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## **A Borderland in the City: Ethnic Entrepreneurship in Post-Soviet Russia**

### **Abstract**

After the dissolution of the USSR, Russian cities are popular destinations of labor migrants from the former Soviet republics, especially Central Asia and the Caucasus. One can observe a monopolization of particular sectors in the labor market and entire branches of petty trade by different ethnic and national communities. At some open-air markets, it is now the Russians who comprise the minority. Markets constitute a borderland which appears in the middle of a city – they serve as an important meeting place of people and cultures.

The appearance of so-called ethnic entrepreneurship, ethnic economy and trade minorities, ethnic or otherwise, has been widely investigated in various parts of the world and in different times. It was, however, questioned whether one can speak about their existence in post-Soviet Russia. In this paper, I argue that trade minorities do indeed operate at Russian open-air markets. However, they do so in a specific manner that stems from the historical and cultural conditioning of petty trade in the former USSR. This study shows the development of ethnic entrepreneurship and appearance of different stereotypes that are tied to it. What is more, it analyzes some ways in which different minorities coexist. In general, the study deals with the extremely complex issue of interethnic relationships in post-Soviet Russia.

**Keywords:** ethnic entrepreneurship; trade minorities; post-Soviet Russia, post-socialist studies; economic anthropology, neighborhood

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## Introduction

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russian cities have become destinations of labor-immigrants from so called *near abroad* (*blizhneye zarubezh'ye*), i.e. the former Soviet republics. It is especially people from Central Asia and the Caucasus who massively come to Russian urban centers in search of employment. There is also a regional diversity. While – except for Central Asians and Caucasians – the European part of Russia sees a lot of labor-immigrants from Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus, in Siberia and in the Russian Far East substantial immigration from China also takes place. The large inflow of migrants not only brings deep changes to the labor market but reshapes urban geography of Russian cities as well.

In this article, I am studying the appearance of a borderland in the city. A borderland is a space upon which different identification regimes make their imprint – cohabited by members of different cultures, religions and civilizations. This space is divided – with borders of geographical, ethnic, political, etc. character – but at same time also common and open, since a dynamic intercultural exchange takes place there (Kieniewicz, 2003, p.206; 2005). As a consequence, a mutual accommodation is reached and intermingling occurs. By entering *en masse* into urban space of Russian cities, labor immigrants turn it into a borderland. Cities, like those in central Siberia, that had previously been quite homogenous in ethnic and cultural terms since the dissolution of the Soviet Union have faced large immigration flows. Newcomers adapt to the reality of the hosting country in many ways, at the same time changing this reality in a reflexive manner. As a result of this adaptation process, of turning some parts of Russian cities into a borderland, new relationships of neighborhood between immigrants and local populations are created. Be these relationships hostile or tolerant – neighborhood implies that its actors coexist in one space, recognize each other and contribute to a common social lifeworld.

It is urban open-air markets which have become the most vivid signs of the immigration flow. They constitute islands of borderland in the middle of urban space. It is also there that trade minorities – i.e. ethnic or religious groups that specialize in market activity – operate. Although the existence of such minorities has been put in question, I claim that one can speak about their presence and the functioning of ethnic entrepreneurship in general in the case of contemporary Russia.<sup>1</sup> I show that the appearance of these minorities is caused by an actualization of ethnicity. An ethnic factor which was rarely visible in Soviet cities and which has become striking in

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<sup>1</sup> I write about trade minorities and ethnic entrepreneurship at Russian open-air markets in my book *Coping with Uncertainty. Petty Traders in Post-Soviet Russia* (Wielecki, 2015). Here, however, I elaborate on the issue and I apply to it a new analytical framework.

the new Russia, when due to migration, groups of different origins have started to meet. Open-air markets have thus turned into important places of contact between newcomers and local inhabitants. It is also there that new relationships of neighborhood are particularly apparent.

The empirical material for this article was gathered during the extensive ethnographic fieldwork research that I conducted in the Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk in 2012-2013. I supplement it with information taken from scholarly literature on petty trade in today's Russia. At the beginning, I provide a theoretical overview of the notions of ethnic entrepreneurship and trade minorities. Next, I discuss their possible application to Russian realities. I analyze the specific cultural and historical background of ethnic entrepreneurship in post-Soviet Russia. In the following sections, I show the appearance of trade minorities at urban air markets in terms of ethnicization, i.e. changed perception of new people coming to Russia and of ones already there. Finally, I try to understand the massive inflow of immigrants in terms of creation of new relationships of neighborhood. In conclusion, I propose some reflections on interethnic relations in contemporary Russia.

