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Migrant Localities:

"Gated Space" or "Access Points"?

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The article considers the relation between media images of migrant localities and their role in everyday life of the city, the example being "Chinese" markets and "Chinese" greenhouses. Migrant localities are viewed as "gated space" and, at the same time, access points of local communities and migrants to multi-level social networks. It is shown that regional mass media shape the image of these localities as closed (gated) spaces that leads to a situation of contested space and the authoritative agents' ambition to force migrant localities out of urban space. However, these objects perform the function of the terminals of access to networks, the function providing a stable position of migrant localities in the social space as well as reproduction in the physical space of host society.

Keywords: migrant localities, "Chinese" markets, "Chinese" greenhouses, gated spaces, social networks, access points.

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Cross-border migrants have become an integral part of everyday life of Russian cities, at least of all regional centres in the eastern part of Russia. Migrants' steady integration into urban life vividly demonstrates the emergence of localities, marked as ethno-migrant ones, in urban space. It is extremely difficult to find a city in Siberia and the Far East without a "Chinese" market (or even several markets sometimes), rows of Kyrgyz shopping stalls which grew out of the open air markets into a full-fledged shopping centers and malls. Such migrant localities stretch outside city boundaries in the forms of

"Chinese" greenhouses, "Chinese" mills and similar facilities which are widely reported in the media, but analyzed to a little extent. Mass influx of migrants has sharply intensified the process of the urban space ethnicizing which began at the end of 1980-s. New phenomena, localities, form of economic activity and relations, arising on the basis of cross-border migrations, began to be viewed as ethnic ones. The definition of migrant localities as ethnic ones has rather firmly rooted in urban space and media, despite a loss of their ethnic solidarity as a basis of activity. Thus, "Chinese" markets are still defined as ethnic

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markets, despite the fact that the term refers to certain forms of urban economy and social relations in which Chinese migrants' role is not the only one and often not the main one (Diatlov, Grigorichev, 2014).

Ethnic marking of migrant localities is often due to the nominations for special objects (for example, "Shanghai", "Manchuria", "China town" markets in Irkutsk) or categorization of such objects as "kitaiki" (small "Chinese" markets), "Chinese" greenhouses mentioned above, etc. Quite different examples, when traditional names and categories get "ethnic" connotations, are not rare. Such nominations as "wholesale vegetable warehouse", "wholesale provision markets" can serve a classic example. The matter is that these nominations were initially devoid of ethnic connotation. However, in modern context the concept of "vegetable warehouse" immediately plunges into ethno-migrant context as this area of life is directly related to cross-border migrants in the citizens' practices and stereotypes (Diatlov (ed.), 2009, p. 269-285).

Such objects quickly acquire an extensive infrastructure, often occupy rather a vast area, and can be defined as specific localities. They have very clear boundaries in physical space (walls, fences, gates and other boundary markers). At the same time, such localities are quite clearly singled out in the social space through the complexes of stereotyped representations that are formed and broadcast mainly through media and electronic communication tools (forums and comments to electronic publications). Such sets of ideas form the basis for the formation of a system of relations, techniques and forms of interaction between citizens and migrants engaged in similar localities and between citizens and such localities and, more broadly, whole urban space.

The issue of mutual influence and interpenetration of physical and discursive boundaries of these localities is quite complex.

Without claiming the completeness of this issue analysis, I will try to show the contradictions in the position and functions of migrant localities through the concepts of "gated spaces" (closed, isolated spaces, defined by the analogy with "gated communities" and the ideas of "gated living" and "gated mind" related to them), on the one hand, and the actant as a material object which is the point of intersection of networks of relations. The first of these concepts is associated with the concept of "gated community", which is widely used in the analysis of isolated communities, including those living in the suburbs and urban periphery. Such communities are understood as residential complexes surrounded with walls, fences or other obstacles, their main feature being the formation of conditions different from those of the surrounding space environment (Low, 2003). Initially these closed communities were described as an alternative to urbanism (Castells, 1983; Jackson, 1985), later they were regarded as a place and way of life of the upper and middle class (Blakely, Synder, 1997). Modern researchers interpret these communities as "closed clubs" (Webster, 2002) acting as a mechanism of social fragmentation and segregation (Le Goix, 2005). This interpretation resulted in the formation of the ideas of "gated lives" and "gated minds" (Brunn, 2006) which can be used to describe migrant localities as isolated spaces and communities.

