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**“Migrant communities in Moscow: Their origins, functionality, and
maintenance mechanisms”**

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Introduction

This text presents the results of a study in which we have sought answers to questions of: what kinds of migrant communities exist in Moscow, how they arise and function, what types of people they unite, and how they are structured. Due to the peculiar circumstances encountered by migrants in the process of integration into the cityscape and social spheres of Moscow, we chose as our setting-off point not “ethnic neighborhoods,” which unlike in European and American cities do not exist in Moscow, but rather the “ethnic cafés” that are scattered throughout the city. Our study draws upon interviews and observations done in eighty Moscow cafés — empirical data collected over the research project’s six-month period. Having chosen as a conceptual centerpiece the appellation “community,” we will delineate in the first portion of this paper a theoretical framework for our research, after which we will progress to the main portion, an ethnographic description of two different types of community, in order to depict here how such migrant communities are, in reality, structured in Moscow.

Theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the study

Integration of migrants in urban settings has been a question of study for researchers since the beginning of the twentieth century. What are their occupations? Where and in what conditions do they live? What kind of education do they receive? How does the life of their children differ from their own? From the time of the earliest studies into such questions, two theses arose that explicitly and implicitly hold sway over the majority of studies dealing with urban migrant integration. The first states that integration is not some nebulous, ineffable affair; on the contrary, it is rooted in discrete social circumstances that must be studied in order to explain integration as a phenomenon. The second specifies that said circumstances usually occur in variegated, complexly-structured urban communities.

Conceptions of community in the social sciences over the course of the past century have been manifold, with various scholars periodically making attempts at sorting through the accumulating heap of existing theories. Thus, for example, M. Bertotti, F. Jamal, and A. Harden have undertaken an overview of possible definitions of the term “community,” delineating around ten fundamental meta-

narratives.¹ For the sake of brevity, we won't tarry long on the details of each one; however, we will at least note the key points most applicable to this text. In question are personal relationships, at the heart of which lie trust, solidarity, and close ties between community members. Various researchers have traced out such relationships, for example, in the countryside and have juxtaposed them with the atomized relationships found in the city. Moreover, they treat community as what arises and occurs in a symbolic sense — through commonality of symbols and rituals.

Another attempt at taking stock of previous research in the field of community studies, and an important one for our study, was carried out by Mark Smith in his article, "What is community?"² He distinguishes between three ideal types of meaning inherent in the term "community" and its peculiar phenomena, which he then describes. He notes that within the confines of concrete usage and in connection with concrete objects, these types of meaning and characteristics "may overlap in particular instances" and coincide with one another. Namely: first of all, community as place. This may be a village or a neighborhood; the important characteristic is a community's attachment to a particular space. Secondly, community as interest— a temporary union within the confines of individual goals which nevertheless demand a greater level of "communality." Thirdly, community as communion— a sort of fellowship constructed on the basis of some transcendental idea or symbol. The archetypal example of such an occurrence is a religious community. In such a case, a city neighborhood with a church or mosque may serve simultaneously as both *place* and *communion*, and an organization that starts out as a *community interest* may attempt to secure an increase in profit for itself through partial transformation into *communion*. The author additionally mentions that community may be looked upon as a value, an aggregation of norms, or as a social network; nevertheless, he does not carry this thought all the way through to form a clear gradation or distinction.

We, however, consider that the aforementioned authors have overlooked the important and analytically useful distinction between "community as a network" and "community as a type of social relations." This distinction remains incommensurable with the other conceptual dimensions of community, and is significant in connection

¹ cf. e.g. Bertolli M., Jamal F., and Harden A. "Connected Communities. A review of conceptualizations and meanings of 'community' within and across research traditions: a meta-narrative approach." <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/Funding-Opportunities/Research-funding/Connected-Communities/Scoping-studies-and-reviews/Documents/A%20review%20of%20conceptualisations%20and%20meanings.pdf>.

² Smith, M. K. (2001) 'Community' in the encyclopedia of informal education, <http://infed.org/mobi/community/>.

with its relationship to two complementary aspects of social structure — networks and norms.

The approach of studying community as a type of social relations understands a study of norms that characterize relations between individuals. Within such an approach, it is assumed that relations between individuals can be measured in terms of tolerance, trust, mutual aid, etc., with accepted, trusting relationships being community relations, whereas nonacceptance and distrust characterize anonymous relations within society at large. A network approach to defining communities means studying the network structure of social organizations and highlighting cohesive subgroups. Cohesive subgroups with high density of inward ties and a relatively low number of outward ties will, in this approach, be defined as communities.

It is in an environment of constant interaction between these two layers of social structure that a certain social dynamic occurs based upon the principles described by Pierre Bourdieu³, according to which the characteristics of the network — for example, the closed nature of a community — influence norms, which may be autonomized and radicalized, and then these norms influence the structure: a community's autonomization and radicalization facilitate its closed nature. We may observe the social mechanisms⁴ by which a community, understood as a network, is connected in empirical reality with community as relationships. Social theory has proposed a variety of social mechanisms that occur in conjunction with the network- and relational characteristics of communities:

- Trust — the members of a community trust one another more than outsiders;
- Tolerance — members of a community are willing to expend more time and energy trying to understand other members than to understand outsiders;
- Reciprocity — community members show more readiness to “sacrifice” for other members than for those “without,” and accordingly they have greater expectations of one another than of outsiders. As a result of this type of relationship between community members, it becomes easier to

³ Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Harvard University Press.

⁴ Hedström, P., & Swedberg, R. (Eds.). (1998). *Social mechanisms: An analytical approach to social theory*. Cambridge University Press; Hedström, P., & Swedberg, R. (1996). Social mechanisms. *Acta Sociologica*, 39(3), 281-308.

accomplish various deeds, practices, and events.

- Collaborative work — community members more often and more readily support one another's affairs;
- Civic participation — the community becomes, on the one hand, a forum for discussion of events regarding "society at large," and on the other hand also an elementary unit for participation in the latter;
- Use of a community's social capital — individuals can make use of their social connections as a means to acquire resources that they themselves lack;
- Investment — community members invest in projects that concern all members of the community;
- Normalization — community members live through difficult experiences together and transform them into acceptable ones;
- Creation of shared meaning — a community is a zone of more intense communion with others than normal, and within which its members' worldview is crystallized.

When we set before ourselves the task of creating a methodology appropriate for the study of migrants in Moscow, the search for and anthropological study of such a type of community became an important part of the task. In general terms, a description of such communities may be offered as follows, divided into six steps:

(1) Identification of the community. Such a community must be located and, during the course of this step, various factors must be used to determine that the given community's defining trait, in accordance with the network definition, is the intensity of relationships between its individuals. It is specifically this way of understanding a community — as a cohesive subgroup possessing a high density of inward ties — that has become a working definition for "community" for the purposes of this study. For subsequent work, it will be necessary to create systems of indicators that demonstrate network density. In our study here, we have elected to use for that purpose the level of acquaintance between visitors at cafés where we searched for communities, which was expressed through greetings, handshakes, and conversation "at table."

(2) Creation of a social profile for the community. This is the step through which there must be created a description of the community with regard to its members' significant social characteristics.

(3) Description of the community's network structure. Communities may possess a rather complex internal structure, and this third step involves identifying sub-communities and borders within the community as a whole, pinning down where the core lies and where the periphery, and describing the leadership structure. One factor in leadership may be the question of to whom one must address oneself if he seeks to enter into any sort of agreement with the community.