### Ethnic entrepreneurship and trade minorities – a theoretical overview

The issues of ethnic entrepreneurship and trade minorities closely intersect with each other and both have a long research tradition. Ethnic entrepreneurship might be simply defined as a set of entrepreneurial connections and “regular patterns of interaction among people sharing common national background or migratory experiences” (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990, p. 112). I, in turn, understand it more specifically. Namely, I treat it as an entrepreneurial activity whose performance is determined not only by a purely economic rationale but also by the ethnic factor. In this sense, ethnic entrepreneurship points to an economic behavior which is socially embedded and thus does not fit into the paradigm of *homo economicus* proclaimed by neoclassical economics. Contrary to such theoretical approaches as *methodological individualism*, *rational choice theory* and *maximization of expected utility*, the social embeddedness of economic behavior implies that in their economic activities, individuals do not follow sheer calculation of losses and gains, and do not only seek to maximize their personal profits. On the contrary, they also include in their strategies such issues as social ties, family and friendship obligations, religious values, etc. (cf. Bruni, 2002; Granovetter, 1973, 1985; Hann & Hart, 2011, pp. 172–173; Polanyi, 1957; Putnam, Leonardi & Nanetti, 1993, pp. 170–172).

In this context, trade minorities constitute a phenomenon of ethnic economy. They might be described as ethnic or religious groups that spec-

ialize in market activity (cf. Diatlov, 1996a, p. 318; 2000, p. 12). Sometimes they are also called *middleman minorities*, since they often play the role of mediators between elites and the masses, the producer and the consumer, the employer and the employee, etc. (Bonacich, 1973). The thing with trade is that it is connected with transgressing different boundaries of geographical, social and cultural nature. That is why trading activities are often socially condemned and as such relegated to minorities. As Georg Simmel noticed, throughout the history of human economic activity “the trader must be a stranger; there is no opportunity for anyone else to make a living at it” (Simmel, 1908/1971, p. 144). This was especially the case of settled societies: they needed middlemen to be provided with goods produced outside. Thus, trading might have been seen as something inappropriate but at the same time it was needed. Because of this dialectics, a trader was a stranger, but a specific one – “the stranger [who] is still an organic member of the group” (Simmel, 1908/1971, p. 149).

The appearance of trade minorities seems to be a universal phenomenon and has been researched in many parts of the world and in different epochs: Greeks and Armenians in the Ottoman Empire (Curtin, 1984), Chinese traders in Southeast Asia or Indian traders in East Africa (Yambert, 1981). There is also a long tradition of researching different minorities in the United States – the Japanese, Koreans, Chinese, Cuban and others – which probably has to do with the intrinsically immigrant character of American society (cf. Godfrey, 1988; Hurh & Kim, 1983; Light, 1984; Light & Bonacich, 1988; Portes, 1987; Zhou, 2004, 2009).

Nevertheless, it is Jews who might serve as the epitome of trade minority and classical example of strangers in the sense meant by Simmel. It is also reflection on Jews which first gave rise to researching trade minorities. In medieval and modern Europe, Jews were forbidden to possess land. One can notice here that in settled societies, it is landowning – actual or potential – which makes you a member of the local community. What is more, Jews were also excluded from many professions. As a consequence, they were forced to engage in trade. Yet 19<sup>th</sup>-century writers described them as “merchants by nature” – in the pejorative meaning of being inherently greedy and materialistic. It was only with time that scholars realized that the phenomenon of trade minorities is not limited to Jews and is in fact by far not strictly European, and can be found in various places and times (cf. Bonacich, 1973, p. 583; Diatlov, 1996b, 2000, p. 25).

### Ethnic entrepreneurship in contemporary Russia?

It is, however, questionable whether ethnic entrepreneurship and trade minorities are to be found in post-Soviet Russia. This concern may be seen

as a part of much bigger methodological problem of applying Western-born sociological theories to non-Western societies. As was stated above, theories of ethnic entrepreneurship and trade minorities have been developed by Western scholars and they have been mainly applied to investigate social phenomena of the Western world. Nevertheless, due to the peculiar historical and cultural past of Russia, the plausibility of analyzing Russian society through Western-made lens cannot be taken for granted. On the one hand, certain divisions of ethnic nature are easily observed in the labor market of contemporary Russia. The presence of such divisions constitutes a part of local knowledge and one can also hear about them in everyday conversations of Russian people: Tajiks work on construction sites, the Uzbek drive public buses, the Kyrgyz are housekeepers, Azerbaijanis and the Chinese work at open-air markets. On the other hand, however, the question remains whether the aforementioned groups constitute trade minorities and whether the economy in which they engage is ethnically determined.