The second concept, associated with the provisions of the actor-network theory, on the one hand (Latour, 1996; Latour, 1998; Vakhshtein, 2005), and with the ideas of dramaturgical sociology (Goffman, 2009), on the other hand, makes it possible to regard migrant localities as a point of intersection of systems of interactions and social networks. The view on animate and inanimate actants, forming complex systems of relations, allows to consider migrants and spatial objects, created by them, as a single complex with fixed "rules of the game", the latter being

interaction practices approved and acceptable in this system of coordinates. As several systems of relations (at least intra-group migrant ones and those of migrants with a host community) intersect in migrant localities, such localities can be considered as a terminal of access to each of them. It is here where interacting participants have access to social networks they cannot access outside these localities.

It is worth while framing the reasons on the example of two migrant localities typical of large cities in the eastern part of Russia: "Chinese" markets and "Chinese" greenhouses. Both localities are closely related to cities and suburbs; they are highly sustainable regarding their interaction with host communities. There are certain stereotypes concerning both localities. They are reflected in the media. There are also complexes of practices of interaction within these localities or with regard to them. Both localities can be movable in physical space (markets and greenhouses can "move"), but they are stable in social space. Finally, both "Chinese" markets and "Chinese" greenhouses form stable and, as a rule, visualized boundaries making it possible to outline them as localities.

Both types of migrant localities have been rather poorly studied on the basis of Russian material. Post-Soviet ethnic/migrant markets are still vaguely represented in Russian studies, the scope of studies being quite narrow (analysis of the situation is in: Diatloy, Grigorichev (ed.), 2015). As for foreign works, they have been recently appearing (Hohnen, 2004; Spector, 2008; Levitt, Lamba-Nieves, 2011). Regardless of how paradoxically this phenomenon might be due to its prevalence, "Chinese" greenhouses are still not an object of research in social and anthropological works. Just a few works make exceptions. "Chinese greenhouses" in them are just a case for the analysis in the framework of theoretical approaches to the property issue

research (Ryzhova, 2014) or to the issue of Chinese capital penetration into the frontier regions of Russia (Smith, 2015), for example.

The present analysis is largely based on the materials of Irkutsk, but the typicality of such localities to the eastern part of Russia seems to provide grounds for some generalization of conclusions. The data of field observations 2014-2016, as well as several series of semi-formalized interviews collected in Irkutsk and its suburbs within the same period serve the empirical basis of analysis. More than 30 interviews (25-80 minutes long) with the residents of Irkutsk and suburban settlements, employees of municipal administrations, small business representatives were analyzed. The research of the images of migrant localities is based on discourse analysis of the texts in regional electronic media, some of which have a paper version as well.

Migrant localities as "gated spaces"

Key characteristics of spaces that can be defined as "gated spaces" are physical or discursive boundaries fixing and maintaining boundaries between a closed (gated) community and the surrounding area. This boundary divides physical space and also sets some "social and spiritual" distance (Brunn, 2006, p. 7). This Stanley Brunn's thesis is extremely important to me as, I think, it makes it possible to focus on isolated spaces analyzing mass views on such localities. The images of migrant localities formed and/or broadcast by the media mostly serve the basis for the formation of such stereotyped and mythologized views. Being the main source of knowledge about the world (Luman, 2005), the media form a stable reality which is often primary even in case of apparent contradictions with steady practices and personal experience.

The key issue of this analysis is to identify the main characteristics of migrant localities presented by mass media. These characteristics seem to be the following ones: 1) the presence of physical and/or symbolic boundaries between migrant localities and the host space; 2) an active role of both a host society and an isolated (gated) group in building boundaries; 3) actual incapability of norms and rules of life of a host community in an isolated space. This set of characteristic features results in fear of the "other" that is also inherent to classic gated communities of American suburbs (Low, 2003).

