. He gets paid once for the road and that’s it. And then what? So, every year he dashes here and there, repairs, takes money. The roads are bad, the Moscow government pays. And there is no replacement. The business is shared. He’s well established here, he has connections, naturally, in that same government of Moscow. The mechanism works well . . .

I. There is a solution, but it is difficult to implement . . .

R. This whole structure is built on unskilled labour [implying the work of migrants, who predominate in this business]. And political will is needed to bring it down. But they sympathise with their own, and these are their own. (Man, aged 63, higher technical education, security guard in a private company)

In the second type of narrative, the observation/opinion of the respondent about migration and migrants ‘unfolds’ further in a more general evaluation of some socio-political problem (from case to generalisation). For example, discussing the problem of ‘rubber flats’¹² and the terrible conditions in which migrants live:

R. In order to live like that . . . around 3,800 for that place . . . A Kyrgyz woman rented a flat for herself there. . .

I. And then sublets it?

R. Then she gathers her countrymen and settles in. Agrees with the landlord that she would live there, around 30,000 a month in rent, and if 18 people at 3,800? Here the mafia are already organising . . . The

cops see everything, know everything. You see it on the television – every day they are locked up, and people still continue to pay for protection . . . what is it with these people? (Man, aged 66, secondary education, retired, now watchman)

In analysing narratives of ‘corruption’ a further element also requires attention. All respondents, from business people to teachers, from elderly pensioners to yesterday’s students, clearly picture the schemes for recruiting migrants that enrich the many participants in this structure: ‘And they are brought here for this, to be defrauded and line the pockets [of those who bring migrants]’ (Man, aged 66, secondary education, retired, now watchman).

Migrants are seen as ‘embedded’ (not by their own volition) in this system, which arose long before they appeared. Moreover, usually nobody blames the migrants themselves. So, for example, the respondents who related attempts to get work – either by themselves or by acquaintances – and had been unsuccessful because they were Muscovites and not migrants (who could be paid less), blamed the established system for this: ‘Every Muscovite wants to work officially, but now no one wants to employ you officially, [there’s] a lot of tax, really a lot’ (Woman, aged 35, secondary education, hairdresser).

Besides corruption, the second ‘background factor’ that is often intertwined with the theme of migration and defining attitudes towards the latter fits within the concept of ‘defended neighbourhood theory’ (Bevelander and Otterbeck 2010: 407). During periods of rapid changes in local living conditions (at city, micro-region or estate level), people lose the sense of habitualness, of being comfortable in their living environment. These changes have at least two constituents: the transformation of the built environment, and the appearance of a multitude of new people to whom they have not grown accustomed. The fragment of an interview below shows how both themes are interwoven in the consciousness of the respondent, a resident of one of Moscow’s satellite towns:

I. And what has changed, as regards appearance, generally?

R. Of those people there is practically no one left . . . and now, you yourself know, what sort of people are there.

I. Is that good or bad?

R. I don't like it.

I. Why?

R. I'm no opponent of the friendship of peoples, but it gets on my nerves because I have lived in this town all my life. All this has happened in front of my eyes. All this entire development . . . I don't like the unregulated development all over town. (Man, aged 50, secondary education, driver)

In the industrial metropolis of Moscow, traditions of 'neighbourliness' (*sosedstvo*), local support and cooperation are generally long gone. This is why, when a multitude of 'others' appears, Muscovites find in this a visible embodiment of the collapse of the 'old world'. In fact, that world disappeared much earlier, during the fundamental socio-economic transformation of post-Soviet times – but before the phase of active labour migration commenced, there were not that many visual proofs of its absence. It seemed if everybody around was 'our people', things were peaceful. Now it seems that many of the surrounding people are 'not ours', and this has become disturbing.

Concerning the 'quality' of migrants (that is, their 'otherness'), mention should be made of a central aspect that relates to the bulk of interviews as a whole: We find that the ethno-cultural specifics of migrants concern respondents considerably less than the socio-political 'context' of the problem of migration. Practically none of the interviewees mentioned Islam of their own volition; no one commented on 'alien culture' in the context of 'threat'. They basically talked, in quite general terms, about the appearance of a multitude of strangers in the city, who talk (often loudly) in an incomprehensible language among themselves and on the telephone, and who listen to loud music. That bears little relation to the ethno-confessional specifics of migrants, or to ethnic culture as such.

The 'quality' of migrants (in this context) is closely intertwined with the question of their 'quantity'. Researchers have already noted that local residents' perception of migrants is influenced by the fear that 'we have a lot of migrants', irrespective of their actual numbers (that is, as a perceived threat) (see Böltken 2003:

236, 237; Escandell and Ceobanu 2009: 64–5). Thus, in Moscow, according to the NEORUSS data, about 60 per cent of respondents consider that, where they live, more than 40 per cent of the population are migrants. This incredible figure derives from fears, aggravations and fatigue – stemming, in the first instance, from difficulties in adapting to the breakdown of one's accustomed environment; second, from the lack of information about the reasons for the concentration of migrants in particular places and about their role in the development of the town; and lastly, because Moscow is a giant, overfilled metropolis (many interviewees talked about this).¹³

Seen in this light, the greater apprehension displayed in the NEORUSS survey by Moscow women towards migrants becomes more understandable. Judging by the interviews, such an attitude is not usually accompanied by consciously anti-migrant frames, but boils down to a feeling of insecurity in situations where there are large groups of migrant men nearby – say, in an empty street or remote corner of a market. Moreover, on clarification, it appears that such feelings of fear may also be engendered by encountering a crowd of 'Russian' men. However, the chance of meeting a large group of non-migrant ('Russian') men united by some factor or other is not so great in Moscow – military units, football matches and bikers' rallies are not on the list of places the average resident visits every day. But as a result of their not resembling anything that the women are familiar with, migrant men are already united as a notional 'crowd' in the minds of these women.