From a historical perspective, economic activities of such groups as Germans, Armenians and Jews in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russia might be perceived as instances of ethnic entrepreneurship (Armstrong, 1976). The situation, however, changed entirely in the Soviet times. Granted, while reading novels from the 1920s, like those of Mikhail Bulgakov, one can notice a presence of Chinese diasporas in some market niches. It was the Chinese who ran laundries in big Soviet cities at that time, for instance. Nevertheless, with Joseph Stalin's departure from the New Economic Policy (NEP) in the late 1920s, private entrepreneurship practically ceased to exist.

To buy something at one place and sell it at a higher price in another, where there was greater demand, was declared an act of speculation. Traders speculated because they did not add a value of labor to the product but only grew wealthy on other people's honest work. Where everybody was supposed to work for the benefit of the society, they worked just for themselves – and that was publically condemned. Trade performed by private individuals – not within state-owned networks – was allowed only in some narrowly designated spheres, and even in those spheres it was subject to strict legal regulation. For selling a pair of blue jeans one might get imprisoned and for trade in foreign currencies one might be sentenced to death. While the severity of actually taken measures differed over time, it was only during perestroika when legislation concerning private entrepreneurship was liberalized.

From this point of view, petty trade in today's Russia is atraditional, because one can hardly speak about any continuity of entrepreneurship from the times of the NEP. That is the first reason why scholars – such as Ol'ga Brednikova and Oleg Pachenkov (2001, 2002), and Viktor Voronkov

(1996, 2000) – deny the presence of both ethnic entrepreneurship and trade minorities. Moreover, these scholars claim that in the USSR particular ethnic identities were successfully replaced by the Soviet one. Consequently, they do not believe in what others call a process of revival of ethnicity (cf. Aktürk, 2012, pp. 231–233; Hughes & Sasse, 2014; Treisman, 1997). If some phenomena at Russian labor market have an ethnic semblance, it is because some groups use ethnicity just as an economic strategy and not as their crucial factor of social identification. Although some groups “have turned their ethnicity into a hobby and sometimes even into a profession,” in general “immigrant economy in Russia is not ethnic” (Voronkov, 2000). Migrant petty traders in Russia – just as all other market actors – are guided exclusively by economic profit and follow free market competition rules (Brednikova & Pachenkov, 2002, p. 157).

Contrary to those ideas, I subscribe to views presented by another stream in Russian scholarship. I agree with scholars – such as Viktor Diatlov (Diatlov, 1996a, 2000, 2009), Diatlov and Roman Kuznetsov (Diatlov & Kuznetsov, 2004), Diatlov and Konstantin Grigorichev (Diatlov & Grigorichev, 2013) and Pavel Varnavsky (2013) – who maintain not only that trade minorities do operate in contemporary Russia but also show that economic behavior of migrant workers is strongly influenced by the ethnic factor. These minorities are specific ones – by no means do they resemble well-established communities in East Asia or in the USA. In current Russia, there are also no China-towns, or urban districts inhabited exclusively by members of other ethnic minority. Nevertheless, I argue that some trade minorities began to form still in late Soviet times. During the three decades since perestroika, subsequent waves of newcomers have organized themselves and have come to occupy several niches of the Russian market.

## Urban open-air markets and the process of ethnicization

Basically, Russian markets evolved from Soviet *barakholkas* (clothing markets) and kolkhoz markets, where foodstuffs were sold. Trade there was performed only on a local scale. A sphere of shadow economy which grew around those markets had a bigger range but it was strictly controlled and constantly persecuted by the authorities (cf. Aslund, 1991, pp. 158–162; Katsenelinboigen, 1977; Sik & Wallace, 1999). In the 1990s, however, the markets turned into important social institutions, which enabled masses of people to earn their living in the very difficult economic conditions of Russian systemic transformation.