Both localities in media texts are described quite similarly. In regional and local media the most important characteristics of markets as well as of greenhouses as migrant localities are the following ones:

1) Implementation of an economic model based on ethnic/migrant solidarity. Regardless of actual structure of the employed in the market or greenhouse activity, such localities are described as a segment of ethnic and migrant economy. Participation of the community members in this model is either completely ignored or positioned as forced and disadvantageous. Thus, there is always a figure of the buyer in the descriptions of ethnic markets. The buyer is almost always forced to purchase low quality products without any guarantee and in unacceptable conditions. In most descriptions of greenhouses there are buyers who purchase poor quality and even dangerous products. In some media materials there are stories related to the exploitation of marginalized groups of local population, which sometimes leads to serious harm to health.

2) Extra-legality of most practices (both economic and related to other spheres of social interactions) in such localities. A major part of "Chinese" markets do not exist as legal entities. At best they are registered to the Russian citizens. However, in reality Chinese traders employ local residents as real or nominal sellers. Officially most economic transactions are not reported. So are the relations of migrant traders employed by the

sellers, service infrastructure and the owners of the market or territory where the market actually functions. What the media throw light on is very close to the conclusions drawn by the researchers analyzing economic practices in such markets (Zhuravskaya, 2012). Chinese "greenhouses" illegally appear as a result of the land owners' desire to get quick income at the least cost. The key stories here are migrants' illegal employment in greenhouses, use of banned or unknown drugs and seeds, violation of technology by the migrants. The stories related to the migrants' use of practices that do harm to the environment and people are largely dwelt upon by regional media. The most common story is the problem of heating greenhouses with small stoves, the smoke from which does harm to local people and sometimes leads to bigger-scale problems. For example, in 2007 the Central Russian television (Channel 1) showed a story about Abakan airport the work of which was disturbed as a result of sharp decline in visibility caused by the smoke from Chinese greenhouses located near the airport.

It should be noted that the view on the illegality of greenhouses, formed by the media, has some reasons. As such business is not registered legally, "journalistic investigations" lead to the conclusion on its illegality. However, this situation is associated not with a legal aspect (formally greenhouses are not considered to be violation of law) but rather with the specificity of the description of space and social reality in the language of power. Since such objects do not become the objects of statistical descriptions and the authorities primarily base on the data of statistical reports in the description of reality, greenhouses are not holistic objects of an "administrative view of the world" either. Some agencies record only various problems if they arise within the area of this or that governing and authoritative body's responsibility (Rosselkhoznadzor, Federal Migration Service of Russia, etc.). In my opinion, this situation is not specific for Russia: distortion of reality through its simplification by statistical descriptions is given by James Scott who considered Germany, France and other historical scenes as examples (Scott, 2005).

3) Rigid boundary between migrants and host communities built by migrants. Almost all the texts of electronic and print media, TV reports trace the closeness of migrant groups working in the markets and greenhouses. This closeness is described through the opacity of inner life of the localities described, actual incapacity of legal rules and unwritten rules. Important markers of closeness are absence of knowledge of the Russian language or unwillingness to speak it, prior use of a native language (Chinese in the cases described) in written texts, use of technologies, tools, materials, etc. unknown to the locals. Media publications stress that this boundary is maintained precisely by the migrants who are unwilling to get into contact through avoidance or aggression, indirect formation of their own system of communication with the host community. Existence of such boundaries is most often shown in the scenes with a correspondent communicating with "one of the migrants who speaks Russian".

4) Combination of functions of economic space and place of residence, life support and security in the localities. Both a market and a greenhouse are described not only as places of work (as it follows from basic functions of these objects) but mainly as places of residence. Whereas this function of Chinese markets is described in the publications of the nineties and early noughties (Diatlov, Kuznetsov, 2004), the greenhouses remain a primary place of residence of those who work there even in the publications of recent years. According to the authors of media texts, migrants in both localities are protected from legal or, at least, just demands

of the representatives of local communities and authorities. Reading of such materials forms a reader's view on some kind of extraterritoriality of greenhouses and markets which may be incomplete but often sufficient for distancing from the host community.