(4) Description of the community's history and explanation of how it came about. Each community appears as a result of the actions of various social agents with various dispositions and structural resources. To explain how a community has appeared means to make clear who are the agents and what the positions, dispositions, and structures that operate in such a manner as to elicit the community's appearance in society.

(5) Description of how the community functions. Communities influence the conduct of the individuals who take part in them, as well as the conduct of non-members. This step includes the task of explaining such an influence through describing the elementary causal reactions that connect community actors and structures.

(6) Description of types of meaning that circulate within communities. What are the values of community members, and what is their system of relevance? In consideration of the rather closed nature of the community at hand using our defining factors, it is these values which will inevitably become the defining element for community members' life experience. This is tied to elementary mechanisms of homophily and xenophobia; community often takes shape due to common ground on these issues and they serve as conducive to its formation. Thus, meaning in a community becomes collectively shared, and these types of meaning in particular must be described in step six.

Hence, the description of a community involves either a sequential or parallel progression through all six steps. Depending on one's goals or the stages in one's study, such a description may be reduced to one or more of these steps.

A project whose goal consists of describing migrant communities in Moscow has been carried out in cooperation with MSSES (the Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences) as part of a course on "Qualitative methods in sociology,"⁵ and

⁵ Project participants: A. Alkhasov, E. Belan, E. Bik, P. Dyachkina, M. Erofeeva, E. Kiselev, S. Kukol, M. Motylkov, A. Muradyan, I. Napreyenko, K. Puzanov, K. Smolentseva. Professor – I. E. Steinberg.

making use of the so-called “long table” method.⁶ The search itself for such communities in cafés was both a methodological peculiarity of and a limiting factor for the study, since cafés are public spaces where there exist both a portion of a community and an observation point for it, where interaction between the researcher and the community is possible; and a sampling unit that may structure the results of the study. Moreover, the layout of Moscow, as opposed, for example, to that of many cities in Europe and North America, is not conducive to the formation of ethnic neighborhoods, which are considered in foreign studies to be the “containers” for communities and are studied in connection with them. As a result of this, it was necessary to create a special approach for studying migrant communities in Moscow.

During the first (pilot) stage we created a base algorithm for finding communities and compiled a proposed database of “ethnic” cafés that were visited by the researchers and which served as points for search of, and observation of, communities. The cafés chosen for this project were considered “ethnic” if they satisfied three conditions: (1) availability of ethnic cuisine, (2) presence among visitors of representatives of “visible minorities”⁷ (at a minimum, at certain times or with some level of regularity), and, (3) indispensably, the presence of “visible minorities” among the café’s workers.

⁶ Long table — a method involving regular meetings between research participants for discussion of progress on the project, ranging from posing research problems and theoretical questions to methodological difficulties and analytical work. A “long table” simultaneously serves to further develop both the research and the researchers, inasmuch as it involves clarification and supplementation of gaps in knowledge, and since it fulfills the role of “intellectual support” for project participants. From: Shanin, T. “Methodology of dual reflexivity in studies of the modern Russian village” // Kovalev, E. M., Steinberg, I. E. *Qualitative methods in field sociology studies* / Ed. I. Steinberg. — St. P.: Aleteiya, 2009.

⁷ “visible minorities” — a classification used by the Canadian government, defined as “persons, other than Aboriginal people, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour” (Employment Equity Act [S.C. 1995, p. 44]). The term, which was first used in 1984 (*Equality in Employment: A Royal Commission Report*), appeared in response to the necessity of practical measures in the fight against discrimination in the job market against vulnerable groups, among whom were identified such “visible minorities,” along with women, Aborigines, and handicapped individuals. This classification was at first applied to Canadians of Chinese and African descent, who were meeting in equal measure with opportunity problems in the job market. At that time, the classification functioned well, since it identified truly “problematic” groups, differentiating them from ones that were not encountering such problems. And despite a much-changed situation today, the term is still in use in Canadian statistics. Its use in that field is criticized as creating an “artificial” group that is in fact heterogeneous in contemporary conditions (some minorities have ended up far more successful than the broader “white” mainstream, and as such can no longer legitimately be termed as belonging to the category of visible, vulnerable minorities). The entry criteria, however, are not well defined — vastly differing, for example, between the USA and Canada. For more on criticism of this term’s use, see Woolley, F. *Visible minorities: Distinctly Canadian*. - 2013. http://worthwhile.typepad.com/worthwhile_canadian_initi/2013/05/visible-minorities-distinctly-canadian.html.

For the present study, the term remains relevant, since it allows us to distinguish between different experiences in the given context which end up reflected in the structural makeup when “Tajiks,” “Uzbeks,” and “Caucasians” are combined into a common “indigenous” consciousness in one “group,” which in turn determines structural opportunities and interactions on a micro- scale.

During the project, our main focus was placed on migrant communities from Central Asia, the Transcaucasia region, and the Northern Caucasus, and so as an indicator of belonging to a migrant group, we used not foreign citizenship, but rather a correlation with “visible minorities.” During this first step, visits to the “ethnic” cafés were organized in such a way that two researchers would visit each café a minimum of two times, taking down observations and holding interviews with the owners, workers, and visitors for two hours or more. In all, participants visited around fifteen cafés according to this plan of action, and on each occasion, each researcher prepared a separate journal entry of around a thousand words, to be accompanied by photographs whenever possible. The results of each visit were analyzed during the regular meetings of the project group. Using the first step’s results, we formulated indicators of the communities of the first and second orders.⁸

The task at hand during the second stage was to verify the initial classification of the communities and saturate our delineated types with sampling units. As part of this process, we attempted to answer the question of what types of migrant communities exist in Moscow. And as a result of having successfully delineated the appropriate indicators, we were able to produce a new format for our fieldwork — the “express visit.” Express visits allowed us, in a short period of time, to form a working comprehension of a large number of cafés with regard to their possession or lack of communities and, in instances where such a community did exist, to determine its type and create for it a short description. When we realized that there was sample skewing present with an inordinate number of cafés being studied in the center of Moscow, members of the research team took, as a corrective measure, trips to neighborhoods distant from the center and performed express visits at cafés there (sixty-five cafés there, with thirteen resultant journal entries). The results of this second step allowed us to amend our classifications. In conformance with A. Strauss’s methodology of theoretical sampling, we declared an end to this step upon discovering that each community encountered could be placed into one type or another, after a long interval of finding no new communities that did not fit into our created classification.

The third step involved in-depth work with the communities of each type. For

⁸ For more on the study’s methodology, see Varshaver, E. A. and Rocheva, A. L., Communities in cafés as an integration environment for ethnically-foreign migrants in Moscow. // *Collection of essays on the results of the “Ways of Russia 2013” conference*. (in print) (in Russian)

this step, we chose one or several cases to be examined using ethnographic methods. Our task consisted of making a full description for them in accordance with the methodology laid out above: it was necessary to describe the community's profile, mechanisms which led to its appearance and functionality, elements of its structure, and the kinds of meaning that circulate in it. As a result, we created thick descriptions of cases for each type. On average, the ethnographic work on each type demanded around thirty hours of labor and is reflected in dozens of field journals.

As a result, during the course of the project, we were able to describe around eighty cafés around Moscow.