Contrary to Voronkov (2000), who sees in this change a purely economic process, I argue that this evolution often took on ethnic forms. As I mentio-

ned, first trade minorities appeared already in late Soviet times. It was the Caucasians, i.e. mainly Georgians and Azerbaijanis, who monopolized trade with flowers, exotic fruit and other scarce goods in Moscow (cf. Il'in, 1994, pp. 195–196). This was certainly connected not only with their entrepreneurial skills but also with the very negative image of petty trade in Soviet society. As was noted above, private trading was perceived as something immoral and unseemly for a proper Soviet citizen. That is why trade activities were – consciously or not – relegated to minorities. Using Simmel's categories, we can state that Caucasian traders thus became structural strangers. One could despise and need them at the same time – they were both strangers and organic members of the society (cf. Simmel, 1908/1971, p. 149).

Moreover, the evolution of petty trade in Russia was tightly connected with the inflow of migrants and import of foreign goods, both on an enormous scale. The former was evoked by dramatic economic decline in former Soviet republics, especially the Caucasian and Central Asian ones. Migrants came – and are still coming – in millions (cf. Jarzyńska, 2014, 2015).<sup>2</sup> Such a massive inflow always causes social tensions and this one was no exception. It was particularly striking for population of those towns and cities in Siberia which during the Soviet period were closed due to housing strategic industries, so that moving to and out of them was strictly regulated. One such city was Krasnoyarsk: the presence of non-Russian labor force there was marginal during socialism. This changed completely within a few years since socialism's collapse.<sup>3</sup>

The mass influx of immigrants into Russian urban space was particularly visible at open-air markets. Petty trade is a kind of business into which it is relatively easy to enter: you have to possess neither a big starting capital nor a specific education. You do not even have to speak the local language fluently. That is why the economic migrants who have been coming to Russia after 1991 often engaged in trade activities. With time, some ethnic

<sup>2</sup> As of 2014, Russia ranked second in the world in terms of amount of immigrants, the vast majority of whom came from post-Soviet states. Officially, the number of foreigners that resided in Russia was estimated at 11.3 million, of whom about 3.5 million did so illegally. The most numerous diasporas were constituted by citizens of Uzbekistan (2.5 million), Ukraine (1.5 million), Tajikistan (1.1 million), and Kyrgyzstan and Moldova (500,000 each) (Jarzyńska, 2014). The numbers of immigrants (both legal and illegal) in particular Russian cities is impossible to assess. One can take the numbers of work permits issued to foreign citizens but, due to the enormously expanded shadow economy, these numbers hardly reflect the actual state of affairs.

A separate group of economic immigrants comprised the Chinese, officially there were 331,000 of them in 2008. In press reports, however, the number was assessed at up to even 8 million (Larin 2008).

<sup>3</sup> With its one million dwellers, Krasnoyarsk is the second (besides Novosibirsk) urban and industrial center of Central Siberia. Because of the presence of strategic (military, space and nuclear industry) factories, Krasnoyarsk was a so-called closed city during socialism. This situation changed after 1991: on the one hand, a lot of industrial facilities went bust, on the other, traffic to and out of the city was not subjected to various restrictions any more.

groups managed to seize control over several branches of trade. A particular configuration of who deals with what products at a market is usually a result of long clashes and negotiations. Thus, there are many regional differences throughout Russia. There seems to be a general tendency, however, for Russian tradespeople to be pushed out of markets – and it is various minorities who take up their place.

At the time of my research in 2012-2013, at the Slavynsky market in Krasnoyarsk, Azerbaijanis traded with fruit and vegetables – a branch which is said to be monopolized by them in entire Russia – the Kyrgyz with clothes, Tajiks with dried fruit and nuts, and Russians with other foodstuffs. At so-called Krastets, in turn, a huge cloth market on the city outskirts, one could notice that shoes were sold mainly by Tajiks, blue jeans by Azerbaijanis, jackets by the Kyrgyz, and other clothes by the Chinese and the Vietnamese. What is more, Russians constituted only a marginal minority among tradespeople who worked there. There were virtually no Russians at urban wholesale fruit and vegetable markets – the Yuzhny, the Luch, and the Briansky. Azerbaijanis traded there mostly with so-called *evrofrukty*, i.e. fruit imported from the West. Tajiks, in turn, sold mostly local vegetables – like beets, onion and garlic – and fruit imported from Central Asia. The final minority were the Chinese, who traded in tomatoes and cucumbers that they grew locally.