In my opinion, the singled out characteristic features suggest that media discourse has formed quite a complete image of the considered migrant localities as spaces, excluded from usual, "normal" life of host communities. According to this image, such localities have stable physical and symbolic boundaries, visualized through various material objects, visual and nonmaterial markers. Their "boundaries" are formed and maintained, first of all, by the migrants. The boundaries for them become a means of fixing social distance from the host society, provide an opportunity to maintain their own system of intra-group interactions and avoid integration in the system of the host society's social interactions. Stanley Brunn terms such way of gated communities' life as "closed / excluded accommodation" (gated living) (Brunn, 2006). He considers "closed mindset" to be the consequence of such pattern of life. It is the basis for determination of a specific range of practices of interaction with host communities, minimization of contacts and rejection of norms of living outside a locality being their common features.

It seems to me that regardless of reasonableness of such an image media suggest quite a complete view on migrant localities as closed spaces, communities of which are not ready, do not want and cannot get in contact with the local population. According to this image, migrants are not just "the others", but "strangers" and even aliens, and the territories they occupy are territories cut off from "our" space. This becomes a sort of privatization of public space that, as in the case of "privileged" gated community suburbs, leads not only to

spatial demarcation but also to the formation of an entire system of exclusion mechanisms around such localities (Le Goix, 2005). This, in its turn, gives rise to a situation of contesting a space, the center of the conflict being not only the territory proper but meanings the opposing groups fill it with (Low, Lawrence-Zúñiga, 2003). A situation is initially a conflict one. A difficult process of mutual adaptation in it is seriously complicated with the struggle for symbolic power over space.

As "reality media" is reflected as a basic one, domination of this image shapes the character of both practices of interaction of local community with migrants and government practices regulating migrant localities' life and activity. Confrontational discourse, specified by the image of "excluded" and "contested" space, determines the range of authoritative practices primarily focused on ousting the migrant locals. if not entirely, to the periphery of physical and social space. However, in most cases the results of this ousting are far from the desirable ones: even moving in the physical space such localities do not change their position in the social space. Changing the location in a city or a suburb, migrant localities continue to perform wellestablished functions, remain the most important factor of a system of social interactions in a modern Siberian city. Probable reasons for this situation, in my opinion, can be determined by analyzing migrant localities through the prism of the second concept, the concept being a complex actant embodying material intersection of different social networks.

Migrant localities as "access points"

One of the main ideas of the actor-network approach is a desire to "let things speak", emphasize the complexity of the modern world with its hybrid forms of socio-technical (social and material) networks instead of a traditional division into social and material

(Vakhshtain, 2005, p. 100). "Chinese" markets and greenhouses, analyzed in this perspective, present a clear synthesis of living and non-living elements of social networks forming complex socio-spatial complexes. Embedding of local actants in multilevel networks is achieved here through material mediation of social relations. Interaction between people and things, taking place in the localities subject to the research, goes far beyond directly contacting actants. In this perspective buying goods on the Chinese market or employment in "Chinese" greenhouses on a daily basis are not only everyday practices but also as an act of accessing multiple networks.

In my opinion, three levels or types of social networks, intersecting in the analyzed migrant localities, can be distinguished:

"Local" networks within a local community, acting as a host one for a particular migrant locality. For the markets these are city or urban area residents participating in the market as buyers, employees, service staff, local authority, and, probably, crime communities, etc., the case being a small local market. All of them interact with the market as a locality one way or the other, directly or indirectly. Even local residents, who do not use market services, are important participants in relations with them. Stereotypes and behaviour of such "third party viewers" to a large extent determine positioning the market in urban space, even through the avoidance practices. The latter are associated with the desire to avoid compromise (Hoffman, 2009) after going to the market. They lead to some kind of "recarving" of the urban space, serious transformation of mental maps of "their" space and, through them, of local networks connected with interactions around the markets as localities.