Brief summary of the research project's results

The study carries mainly a descriptive character, although it did allow the formulation of a range of analytical generalizations.

Communities do not arise on an ethnic basis. Despite the widely accepted and discussed preference for members of one's own nominal group, the real mechanisms that lead to communities' formation among migrants are rarely connected with ethnicity: people end up in the same community for reasons of family ties or a common homeland, as a result of working in the same place or of like religious affiliation, and in all of these cases ethnicity and common language occur only as additional, but not primary, foundations for communities. Nevertheless, a considerable number of communities are in fact mono-ethnic, but this is most often tied to the fact that such communities consist of individuals already acquainted with one another due to their country of origin — either directly or through an intermediary. The only exception is the system of Kyrgyz mono-ethnic institutions, which provide consolidation on the level of nominal ethnicity, although that system gives rise not to communities (by our definition), but to a mono-ethnic urban "society." (*Gesellschaft* according to F. Tönnies) Communities, on the other hand, never possess ethnicity as a foundation or mechanism for their construction.

Diaspora organizations do not represent communities. The perception that migrants live in diaspora communities that have leaders does not match up with reality. More often than not, an aggregate of migrants from one and the same country possesses a much more complicated structure, within which it is possible to delineate an elite that is practically unconnected with the rest of the country's migrants (excepting perhaps in

cases of communities whose members possess a common bond through family or homeland locality) while remaining to a much greater extent connected to the “establishment” of its country of origin— and the poor migrants of low social status end up forming their own communities separately from the elite. Diaspora organizations, having been founded not infrequently by groups of the elite, lay claim to the role of representative body for the entire migrant aggregate from one specific country even when they are not, and without developing communicative institutions between migrants. One exception is the Aga Khan Foundation, which through its activities breathes great life into the Pamir communit(y/ies) in Moscow.

Communities are a space for migrant integration. According to the theory of segmented assimilation,⁹ migrant communities truly are a space for integration for some migrants. Owing to particular relationships and mechanisms — trust, control, social capital, and normalization — communities allow the modification of one’s network of personal acquaintances, resource acquisition, and also a dynamic of identity. At the same time, nowhere near all the migrants are included in such communities or find themselves on the path towards integration through them. However, a model that would explain the choice of one strategy or another has not yet been developed.

A community’s structure determines the relationships and institutions that arise within it: namely, trust, social control, concentrated social capital, normalization, tolerance, reciprocity, collaborative work, civic participation, and creation of shared meaning. These relationships are among those characteristic of migrant communities. In this study, the first four were reflected most vividly, and we will examine them in greater detail. A detailed description of how each of these mechanisms function may be found in the case descriptions.

Communities form in various ways and differ from one another substantially. The relatively closed nature of communities consisting only of migrants may arise as a result of the influence of a whole host of mechanisms and factors. As a result, the “content” of these communities — their homogeneity and background of members, the types of connections within them, mechanisms of functionality, and spheres of life associated with them — will substantially differ one from the other. During the course of the study, we were able to identify four such types of community. Each of them is an ideal type

⁹ Portes, A., & Zhou, M. (1993). The new second generation: Segmented assimilation and its variants. *The annals of the American academy of political and social science*, 530(1), 74-96.

according to its method of origin and functionality, and real-life communities at cafés may partially reflect the traits of several types. Nevertheless, we were able to pinpoint cases that approached the ideal “types”. What follows is a description of those types.

Communities within walking distance. Communities within walking distance are formed of people who live and/or work together or simply not far from each other. Due to this, walking-distance communities may arise on the strength of those relationships formed at workplaces or in residence locations apart from meetings at cafés. Such cafés, meanwhile, may serve both as places to conduct meetings and as relaxation spots, both consultation and information centers, bank safe-deposit boxes, and much more.

Homeland-rooted communities. Identification according to area of origin figures prominently in the formation of such communities, and their members’ mechanisms of network migration are also connected with commonality of origin: for example, the community of migrants from Samarkand includes both Uzbeks and Tajiks from that city. Relationships rooted in the context of the community from whence they came end up reproduced in the context of Moscow. Members of the Moscow community keep up active contact with their home country, which lends to the community a distinctly transnational character, and in Moscow we may readily observe only a portion of the community located there. This sets the stage for the possibility of a high level of social control and an accordingly high level of trust. What’s more, the presence of these transnational connections may provide for easier entry of newly arrived migrants into the community upon their arrival in Moscow since they may know of its existence beforehand. At the same time, the rehashing of meaning as brought in from “over there” is an important activity for the members of the community — and it may become the foundation both for the community’s existence and, in the end, its separation from others who have remained “back there.”

Muslim communities. Muslim communities in Moscow arise in connection with two dispositional factors of influence inherent in Islam as a religion: the practices of coming together as a congregation and of Muslim ecumenism. In accordance with the first practice, the community of believers should come together at least once a week for Friday salat, and indeed every encouragement is given to close association of Muslims amongst each another. According to the second factor, a Muslim community is according to principle a multi-ethnic one, within which any ethnic or national identity must be left behind in favor of one’s identity as a Muslim, since under the Muslim

utopian government, the caliphate, everyone is part of a single greater community of Muslims (a so-called “ummah”). Muslim communities, in consolidating different groups, distinguish themselves on a resource availability level, and act as a logical space and an avenue for integrating groups that are less well-provided for — for example, migrants from central African countries where Islam is widespread. Muslim communities in Moscow are located close to official (mosques) and unofficial (prayer halls of “alternative” Islam and halal cafés) Muslim infrastructure sites.

“*Azerbaijani business.*” Azerbaijani entrepreneurs in Moscow (including both businessmen and people who contribute to their affairs on various levels) form a dense social network. The spatial foundation for this community’s functionality is provided in part by cafés and restaurants that are more or less evenly distributed throughout Moscow. Azerbaijani entrepreneurs regularly gather at these food service spots, with their exact makeup changing from day to day as individuals come and go. The community of “Azerbaijani business” is an important space and an avenue for integration of migrants new and old from Azerbaijan who can through it find work and also support for the opening and running of their own businesses.

The separate finding of the research is Kyrgyz “city” in Moscow - “*Kyrgyz-town.*” Among our sample there were several establishments frequented, depending on the time of day, exclusively by migrants from Kyrgyzstan. In part, these were cafés, and in part, nightclubs. People go there in small groups, dance in pairs, and go their separate ways (sometimes pairing off two by two at the end of an evening). Visitors to this type of establishment usually don’t know each other beforehand, and the café or club serves as a forum for meeting new people. This allows us to conclude that “Kyrgyztown” is not a community, since a community, by our definition, is a dense network. However, as the results of our later research on Kyrgyz migrants’ integration in Moscow show, Kyrgyz institutions (which include, but are not limited to, medical centers and sports clubs) are not the main basis for the continued functioning of “Kyrgyztown” (the vast social network of Kyrgyz migrants in Moscow that is not confined spatially to any one place).

Ethnography of migrant communities in Moscow

The results given so far paint a general picture of what migrant communities are like in Moscow; now we will offer the ethnographic descriptions of communities of two different types — those whose roots lie in a common homeland (“homeland-rooted”),

and those for which Islam is the uniting factor. Both of these descriptions were created as a result of observations and interviews carried out by the authors of this paper. Homeland-rooted communities were studied based on data collected from Samarkand communities in cafés at three different locations in Moscow, while the Muslim ones were studied in the area where Muslim infrastructure is most built-up — so, in several cafés located near one of the mosques. Each description includes general information about the community, a description of its structure and how it functions, and for the Muslim community there is as well a separate section devoted to the types of meaning created through it.