This enumeration demonstrates that urban markets became neighborhoods and at the same time – islands of borderland in Russian cities and towns. They became important places of intercultural contact – both between different groups of immigrants and between immigrants and the local population. They also turned into centers of minorities social life. Immigrants tend to live in the surroundings of the markets, which consequently also become the place where they run ethnic restaurants and establish their cultural organizations. They do not only change the urban space, however: they change also themselves.

One can say that migrants who come to Russia undergo a process of ethnicization. The process is reflexive and happens on two levels. On the first one, which can be called internal, the encounter with strange environment prompts migrants to embrace their ethnicity and national belongingness. Varnavsky, in his study of ta Kyrgyz community in Ulan-Ude (2013), provides an example of a woman who only learned to speak Kyrgyz during her stay in Russia. Previously, she had spoken only Russian as her mother tongue. This is an extreme example of a characteristic phenomenon: having come to Russia, migrants find accommodation and work through informal channels, usually connected to family or friendship ties. Already at this stage, this kind of networking bears an ethnic character, because families



and friends are parts of already functioning diasporas. The Kyrgyz woman strengthened or perhaps even discovered her ethnic identity while living in such a diaspora.

The networking through which an immigrant finds work is indeed a characteristic feature of ethnic economy. As a rule, ethnic entrepreneurs employ only their countrymen. This is especially clearly noticeable in wholesale trade. At the wholesale markets, entrepreneurs employ from a few to over a dozen people and all employees are of the same ethnicity as the employer. This is a sign of an embedded economy: one cannot say that a pure rule of competition works in a market if it is ethnic ties which define the procedure of employment. Besides, hiring one's countrymen not only has practical advantages, like that of not having communication problems, but is also a proof of ethnic solidarity. Thus, contrary to Voronkov's claim (2000), immigrant economy is ethnic. A typical example of such economy is provided by running an ethnic restaurant – even if some might perceive it as “turning ethnicity into a profession.”

The second level of ethnicization could, in turn, be called external. It pertains to national citizenship rather than to ethnic identity *per se*. Ethnic or national categories are in this case imposed on immigrants by local inhabitants, especially the mass media and authorities. It is them who categorize newcomers in ethnic terms: Chinese markets, Tajik construction workers, Uzbek drivers and so on. Calling someone an Uzbek mixes national and ethnic identities: it implies at the same time both that an immigrant comes from Uzbekistan and is Uzbek (cf. Diatlov & Grigorichev, 2013, pp. 14–15; Brednikova & Pachenkov, 2001, p. 143; Varnavsky, 2013, pp. 469–470). Another important issue in this case is that by encountering immigrants, also local people actualize their ethnicity and change their ways of identification. Thus, the process of ethnicization pertains to both sides.

## The inflow of immigrants and the relationships of neighborhood

What is more, the entering by foreigners into the space of Russian cities results in the creation of new kinds of social relationships. Different national groups – labor immigrants and local inhabitants – interact with each other, building very complex networks of diverse neighborhoods. As Arjun Appadurai (2005) puts it, neighborhood is closely linked to locality and context-making. For him, locality is a complex phenomenological quality of a relational and contextual rather than spatial character. Locality is never something given, it has to be constantly produced and reproduced, first of all materially. In this sense, it constitutes a part of local knowledge – “much that has been considered local knowledge is actually knowledge of how to

produce and reproduce locality under conditions of anxiety and entropy, social wear and flux, ecological uncertainty and cosmic volatility, and the always present quirkiness of kinsmen, enemies, spirits, and quarks of all sorts” (Appadurai, 2005, p. 181). While Clifford Geertz (1983) famously puts emphasis on the embeddedness of local knowledge and its non-abstract character, Appadurai stresses that “local knowledge is substantially about producing reliably local subjects as well as about producing reliably local neighborhoods within which such subjects can be recognized and organized” (2005, p. 181). One might thus say that locality and neighborhood are about maintaining the group’s identity and cohesion.

While locality is a property of social life, neighborhoods constitute social forms of its realization. Neighborhoods “are situated communities characterized by their actuality” (Appadurai, 2005, p. 179). Besides this practical dimension, neighborhoods provide a context in which social actions might be conducted meaningfully. To be more precise, they provide contexts and require them at the same time: “neighborhoods are contexts, and contexts are neighborhoods. A neighborhood is a multiplex interpretive site” (Appadurai, 2005, p. 184).