Greenhouses are included in local social interactions a little less clearly than the markets, but no less firmly. These are both relations with landlords and land brokers, governing

authorities, local municipal administrations. It is noteworthy that in relations with the latter "the Chinese" often act as sponsors by participating in informal "additional funding of the territory", which is traditional for Russia (Grigorichev, 2013). Adoption of the function peculiar for "nonstranger" participants of interaction between the authorities and a local community perfectly reflects integration in local networks. At the same time a reciprocal process takes place: practice of day-to-day employment of local residents for work for the migrants leads not only to changes in the spectrum of employment variants possible in the suburbs but marking a social status through it (Grigoriev, 2012).

Inotherwords, the objects under consideration enter local networks as not just passive participants, a stage for the action (Hoffmann, 2009) but as active actants transforming these networks. As a result, local networks become not so much a means of distributing information as a source of new practices, relations, meanings (Latour, 1998).

2) Regional or subregional networks. Large Chinese markets, as a rule, are the most important wholesale provider for small business located outside the city. The practice of wholesale trade and supply of small markets and points of sale outside the city turns "kitaika" into the mechanism of integrating the city with the space of the region. This connection is realized in two ways: through the flow of customers visiting the city and the flow of exported goods. "Loaded" minibuses exporting small-scale goods to rural areas and small cities in the region become a bright symbol of "Chinese" markets as nodes of local networks. On the other hand, residents of suburban areas are often among the buyers on these markets. It is not coincidentally that "Chinese" markets do not appear in suburbs and territories which are slightly remote from regional centres.

As for Chinese greenhouses, integration to this level of networks is the basis of their activity, since the main market of selling their products is located not in the suburbs but cities (which may involve selling part of the products "on the spot"). The system of social interactions, which is formed here, leads to an indirect interaction of not only owners and employees of retail chains but of a significant number of citizens with Chinese greenhouses. Moreover, in my opinion, it is possible to regard the activity of "Chinese" greenhouses as one that largely forms new connections between a suburb and a regional centre. Whereas trading networks of the city were previously associated with only a few suburban settlements with major agricultural production, appearance of "Chinese" greenhouses has considerably expanded geography and scope of such relations. Forced interaction with representatives of the auditing and controlling structures also integrates Chinese greenhouses in relations outside settlements they are located in. In my opinion, this makes it possible to assert that such migrant localities significantly transform regional networks as well, largely developing them.

3) Cross-boundary networks. This is, probably, the level of networks which is much less perceptible in life of the migrant localities analyzed, but for all that it largely underpins their activities. Being places of imported goods distribution, Chinese markets turn out to be the points of intersection of relations between suppliers and intermediaries from different countries, with different sets of goods, legal status in Russia and, consequently, with different sets of practices of interaction with a host community (for example, migrants from Kyrgyzstan and China). Thus, for example, "Chinese" markets of Irkutsk are one of the largest recipients of direct import from PRC or transit one through Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Collecting two key floods of

Chinese import (from the North-East through Zabaikalsk and Mongolia and from the West through Kyrgyzstan (Peshkov, 2014)), "Chinese" markets of Irkutsk integrate the city in a largescale system of commodity, human, financial flows of north-eastern Asia. Chinese markets as such become a tool of integrating urban space into cross-boundary collaboration, thus being a point of material mediation of numerous systems of relations (Vakhshtain, 2005, p. 105) that lie far outside a specific locality. In other words, "Chinese" markets are a vital access point to the system of cross-boundary interactions for the city and its residents. Similar conclusions about the role of migrant markets are drawn by the researchers who base on the materials of not only the former USSR but Eastern Europe as well (Humphry, Skvirskaja, 2009; Hüwelmeier, 2013).

Integration of greenhouses into crossboundary networks is less visible for a host community, but, nevertheless, it is traced quite clearly. Through greenhouses local communities are included in the relations concerning foreign migrants' entry and stay in Russia, supply of seeds, chemicals, fertilizers. Interactions with "Chinese" greenhouses often lead to the borrowing of technologies and work organization schemes. Finally, real presence of "Chinese" greenhouses, directions and schemes of financial transactions related to them integrate suburban communities into the problems of currency fluctuations and - wider - of transnational economy. These spheres have been infinitely far from suburban communities before migrant localities emerged.