Homeland-rooted communities

For our case study of homeland-rooted communities of migrants from Samarkand, we chose three spots in Moscow: (1) one café in a marketplace in the southwest of Moscow, (2) three cafés in a marketplace in the northwest of Moscow, (3) and one café in a commuter residential district in the northwest of Moscow.

The first location is a large café that works round-the-clock, located in an area highly frequented due to its proximity to two shopping centers, three marketplaces, and a transportation hub linking Moscow and the localities around it. The café is situated on an alleyway that leads to the wholesale market. On the same alleyway there are also a barbershop with Tajik barbers and a kiosk that sells music by popular artists from Central Asia. Chance passers-by who have no connection to the wholesale market are rare. According to the senior waiter, “The café is halal,” a statement which is first and foremost about the food; they do sell alcohol because “without alcohol there’s no café,” but there’s no smoking allowed, in keeping with fire code.

The second spot is located at a large building supplies market in the northwest of the city. Sellers from Samarkand began to appear in significant numbers here at the start of the 2000s; the “age” of the Samarkand cafés here is rarely more than five years old; they’re a sort of guide marker indicating the “Samarkandian” portion of the marketplace, since they’re located in the spots where wood is sold, which is a specialty of migrants from Samarkand, and in the areas where anyone will point you to if you ask them about “the Samarkandians at the marketplace.”

The third center isn’t connected to marketplaces at all— it’s a café tucked away deep in a sleepy commuter neighborhood in the northwest of Moscow far from any

metro station, which means getting there is convenient only for car owners and neighborhood locals. There is nothing “customarily ethnic” about the area that would reveal the character of the café and its visitors. And yet the majority of those who go there, just like those who work there, are “visible minorities.” Whereas at the two locations just mentioned the café spaces seemed consolidated and free from divisions since “chance” visitors almost never go there, at this place there’s a special table hard at work “sorting” the guests who come in the doors. At the entrance, community members exchange a few words with the administrator and head off into one part of the hall that’s well within view from the bar and with lively conversations taking place between tables; the others make the trip all the way to the far end of the hall and during their entire stay remain mostly “within the confines” of their own individual tables.

The Samarkand communities concentrated around these three spots possess only a weak connection with one another. As opposed to the Kyrgyz, who when they visit a café often know (and visit) several of them in various spots around the city, the Samarkand migrants know only of one, or at most two such spots. Among the three spots just discussed, the most well-known (and also the oldest) is that second one, located in a marketplace in the northwest. The visitors at the other two locations know of it as well, though those two locations themselves have only weak connections: visitors to one are ill-informed about the existence of the other.

The distribution of guests among these spots occurs in accordance with two fundamental principles: (1) the cafés’ geographic locations; and (2) the social status of the visitors.

(1) Even among those who have lived in Moscow for more than a decade, visitors to these cafés remain strongly connected to one region or district of Moscow, carving out a life for themselves there within its bounds: it is there they will find both work, and living space — and cafés. Owing to the population’s geographically static nature, its visits to cafés located in other areas of the city may be described as exceptions that are not significant enough to allow keeping up contact with those communities. Accordingly, the cafés located in various districts attract varied guests, and the community found in the southwest of Moscow will be found to share little in common with the two communities discussed in the northwest.

(2) Despite a negligibility in price difference between all the different cafés, the

respective visitors to each one differ significantly according to social status. The “market” locations are aimed first and foremost at communities relying on common homeland roots and work at the marketplace “shoulder to shoulder.” Conversely, the third spot, unconnected with marketplaces, positions itself as “a cut above” the rest and, accordingly, able to attract not only “market workers” but also people “of a finer cloth”: non-marketplace based businessmen, rentiers and landlords (living off the interest from their investments), and the “golden youth,” whom you won’t chance to see at the other two locations. It’s especially telling that the third café offers Wi-Fi, and it’s not uncommon to see visitors using tablet devices surfing the Internet or chatting by Skype.

The only group able to fill the role of keeping up connections between all three social centers remains the taxi drivers, though even they quite often become “attached” to one part of town or the other.

Community structure

Each community possesses a core, which contains the closest, most frequent, and most intensive ties, and a periphery where the ties are weaker (e.g. those who visit irregularly or rarely). Communities that arise at the crossroads of corporate and homeland-oriented relations are able to avail themselves of cafés. This is how the Samarkandians’ “marketplace” cafés have arisen: under the influence of demand for such a service, appropriate individuals were found who could create such a business but who did not themselves (at the start) belong to the core of the community. In conversation with members of the community’s core, one receives the impression that they themselves are the owners of the café or at least that they are its “majority shareholders,” viewing it as an enterprise into which they’ve put an investment (though not necessarily a monetary one):

When we were discussing how the café had added an awning and some little tables on the street, G. said: “Yeah, I’ve got some great prospects going on here.” He related how he’d been there since 7:30AM that day, and how each morning he brings the café workers mille-feuilles or some other pastries (journal entry, 05.06.2013).

Such a position allows the “shareholders” to modify the cafés’ work to meet their own demands, to propose and carry out changes. Thus, representatives from the Samarkand community asked for the owner of one of the cafés studied who was from Chechnya, to take on a separate individual as a worker, and one who would need to be

paid quite well (by the establishment's standards), — and the owner accepted their request.

Here the usual dish is rice pilaf — they made a special agreement with the café owner to invite a “well-known pilaf specialist,” who takes \$100 a day as his pay. They prepare twenty kilograms of rice, which is enough for a hundred people. Out of that hundred, M. knows if not all of them personally, at least all of their faces. At 11:30 they start serving the pilaf, and by 12:30 it's already gone (journal entry, 08.06.2013).

The third café, in the commuter district of Moscow, came about as a business venture after its non-Samarkandian owners “sifted through” various target audiences, tried working for the “Bukharans,” but in the end “seized upon” the idea of the Samarkand community, which became their target audience instead. Cooks and administrators from Bukhara were changed out for workers from Samarkand, after which an advertising campaign was carried out through which they fed Samarkandian taxi drivers for free for several days. Their bet on the taxi drivers turned out to be a good one, as those drivers' vast social networks attracted visitors to the café in enough numbers to create from them a core of community and its periphery. We may reasonably assume that should doing business with specifically the Samarkand community in mind cease to accomplish the desired economic results for the business owners, then they will change out the café's current profile for a new one once again. Creating a café tailor-fit to a specific community is a functional business model able to be copied elsewhere. Yet at the same time, such a café is not “ethnic business:”¹⁰ it provides a variety of workers for successful communication with various possible customers. The Samarkand administrator supports the Samarkand community, the Russian administrator/accountant arranges banquet events and other such business with Russian customers (and it was she who came out to speak with us, the “Russians” or “Muscovites,” when we first visited the café and asked for someone from management). Lending daily support to the communities' functionality is the responsibility of the administrators, although the owner herself is, little by little, becoming drawn into the community as well: she's learning Tajik, has stopped smoking, and is preparing to observe the Ramadan fast this year. Retaining the communities as customers at the café is the key objective for this type of business, and so in

¹⁰ Waldinger R. et al. (1990) Ethnic entrepreneurs: Immigrant business in industrial societies //University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Academy for Entrepreneurial Leadership Historical Research Reference in Entrepreneurship. Available at: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1496219

extraordinary circumstances it even engages in “feeding” them and their key figures. One such extraordinary circumstance was when the SOBR, the quick-response special police force, paid the café a “visit,” after which the owner herself took measures to “resuscitate” life at the café, spending time at tables with guests from the “core” in order not to lose them as clients — and with them their whole community.