Concluding remarks

An understanding of Russian society as continuously changing, among other things, as a result of migration, is only starting to form. This can be seen in the absence of a stable public consensus about migrants and their role and place 'among us' – and is why, in our opinion, various contradictions emerge in the answers to some survey questions. It can also be seen in a lack of tools, practices and initiatives that could facilitate mutually enriching contacts between different people living in Russia.

The mental unpreparedness of society to accept the new daily reality gives rise to anxiety among the population. From this stems the readiness to import images and formulations from the mass media and sociological surveys into the models they use for describing the world; and the readiness to respond to any appealing declaration, also if provocative or contradictory. In ordinary life, such things are quickly forgotten, disappearing into passive memory; people are perplexed to find feelings that they themselves would classify as xenophobic arising in them. However, these feelings emerge either as a result of negative personal experience, producing a readymade explanation for the situation, or due to the necessity of participating in discussions initiated by others – for example, when answering survey or interview questions. In such cases, people discover (sometimes to their surprise) pre-formulated answers to questions they would not have posed themselves in everyday life.

We could call this state of public consciousness ‘manifest xenophobia’. Most categories presented by the infosphere to describe social surroundings build on the opposition between different types of ‘us’ and ‘them’, whereas in daily life, the agency of these categories is very limited indeed. Many Muscovites may thus choose survey answers that seem to testify to their concern about the threat that migrants, Islam and so on represent to Russian culture, to society and the economy – even though they do not see this threat in the real-life migrants whom they observe around themselves every day.

Notes

1. This literature, in our opinion, still falls seriously short and contrasts starkly with the socio-economic and ethno-cultural significance of the problem of migrant workers in Russia today.
2. Such texts are quite numerous. Some participants in the NEORUSS project have, for example, reflected on the results of the survey of Moscow residents commissioned as part of the project (Filina 2013; Verkhovsky 2013).
3. There are several works based on research conducted with the help of ethno-psychological tests (see, for example, Lebedeva and

Tatarko 2007; Tatarko 2009), but the specifics of these tools make it difficult to compare the results of such studies with those of other research conducted on the micro-level.

4. We postponed the start of interviewing for as long as possible after the Moscow mayoral elections (6 September 2013) in hopes of minimising the effect on informants of the various forms of alarmist anti-migrant rhetoric employed in the election campaign.
5. Here we drew on the experience of Rogers Brubaker and colleagues (2006), who studied – via interviews and focus groups – various manifestations of ethnicity in the lives of ordinary people, taking as an example the daily cooperation of Hungarians and Romanians in Transylvania. As Brubaker notes, ‘we avoided asking directly about ethnicity, or signalling a special interest in ethnicity’. He cites Thomas Hylland Eriksen: ‘If one goes out to look for ethnicity, one will “find” it’ (Brubaker et al. 2006: 15). If ethnicity is only one, far from exclusive, means by which people may interpret and understand social reality (*ibid.*), in our opinion migrantophobia and xenophobia may be treated in a similar fashion. Therefore ‘prompts’ are inappropriate.
6. ‘Indirect’ questions were posed about matters potentially connected with migration, and that could lead to it (transport problems, social services, personal safety, street cleaning, public amenities), but without ‘prompts’ from the interviewer.
7. Again we stress that we are talking about the attitudes of ordinary citizens. As regards other aspects of nationalism and xenophobia – their manifestation in politics and ideology, in the mass media and public discourse and in the ranks of different (in)formal organisations and groups; as well as the forms and scale of opposition to xenophobia in civil society – in all this a specific ‘Russian’ character is notable, and indeed is the object of scrutiny in this book.
8. The example of contemporary Russia may be indicative of how foreign policy factors can impact on the level of everyday nationalism. A series of public opinion polls conducted in spring/summer 2014 recorded the declining popularity of anti-migrant views among Russians, influenced by events in Ukraine (see Opalev 2014; Tumanov 2014). However, this conclusion will need to be confirmed by further monitoring of the situation and analysis of new data.
9. For a study of these processes in the case of Germany, see Böltken (2003: 239). As to the dynamics of migrant population numbers, Western research, to our knowledge, does not say anything about

what happens in case this number falls swiftly. Under the economic crisis in Russia of 2014–15, migrants from the ‘near abroad’, facing ‘inflation’ of their currency remittances, have started to leave for their home countries. However, it is still unclear whether this trend will produce a serious and lasting (non-seasonal) reduction in the numbers of labour migrants in Russia, or what regions may be most affected. It is also difficult to produce estimates of possible correlation between this trend and the level of migrantophobia in different parts of the country.

10. The inconsistencies in respondents’ positions are notable also in the fact that, for example, together with support for the idea of ‘the necessity of migrants’, almost the same percentage (53.3 per cent) fully or somewhat agreed that ‘migrants – legal and illegal, and their children – should be sent back to their former homes’ (42.5 per cent did not support this idea, fully or somewhat). The pragmatism of respondents, who understand that the demographic situation in Russia demands an influx of supplementary workforce, is thus coupled with an emotionally coloured and unmotivated (in the question, no explanation is offered) desire ‘not to let them in’. We return to this peculiarity in respondents’ views in the concluding part of the chapter.
11. Waldinger writes only of ‘majority/minority’, without giving concrete figures.
12. Flats whose owners illegally register and/or accommodate dozens of migrants.
13. The reluctance of respondents to live in close proximity to multiple-family neighbours who are potentially noisy is also aligned with this aspect (see section on contact between migrants and Muscovites above).