In other words, both analyzed migrant localities lie at the intersection of at least three levels of social networks. Markets and greenhouses become places and mechanisms connecting these networks. At the same time they become places and mechanisms of access

to these networks for host communities, kind of terminals, access points. These access points ensure local communities' integration into long and complex chains of social interactions (and not only economic ones!) leading far beyond the actual act of buying products on the market or employment for "Chinese" greenhouses.

Non-reflexive character of such practices as both sets of actions, the meaning and form of which are regulated by daily life, and acts of integration in a multi-level network of relations becomes a kind of response to media images of migrant localities. As for the latter, both markets and greenhouses are excluded and isolated spaces. As for the practices, these localities, on the contrary, become spaces of inclusion, terminals of access to the wide external world. Multiplicity of networks, available through such localities, results in a high degree of not only host communities' involvement in these networks, but also in a strong embeddedness of migrant localities in a host social and physical space. This, in its turn, ensures the constancy of their position in semiotic space (position in a network) while being mobile in the Cartesian space (mobility) (Law, 2006). In other words, reflected by the media as excluded (sometimes "captured" and even "occupied") localities, "Chinese" markets and greenhouses are firmly integrated into everyday life through practices and turn into a part of local space and experience.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that both concepts are connected with migrant localities as material objects with spatial reference, their content rests, in my view, on different grounds. The idea of migrant localities as excluded, closed spaces is mainly formed on the basis of media images which are not directly related to personal experience. And whereas real practices of migrants themselves are in the basis of the "gated

space" image formation ("establishment" of borders as a means of fixing the distance from the host society), the host society itself mainly bases on these media images in the reflections on these localities. This media reality, according to Niklas Luhmann (Luhmann, 2005), is more real than personal experience. It is reflexed as the "main", "true" reality, even if it contradicts personal experience. The basis for the second one is a system of non-reflexed practices developed and implemented in everyday life. Thus, the use of these two concepts allows us to have a view of migrant localities in the perspective of two realities: constructed by the media but reflexed as "true" reality and the reality formed by nonreflexed practices.

It seems to me that the described differences in migrant localities understanding can be suggested as a tool for the analysis of the causes of inefficiency of the government activities in relation to migration and migrants. Basing on the reflexed image of migrant localities as "gated spaces", the government and the community are included in the logic of contestation of space. The purpose of their actions is to return a symbolic power over this space and to crowd the migrants out of this space. Such activity, however, does

not lead to the displacement of migrant localities out of social space, where they perform the most essential function of connecting multi-scale networks and that of the points of access to the local community. These functions are not reflexed by the representatives of local communities and authorities, but they are firmly incorporated into everyday life practices. As a result, competition for space leads to a change only in physical location of such localities in cities or suburbs. As for their place and function in social space organization, they remain unchanged. What gives a chance to change well-established images is only the suggestion of other spatial and organizational forms of such terminals of access to multi-scale networks (transformation of open markets in various shopping malls, small nomadic greenhouses in sustainable longterm economies). Practice of "Chinese" markets transformation in Siberian cities serves the evidence of prospects of such a path. However, the inevitable presence of migrants as agents of social networks in the conditions of the alarmist anti-immigrant discourse dominance can again put the host community and authorities in captivity of media reality capable of forming gated spaces in the most open society.

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Мигрантские локальности: gated space или «точки доступа»?

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В статье на примере «китайских» рынков и «китайских» теплиц рассматривается соотношение медийных образов мигрантских локальностей и их роль в повседневности города. В рамках анализа мигрантские локальности рассматриваются как gated space и одновременно как точки доступа местных сообществ и мигрантов к разноуровневым социальным сетям. Показывается, что в региональных массмедиа формируется образ таких локальностей как закрытых (gated) пространств, что приводит к возникновению ситуации оспариваемого пространства и стремлению властных агентов вытеснить мигрантские локальности из городского пространства. Однако выполняемая такими объектами функция терминалов доступа к сетям обеспечивает устойчивое положение мигрантских локальностей в социальном пространстве и воспроизведение в физическом пространстве принимающего общества.

Ключевые слова: мигрантские локальности, «китайские» рынки, «китайские» теплицы, gated spaces, социальные сети, точки доступа.

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