“Core” members of the community view the café as “home turf,” where they enjoy the benefits of sitting down to relax, carrying out negotiations, and giving orders, often to include special missions given directly to the waiters without contacting the owners or managers of the café:

When I arrived, G. wasn't at the café; I asked one of the waiters if he would be there that day; he took out his phone and called G., they spoke about something briefly, and then the waiter handed me the phone. We agreed on a time to meet, and in the meantime G. offered me to have ice cream (which was not on the menu) — and I didn't bother to refuse; he asked me to hand the phone back to the waiter and, presumably, gave orders (journal entry, 03.06.2013).

Upon making contact with a new informant, we used as an indicator of his belonging to the community's core whether or not he already knew, without our direct disclosure, who we were and why we were at the café.

The “periphery,” in turn, is essential for the running of the café as a business venture; it provides the necessary volume of orders. Additionally, the periphery provides a geographical footprint of the community, which serves as a means to increase the community's own sense of significance and pride based on its resources and “sphere of influence” (“*people come here all the way from Zelenograd*”¹¹); the periphery offers the potential for growth to the community, since it possesses new resources that may interest the core. The ratio of core to periphery seen at the café varies based on the day of the week: if it's a working day, the community core will be dominant, whereas on weekends, by contrast, there will be more “peripheral” visitors.

The communities' core consists of Samarkandians whose native tongue is Tajik, but who, having lived in Uzbekistan for long enough, also speak Uzbek. And so, an Uzbek from Samarkand may know Tajik, but “doesn't want to speak it,” preferring his own language instead. This marginal position allows the core to be “kinfolk” to both the

¹¹ A locality outside Moscow

Uzbeks from various parts of Uzbekistan, and to the Tajiks, who form the broader periphery of the community. It's interesting to note that the Uzbek customers, including those from other parts of Uzbekistan, mark the café as being "their own," relating how "in reality" the chef is from Namangan, which makes the café from there as well, Namanganese, Ferghanese, and really just downright "Uzbek." For the core of the community, the main identifying trait is regionally Samarkandian, one which encompasses the aforementioned, ethnic identifiers.

The café's location and its surroundings in great part determine how social life works within it. In part, the communities at cafés in marketplaces are an organic extension of that which occurs beyond their walls, and thus they become forums for sellers of "shady" perfume products and for beggars. Theirs is a marginal position: on the one hand, they don't "network" with the café, yet on the other hand, they show up there often enough that they have running jokes going with the café owners. For example, an African young man from Cameroon jokes that he's in fact Tajik from Cameroon, which makes the café owner smile to no end — and it serves as a "pass" for doing business at the café. Conversely, the third café, due to its isolated location from the marketplace environment, is like an island in one of Moscow's sleepy residential regions, and it does not possess such marginal participants in its community life.

Community functionality

The usual pragmatic nature of social networks, with regard to acquisition of employment, accommodation, and various official documents, holds no relevancy for the "homeland-rooted" communities currently under discussion. This is impingent upon the fact that the groups' cores consist of individuals from the "old" migration, for whom all such preliminary questions were long ago resolved:

They don't look for accommodation and work — the ones who come here, it's not something they need to deal with. (journal entry, 07.06.2013)

For the given homeland-rooted communities, the most important factor is how they function as a reference group. There we may observe those who possess a common experience which is perceived as deviant on the parts of the sending and receiving societies, but the possession of which is not uncommon among migrants in Russia. Possessing two wives or refusing to help someone build his career at the marketplace — these are situations that require discourse, discussion, and subsequent normalization.

Homeland-rooted communities are tightly interwoven with transnational connections between “sending” communities. What happens in Moscow to migrants from the Rural region of Samarkand does not go unnoticed by members of the café community, which means by anyone who enters into its social network from Samarkand. Wives on either side of the border might be acquainted at a distance, which does nothing to calm the intensity of emotions and difficulties in the interpersonal relations found in such a complex type of household, where the husband’s earnings must be divided up among different parts of the family. This all gets discussed time and again, with rational and emotional arguments found in favor of such a familial arrangement, or else it is not discussed with any seriousness at all but clothed over in jokes. Either way, this situation serves as a means of confirming once again that an individual is not “abnormal,” and moreover as a means for the community to test its uniformity and integrity with regard to personal views and meaning.

The currents flowing between Samarkand and the Moscow marketplaces have reached a level of saturation at which the upper positions in marketplace hierarchy have become more or less entrenched. Immigration is “growing old,” and those who came to Moscow long ago and have achieved a certain status are beginning to cast doubt on the expectations and circumstances imposed by their “sending” society back home with regard to help for newcomers. In conversations held within the community, the lack of desire to help one’s fellow countrymen immediately attain high positions (such as opening their own shops, for example) becomes legitimized by claiming that these newcomers break the rule of reciprocity and go against the grain of the established hierarchy — whereas social control, it would seem, does not always function flawlessly:

Sitting together at the table, G. and N. complained that the people had become disrespectful: they would arrive from abroad, “be a father to me, help me out,” then you would help them, — and in half a year’s time they would no longer even give you the time of day. (journal entry, 03.06.2013)

He keeps his nephews in check — I forgot the right word for it, it’s not that he shelters criminal acts, but on the other hand he’s not just looking after them; “Because it’s easy for them to go astray here;” if they argue, he reminds them, “Where did you come here from? Did you speak Russian then? Who taught you? Who was your teacher?” (at which G. grabs at his lips while speaking and acts like he’s ripping them out — a symbolic gesture, as if he were tearing from the lips of his nephews the words that he didn’t like). Nowadays G. no longer helps those who want to open their own

shops because if he did, he'd have to answer for them. (journal entry, 05.06.2013)

At the same time, I witnessed G. “induct” his nephew into the community, a young boy who had just finished the ninth grade in Samarkand and had arrived to work at G.’s shop. Keeping him in line shouldn’t be too difficult: first of all, he’s a close relative, and secondly, he’s young and speaks no Russian, which means he does not yet possess the necessary resources to challenge the accepted social order.

Communities are a space of safety in another sense, as well. One Friday evening in the café in the northwest was remarkable in that on one of the tables where the “core” community members were sitting, there was a bottle of cognac and homemade little dumplings. The dumplings had been prepared and sent to the café as a gift by the wife of one of the men seated at the table. In situations where “Muscovite” conceptions of neighborly relations differ from those of migrants from Central Asia, and when these differences are coupled with xenophobia, it sometimes happens that an offering brought to one’s neighbor “with one’s respects” is rejected, in which case migrant communities come to the rescue and serve the would-be gift giver as fitting “neighbors” who will accept the gift of food instead.