Admittedly, one could demand a more elaborated notion of community to supplement this theory of locality and neighborhood. In addition, one might find it difficult to apply it to any case study (Valo, 2007). I myself find Appadurai’s concept of neighborhood to be useful for understanding the complexity of such processes as the appearance of multi-ethnic urban communities. However, while I maintain his point that neighborhood is about producing locality and situating community in the flux of social lifeworlds, I would rather stress its primarily spatial dimension – whether a physical or an imagined one. After all, it would be challenging to define what a neighborhood is in a virtual world. Thus, I conceive neighborhood as relationships between social agents who coexist in a particular space. In the case investigated in this study, this space is an urban borderland which has been created by the inflow of economic migrants.

Minority traders at urban markets not only usually engage in branches in which their countrymen specialize, they also tend to group together. Branch divisions at open-air markets often translate into spatial divisions. Opening a bar with ethnic cuisine or establishing a cultural center which serves the needs of a diaspora also marks the presence of a group in a particular place. In general, creating new neighborhoods is about reproducing one’s locality as one of migrants living in a strange environment. Living in such neighborhoods influences the process of socialization of new members of a community – both children and newcomers. In general, neighborhoods help the immigrants to orient themselves in a new reality – they refer to the

situatedness of communities and to micro-structures of their everyday life (cf. Appadurai, 2005, p. 179; Valo, 2007). Such neighborhoods account for the complexity of social life and the variety of its agents.

Considering an open-air market in terms of neighborhood implies that it consists of many localities because it is a place where different minorities operate. These localities include also those of the group that is necessary for each and every market to exist – the customers. Every group brings with it its cultural traits, economic strategies, ways of behavior in a public space, etc. – thus influencing positions of other groups. Different localities interact with each other in forms ranging from hostile competition to peaceful cooperation.

Through this interaction, they contribute to a common social lifeworld. A market, consisting of different localities, constitutes also one common locality: be the coexistence of different market agents a peaceful or hostile one, it requires that neighbors recognize and often even need one another. In the post-Soviet context, this situation creates a possibility for identifications beyond ethnic ties. One Russian tradeswoman said to me: *they [migrants] do not come here from an easy life*. Another told me: *the story of each trader at this market is the same: perestroika came*. What they meant was that tradespeople – regardless of their nationality – were united by sharing the same difficult life trajectories after the dissolution of the USSR. Thus, apart from competition, there was also space for compassion.

## Conclusions

In this article, I discussed the notions of ethnic entrepreneurship and trade minorities, and their possible usage in social research of post-Soviet Russia. Drawing on empirical material, I backed the claim that one can speak about those phenomena on Russian labor market in general and at urban open-air markets in particular. I showed the process of these minorities' appearance and I analyzed the ethnicization of both urban space and its inhabitants, be them newcomers or local population. Finally, I tried to understand the relationships between these groups in terms of neighborhood.

The Russian situation is absolutely unique when it comes to ethnic relations: Chinese immigrants aside, less than 25 years ago both local inhabitants and newcomers used to be citizens of one vast country. Today they come from different, sometimes downright feuding states, like Ukraine and Russia or Azerbaijan and Armenia. Large inflow of labor migrants always evokes discontentment of local population. This applies to the case of Russia, too. At the same time, due to the common Soviet legacy, newcomers can be said to have a certain right to come to their old patronage state. What is paradoxical about the post-Soviet context in general and economic migrations to Siberian cities in particular is that the foreigners in their

masses were torn apart from Soviet society and turned into neighbors due to the dissolution of the USSR. Their presence, which was initially rather an imagined one for most of the Siberian population – they lived thousands of kilometers away – over the course of time became physical. From distant neighbors they turned into close ones, with whom you deal in everyday practice. Metaphorically speaking, an imagined borderland became part of the core of Russia.

It was the urban open-air markets which became sites of interaction between different minorities and local population. On the one hand, an open-air market is a place of tension, since newcomers of different groups pose competition for each other and for local inhabitants. On the other, markets are needed and constitute a space where various negative stereotypes are challenged. The new relationships of neighborhood that appear during this encounter influence social ways of identification. As Appadurai puts it, neighborhoods “are always to some extent ethnoscaapes, insofar as they involve the ethnic projects of Others” (2005, p. 183). It is the Others towards whom we define ourselves. These Others can become part of *our* neighborhood and play the role of strangers who might even be despised but at the same time constitute organic members of *our* society.

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