Apart from work at an individual level, when a community acts as an agent of quasi-neighborly cooperation, it may “function” on an institutional level, taking upon itself the representative function of “Samarkandians in Moscow.” When official representatives and diaspora organizations are severed from the presence of the real people they endeavor to represent, communities become noninstitutionalized representatives. We may observe this through the example of how the café functions as a lost and found center for Samarkandians:

One time a man from Samarkand lost his handbag containing his documents at the airport — but it was found by a different man, also from Samarkand, who brought it to this café; U., through his network of connections, found the owner, got him on the telephone, and returned the passport and automobile registration papers. (journal entry, 07.06.2013).

Homeland-rooted communities, as we have seen, are a space of symbolical or conceptual safety. This safety is created because these social networks containing people with experiences similar to one’s own, aid in gaining a foothold and a semblance of “normalcy” for oneself, and allow one to function in ways that an individual would not

be able to with confidence in relation to others — with regard to one’s neighbors, for example.

Muslim communities

We began our ethnographic study of Muslim communities by locating a “cluster” concentrated in one of the regions of Moscow featuring a developed Islamic infrastructure. This infrastructure includes both official Islamic institutions (connected with the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims in Russia) and unofficial ones (including the several cafés where we conducted our study).

The observations gathered during the first stage of our study at four cafés demonstrate how “visible minorities” predominate in them and how, according to a range of indicators, the conclusion may be made that communities exist there. Our next question to answer was to what extent the identified communities were autonomous or, conversely, to what extent they occurred as fragments of one greater community that overshadows the boundaries of each café and exists primarily in connection with a nearby mosque. To clarify this, we carried out additional observations near mosques, and then we superimposed upon those results the ones gathered from initial observations at the cafés. We discovered two autonomous Muslim communities. The first is based around a mosque and two cafés located nearby (and on Fridays, due to the influx of worshippers, the number of such cafés increases to three). The second community is in a café located further from the mosque and closer to the metro station, with no formal connection to the mosque; it includes as well Muslims who are employed at various locations throughout the area and visit the café regularly to have a meal and to pray. Two things guarantee the rise and operation of this community: the regularity with which customers visit (as the “barman” of the place put it, the regulars all know each other and have “gotten chummy”), and the existence of “spiritual ties” — regular prayers side by side in the prayer room provided within the café.

The framework for the first (mosque-based) community is fashioned by former residents of the eastern portion of the Northern Caucasus with widely varying stories of how they immigrated; the typical version, though, consists of having arrived in Moscow from the Caucasus seven to ten years ago. For a snapshot of a different, atypical member of this community, we may turn to one migrant from Kyrgyzstan, who, though he works

in the eastern portion of the city, rents an apartment along with other Kyrgyz in the center, located right by a mosque in order to facilitate regular trips there for prayer. There are Muscovites as well – Russians who have turned to Islam form a separate “cluster;” there are few of them at the mosque and they associate amongst themselves. Additionally, there is a certain number of migrants from Muslim countries in Africa, including the Sub-Saharan — from Senegal, Guinea, and others.

The second community possesses former residents of the Northern Caucasus as well, but they do not predominate there. Most of all it consists of migrants from Central Asia, primarily from Uzbekistan. The owner of its café is an Uzbek, all its waiters are Uzbeks, and Uzbek speech may be heard louder than all the others among the guests. However, it must be added that when I asked one of my informants, also an Uzbek, to determine the ethnicity of those around him in the café, he quickly identified all the Uzbeks in the room, but with regard to around half of the “visible minorities,” he had difficulty identifying them, which led to a feeling of significant linguistic diversity.

The observations gathered by that point at the four cafés and around the mosque allowed us to form a general picture of the communities that prevail there and to determine proper locations for carrying out future observations. Accordingly, the text that immediately follows here will deal predominantly with that first, mosque-based community.

Community structure

The Muslim community is internally heterogeneous. People enter it from all walks of life, with differing migration experiences, ethnic identification, social class, and religious views. To what extent are these potential dividing lines reflected in the actual existence of such a community?

Within the community, we may speak of the existence of a Caucasian core with traversable boundaries between groups. Most groups of people at tables I knew about consisted of individuals either all from one and the same republic, or from various republics around the Caucasus. The boundary between them as the core of the community and migrants from Central Asia is bright.¹² One migrant from Kyrgyzstan confirmed that it was still early for him to begin associating with others in the mosque

¹² Cf. Alba, R. (2005). Bright vs. blurred boundaries: Second-generation assimilation and exclusion in France, Germany, and the United States. *Ethnic and racial studies*, 28(1), 20-49.

since his knowledge of Russian was poor. Informants from the Caucasus mentioned how in their circles there weren't any migrants from Central Asia — because “*friends are chosen by mindset, and each people group has its own.*” Migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa form their own special group, inasmuch as its level of integration into the community varies. A., a migrant from Guinea, goes to the mosque most of all to pray and does not view it as a source of social capital, while conversely, migrant U. from Senegal uses the mosque as a source of finding dependable work and as a location for leisure activities and pastimes:

He's forty-one years old, though he doesn't look it. In 2006, he came to Russia from Senegal and stayed in a university dormitory near [name of the metro station in Moscow] with others from Senegal. [...] he spends all his free time at the mosque, where he associates with individuals simply on his own initiative, prays, and looks for work. Nearly all the work he has found has been through the mosque. Do they ever scam him out of his money? He did recount one instance, but it involved a Ukrainian. Muslims don't run scams. And he's almost always been able to find work — if not in one place, then in another. At interview time he was acquainted with many in the café. (journal entry, 24.05.2013).

This case is particularly important since at the start, U. had relied on his fellow Senegalese in Moscow, but over the course of seven years, his social circles have changed, and now they're primarily Muslim, multi-ethnic, and acquired at the mosque. During our conversation, U. greeted those who came into the café in Russian and then changed to a language I didn't recognize, then later back to Russian. As it turned out, that second language had been his native tongue; he had taught a greeting in it to one of his Caucasian employers, and thus I was able to witness an exchange of greetings between an Ingush and a Senegalese in the Senegalese's native tongue. Nevertheless, as a rule, the non-Caucasian migrants tend to be located either at the community's periphery or beyond its bounds, and their level of use of the mosque as a source of social capital varies drastically.

The community's religious heterogeneity is most visible in the “transplanted” (predominantly from Dagestan) conflict between Salafism and Sufism. The Mouride followers of the late Said Afandi al-Chirkawi are easily recognizable with their characteristic taqiyah caps. There are also Salafi: they keep to themselves and are not a part of the community, and although they have their own (parallel) Islamic

infrastructure “scattered” around Moscow, it is still possible to see them at the mosque. But most worshippers, to all appearances, are located either somewhere in the middle of this continuum or not along it at all if they don’t have the chance to delve into the finer points of theology.

The community attracts a wide variety of individuals, from hired laborers to businessmen of all levels — ranging from the “oligarchs,” whose personal motor fleets the café owner describes with gusto, all the way down to petty traders. Class boundaries in this community are contextual and far from prominent. At one table, for example, there might be only businessmen if they’re conducting affairs. Moreover, in cases when ethnicity is tied to a particular activity, an observed social circle may end up homogenous according to both criteria. One gets the impression that he probably won’t ever meet a Chechen here who works as a hired laborer. As a result, groups of Chechen businessmen may sit together at the tables, and such groups may in fact also possess familial ties, connected simultaneously both by ethnicity and class. Nevertheless, if individuals know each other and there is a topic up for discussion (and the general and most heated topic, judging by the number of conversations about it, is religion), then social class ceases to play a role, especially since integration — both social and ethnic — plays an important part in Islamic discourse, according to which the “ummah” must be united, and it is this factor, presumably, which spurs on integration actively and continually and which resists the formation of social boundaries.

Community functionality

A mosque-based community, in comparison to the others identified during the study, possesses a “degree of reality” higher than all the other studied communities: it is a tight, closely-knit community, and it could not be so were it not so functionally effective for its members. We have succeeded in identifying several levels at which the given community “works” for its members in a positive fashion.

(1) The community functions as a labor market. The aforementioned U. spends a great amount of time at the mosque in part because he knows that sooner or later he will find work there. The mosque has a sort of “bulletin board” where information on job opportunities appears from time to time. Additionally, the community, it may be supposed, unites and raises the level of trust among mosque-goers who are connected to each other through workplace, who are acquainted with one another even apart from

their time at the mosque, but who meet one another at the mosque or in its direct proximity as well. The fundamental mechanism in finding work and supporting trust in such cases remains having a common homeland, however the possibility cannot be ruled out that the fact of belonging to one and the same homeland may in turn strengthen and reinforce one's sense of belonging to the mosque community, as well.

(2) The community is connected with various charity institutions, which help to improve the condition of Muslim migrants who might otherwise “go adrift among the Moscow machinery.” Firstly, there is an official charity run by the mosque. Secondly, there are unofficial charity funds through which mosque-goers may pool their money to provide for those in need. For example, the owner of one of the cafés receives money from people in his circles that he then uses to feed poor mosque-goers in his café:

X. has several personal friends or acquaintances (he calls them “his own”) who chip in so that X. can feed the poor from time to time. [For example, those] who cannot rent their own living space and sleep in the mosque. [...] There are days when they [...] are allowed to eat free. And leading up to Eid al-Fitr they try to feed everyone for free every day. It's interesting that the charity efforts are organized through the café ONLY by people who have some close connection to the owner. He says that he'd rather not put up a collection box for sadaqah¹³ because then people might claim that he was using the money improperly, and he doesn't want to have to take that responsibility. (journal entry, 22.05.2013)

(3) The key function of communities remains their formulation and support of existential meaning. An “atomic” existence in the city all but condemns individuals to find meaning and support their relevancy on their own. Such “homegrown” meaning, for the most part, does not hold up to the trials of reality — the facts of life and alternative forms of meaning. As a result, an individual finds himself in an existential vacuum. He neither knows, nor values, nor understands what is good and what bad. The sociology term for such a condition is *anomie*, although on an individual level, the psychological result may simply be depression. It is therefore not surprising that an individual may search for opportunities to associate himself with a group in which he may gain precast meaning. Muslim forms of meaning, in this respect, are first of all inwardly consistent, and secondly contain instructions for cooperating with alternative forms of meaning and their proponents, as a result of which they prove themselves to be steadfast in the face of both individual predicaments and collective “propagandistic

¹³ Sadaqah – alms collected and given out according to specific rules.

attacks.” One mode of conversation practiced by mosque-goers may be referred to as “practical theology,” through which average, rank-and-file community members have the chance to discourse with one another about God in Islam, retelling one another hadiths and the sunnahs, as well as relating problems they’re encountering in their own lives with an end to interpreting them through the prism of Islam and understanding how to correctly proceed according to Islam’s guiding principles.

A mosque community is a closely-knit community of people who continually support Islamic forms of meaning and norms within their social circles. Therefore it is not surprising that the appearance of a stranger forces them to engage their community’s “defense mechanisms” created with the intent to defend these forms of meaning. In the given case, such “defense” proved both discursive and social. Each time when I, during the course of my first visits, tried to start conversations with people, they reacted to me as a stranger in one of two ways: either they attempted to show that I didn’t belong there, or they attempted to convert me. On the third day of my observations the former of these two strategies was prevalent, and on the fourth day — the latter.

I spent the fourth day in a cafeteria near the mosque — and no sooner had I stepped in than one of my conversation partners from the day before invited me to join him at the table where he was sitting, and almost immediately, our talk turned to God and why we exist. When it became clear that I don’t believe in God, I was read a collective sermon on Islam as the greatest religion. And just like the day before, there was no sense in posing questions — it only bewildered them, they didn’t answer them, and would only respond that I had no business asking such things.

What amazed me was how on the third, “tough” day as well the fourth, “proselytizing” one, it was as if a performance were being played out before me with all its roles pre-determined: of course there had to be their “tough guy,” who would play the role of the “hard-core believer,” demonstrated to me in order to prove the validity of their doctrines, and of course there had to be the “smart guy,” who would create all sorts of (predominantly Islamic) discourses, and in so doing prevent me from expressing my own position or posing questions. We may assume that the conversations with me proved functional for their community because they allowed agreed-upon forms of meaning to be pronounced once again amongst one another and to demonstrate to each other the validity of those forms of meaning on outsiders. These three functions of the

community, when superimposed one on the other, lend the community a high level of internal “concatenation,” while the Islamic discourses — consistent and effective — multiply such internal concatenation manifold.

Meaning in community

Islam is the sort of structure that “explains” to its community members how to relate to various crisis situations in life, to Islam itself, and to the surrounding world. One segment of Islamic discourse constructs a boundary between “us” and “them.” Within its confines, “we” means the Muslim ummah, the entire aggregate of believers, which is impelled to continually make sense of the borders within and without itself. For example, this exact discourse allows migrants from Central Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, if a due level of energy exerted by them, to enter into the mosque community. On the other hand, such a setup directs the mosque community toward external, Muslim paradigms, which may be stably reproduced in various countries and in various languages.

Islam is a proselytizing religion, and accordingly, special place is given in pan-Islamic discourse to methods of communication with non-Muslims who are ready to hear about Islam as being the greatest religion. Within this discourse, there exist a whole host of “canonical” stories that may be used to unite an entire audience — modern atheistic rationalists — and which are aimed at proving to that audience that Islam not only doesn’t contradict modern science, but also in large measure even presages it. On the fourth day, when the “community was trying to convert me,” I, having heard one of the stories they were sharing, began recounting to the informants of this study another story from the “canon,” which I had heard once from their Egyptian brother Muslims. To my amazement, they didn’t recognize the story. It was an account of how Neil Armstrong, having landed on the moon, could hear some sort of outlandish music, and later, when he was back on Earth delivering a lecture in Saudi Arabia, he recognized the same music in an azan.¹⁴ As a result, he came to believe in Allah and accepted Islam. I told this story, and then suddenly I heard the café owner’s voice: “Yeah well Armstrong never was on the moon — the Americans made all that up.” Such a statement is also extraneous to the given community and a typical element of global anti-American discourse, whose proponents on “the world stage” are often Muslims. And this incident serves as an example of how two different kinds of discourse, both typical of the Muslim

¹⁴ A Muslim call to prayer

ummah, may be in conflict with one another, yet at the same time may serve as an indicator of how the members of the Muslim community being studied view themselves as situated, at a minimum, within the context of international trends in Islam.

Yet another important element of self-referential discourse is the topic of discrimination against Muslims. The logical structure of such arguments includes a thesis stating the overarching principle — that such discrimination occurs the world over, and a thesis on some concrete manifestation of that same principle — that such discrimination occurs with regard to the local mosque community. To wit — a story about how the OMON riot police visited, at which time “*they forced all the women and elderly to get on the floor*” but failed to find anything suspicious; moreover, the story is told within a larger context of the oppression of Islam around the world.

All of this — to include one more observation session, during which the imam answered in great detail some questions about how to properly react to events in Turkey — allows us to comment on the manner in which Muslim communities demonstrably exist on conceptual and discursive levels as parts of the worldwide Muslim ummah, and how local events are perceived as being part of a global “story” about Islam and modernity.

The Muslim community studied differs greatly from the majority of Muscovites according to two characteristics, along whose lines social boundaries are built up *most eagerly of all* — religion and ethnicity. The conspicuous boundary that arises between Muscovite Muslims and Russian “ethnic” Christians demands the drawing of one particular distinction, which may be *horizontal* when the difference is asserted without stating which of the sides is superior, or *vertical* when the strengths of one side are emphasized over the other’s. In relation to the surrounding majority, the Muslim society constructs in great measure a *vertical* distinction. The foundational “claim” Muslims of the community have toward surrounding society is essentially that it consists of nonreligious people. Then, within this element of discourse, they assert that if Russians believed in a god, they would become closer, more understandable, and more open to negotiations, even if they happened to be Christians, because Christians, just like Muslims, are obedient to Allah. Out of this distinction they draw others — which, on the whole, belong to the same logical dichotomy of “religiousness/tradition/patriarchy *vs.* faithlessness/modernity/gender role diffusion.”

Another category significant to the construction of meaning for ethnic communities is the category of “Jew.” A significant portion of the early Islamic textual tradition “addressed itself” to Jews, who it must be said appear there in two different guises: as people of the Book and forerunners to Islam who are allies of the Muslims in the fight against the pagans, and as traitors to Islam who distort the gospel of Allah. Both of these concepts find their place in the Muslim community’s perceptions of the Jews, but what’s more interesting is how such an understanding of the Jews dominates Islam totally and how, as a result, Jews are considered among Muslims to be first and foremost members of a faith and not of a “nationality” that could contain within it both religious and nonreligious people. Once I announced myself as being a Jew, more than once I was addressed with remarks that began with the words, “Ugh, you Jews...”, and the speech that followed dealt both with Jewish practices and with the politics of Israel in the Middle East. I rather emotionally sought to explain to them that I don’t take sides with either the former or the latter on the issue, but I got the very clear feeling that they didn’t understand how that could be possible, perceiving Jews as they did to be a cohesive, interconnected social whole: they look like each other, know each other, and coordinate their actions.

Hence, we may ascertain that the Muslim community studied serves as an active and effective “manufacture” for meaning creation, which allows the community to define the role of the individual in the world around him, the borders between “one’s own” people and “aliens,” and other such categorizations that allow an individual to orient himself in his environment.

Conclusion

This paper presents the results of the research project “Migrant communities in Moscow: looking through the ‘ethnic cafes’” which aimed at answering the question of what are the communities into which migrants integrate in Moscow.

In the first part of the paper, we make an effort to define the concept of community, sifting through the “heaps” of theoretical resources at our disposal, and we propose a methodology for studying communities. The development of these resources allows us to delineate two assertions significant to the study of communities. First of all, that communities are not synonymous with spatially-localized connections; they are networks existing primarily in social space; their spatial localization is a question of

lesser magnitude. Second of all, that each community stretches out in two dimensions: community as relationships and community as a structure. Structure and relationships complementarily create one another, which is reflected in the various mechanisms inherent in communities, including trust, social capital, social control, and normalization. Drawing upon research material on migrant communities gathered in over eighty “ethnic” cafés in Moscow, we have outlined in this text the fundamental types of those communities, how they arise, and the ways they function, as well as how migrants are drawn into them and a description of the primary forms of meaning that circulate within them.

As part of the study, we have created a methodology for seeking out and describing communities that contains six steps, beginning with identifying the potential community according to a set of indicators created over the course of a real-world research effort; describing a given community along the lines of “community as relationships” and “community as a structure” (a social profile, network structure, history and mechanisms of how it arose, and the ways in which it functions); and concluding with a description of the types of meaning essential to a given community. The field work consisted of three steps: observations and interviews in “ethnic” cafés in search of communities, trips around Moscow and express-visits to cafés with a goal of “filling in the gaps” in our sample, and ethnographic work in separate cafés that were recognized as representative of the types of communities we identified.

On the basis of the fieldwork carried out, we have ascertained the following results. First, that communities do not fall along ethnic lines. At the hearts of communities lie other characteristics. Second, that diaspora organizations cannot be classified as communities, but instead are separate groupings severed from the preponderant mass of migrants. Third, that communities act as a space for migrant integration. Fourth, that a community’s structure defines the character of the relationships and mechanisms that arise within it, namely— trust, social control, concentrated social capital, normalization, tolerance, reciprocity, collaborative work, civic participation, and creation of meaning. Fifth, that communities may form variously and differ substantially from one another. Nevertheless, over the course of the project, we were able to delineate four “ideal” or archetypal models of communities: Muslim multi-ethnic ones, homeland-rooted ones, those within walking distance, and “Azerbaijani business.” The results of the project also include the appellation of, if not a community, then a form of society — Kyrgyztown, which is not localized in one single

spot, but possesses a set of institutions that serves the “city” of Kyrgyz within Moscow.

In conclusion, we offer ethnographic descriptions of two types of communities — one the “homeland-rooted” type, in this case consisting of Samarkandians in three spots around Moscow, and the other being Muslim communities localized in one region of Moscow around a developed Muslim infrastructure. The Samarkandian cafés are distributed around three different spots in Moscow, two of which are connected with marketplaces while the third, conversely, distances itself from them. The homeland-rooted communities arise when connections established prior to migration are carried over into Russia. Intense familial and neighborly connections, to include even old conflicts — all of this becomes the foundation for constructing connections in Russia based on a common homeland, under conditions necessary to develop social capital within the new space. Homeland-rooted communities may serve as an effective buffer for newly-arrived migrants with a poor command of the Russian language to better orient themselves in the social as well as physical spaces of a new and unfamiliar city. The Samarkandian homeland-rooted communities are primarily a space of symbolic and conceptual safety thanks to their great measure of homogeneity. To a lesser extent, these communities exhibit other, pragmatic mechanisms — although they function as accumulators of social capital with access open to those who are trusted, which means those under the community’s social control. How specifically the mechanism of normalization works in such communities, and how change to the normative structure coincides with the homogeneity of meaning at the heart of the communities, and social control — these are questions for further study using research material gathered on such homeland-rooted communities.

Within the confines of the Muslim infrastructure that exists in one region of Moscow, halal cafés place a special role, containing as they do two communities not connected with each other. In the two communities near the mosque, may be seen a community of Muslim migrants primarily from the Northern Caucasus, within whose periphery may also be found migrants from Central Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and other Muslim regions, while at the other café there thrives an Muslim community built around the principle of being “within walking distance,” connected with the aggregate of workplaces in the area, and strengthened through the practice of daily prayers in a prayer room within the café. These are multi-ethnic communities, although within them migrants from Uzbekistan and the Northern Caucasus predominate. The mosque-based communities position themselves as part of the worldwide Muslim ummah, albeit

immersed in a local context, which allows them to coincide well with the relationships developed from person to person and to the surrounding society, while maintaining a claim of sorts toward that society that it is fundamentally nonreligious in character.