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5 Migration and transnational informality in post-Soviet societies

Ethnographic study of po rukam ('handshake') experiences of Uzbek migrant workers in Moscow

Rustamjon Urinboyev

Introduction

The concept of 'informality' has become a trendy topic of research in the scholarly literature about post-Soviet societies. The amount of literature focusing on informal practices, institutions and networks in the post-Soviet space has grown rapidly over the last two decades, producing theoretically and empirically grounded accounts of different forms and manifestations of informality, such as clans and regional patronage networks, clientelism, blat networks, bribery, embezzlement, cronyism, kickbacks. In this connection, the review of existing research shows that the distinct focus on 'post-Soviet informality' highlights at least nine main themes: (1) economic informality (Alexeev and Pyle 2003; Wallace and Latcheva 2006); (2) blurred boundaries between informality and corruption (Werner 2000; Polese 2008; Urinboyev and Svensson 2013a); (3) informal political institutions and practices (Gel'man 2004; Hale 2011; Ledeneva 2013); (4) informality as a mixture of cultural and economic practices (Misztal 2002; Smith and Stenning 2006; Urinboyev and Svensson 2013b); (5) informality as a reflection of broader sociopolitical and sociocultural traditions (Ledeneva 1998; Collins 2006; Hayoz 2015); (6) the relationship between formal and informal economies (Round *et al.* 2008; Williams *et al.* 2013); (7) the (dis)continuity between Soviet and post-Soviet informal economies (Kurkchiyan 2000; Rodgers and Williams 2009; Aliyev 2015a); (8) informal practices of redistribution as an alternative to state-driven welfare distribution (Urinboyev 2013, 2014; Morris and Polese 2014); and (9) definitional, conceptual and terminological ambiguity surrounding the concept of informality (Williams *et al.* 2013; Aliyev 2015b; Polese 2015).

Despite the existence of a large diversity of scholarly explanations for and approaches to 'post-Soviet informality', one idea common to the aforementioned scholarship is that the bulk of studies focus on informal practices and institutions and their regulatory structures that take place within the boundaries of a single nation state (i.e. the scholarship is confined to a particular

nation state, not taking into account the increased transnational links between different places and people). Another factor that adds to this complexity is the growing use of information and communication technologies in the post-Soviet region, which may facilitate the daily exchange of information and reduce the importance of distance between different countries and people, possibly leading to the emergence of ‘transnational informality’. Hence, with a few exceptions (Cieslewska 2013; Yalcin-Heckmann 2013; Turaeva 2014), not much has been said about how multidimensional flows of people, ideas, goods, social practices and cultural symbols between different post-Soviet countries mould the nature and geographic scope of informal practices in the region.

This chapter situates itself within these ‘informality’ debates by suggesting that the nature of informal practices in post-Soviet societies is changing, not only in terms of content, forms, actors and magnitude, but, more importantly, in terms of geographical scope, due to ongoing large-scale migratory processes, e.g. the massive inflow of migrant workers from Central Asia and the Caucasus to Russia. Moving beyond the methodological nationalism still prevalent in much informality research (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002), I argue that informal practices in post-Soviet societies are becoming increasingly transnational. Migrant workers, living their lives across the border of two (or more) nation states, become part of the fabric of everyday life and social relations in their home state, while simultaneously becoming part of the socio-economic processes in their receiving state, thereby facilitating the daily flow of ideas, social practices and cultural symbols between migrant sending and receiving societies. These processes are especially visible in the construction sector in Moscow, Russia, where the informal employment of migrant workers is widespread and carried out through so-called *po rukam* (‘handshake-based’) labour contracts, which involve multiple formal and informal actors with different kinds and locations of power: migrant workers, intermediaries, construction firms, Russian police officers, Chechen racketeers, and migrants’ left-behind families and communities (e.g. village residents, local community leaders, leaders of mosques). Hence, this chapter, through an ethnographic study of *po rukam* experiences of Uzbek migrant workers in Moscow, aims to show how the interaction of the aforesaid actors across borders (via smartphones and the Internet) serve as an enforcement mechanism of the informal migrant labour market in Moscow. In doing so, I show how informality operates across borders, through different means and has an identifiable impact on the outcomes of many practices that Uzbek migrants (and other actors) engage with in Moscow. Thus, I use this case as a lens to pursue broader questions – that is, to offer a transnational framework for the study of informality in the post-Soviet context by drawing upon ideas and concepts developed within the informality literature, migration studies, law and society, and legal pluralism literature.

The rest of the chapter proceeds in the following manner. The next section presents the sociolegal context of the Russian migrant labour market, which

72 *Rustamjon Urinboyev*

is crucial in understanding the nuances of Russian migration governance and the perspective I take on informality. The chapter then provides the theoretical framework of the study by using the concepts of transnational social field, translocal village and the legal pluralism perspective. I then discuss the methodological considerations and present the results of multi-sited transnational ethnographic fieldwork conducted in January–September 2014 in Moscow, Russia and Ferghana, Uzbekistan. Finally, the chapter draws out the implications of the ethnographic material for informality debates and highlights the most important findings of the study.

Sociolegal context of the Russian migrant labour market

Russia, after the United States, is the second largest recipient of migrants worldwide. Currently, approximately 11 million foreign-born people reside in its territory (World Bank 2011). Migrants come to Russia primarily from the post-Soviet Central Asian republics, namely Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, where labour migration has become the preferred livelihood strategy for many due to deteriorating economic conditions. They typically stay in Russia for one to three years. Moscow and Saint Petersburg are the cities with the largest number of Central Asian migrant workers. Citizens of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan can visit Russia for up to 90 days without a visa. This means labour migrants from these countries can enter Russia without any visa. However, they are required to obtain residence registration (*registratsiya*) and a work permit (*patent*) within 30 days of their arrival. If migrants obtain these documents within this period, they can stay and work in Russia for up to one year without a visa. Of these documents, the work permit is harder and more costly to obtain, especially after the 2015 legislative changes that considerably increased the fees. Currently, Central Asian migrants must spend at least 22,000 roubles to obtain a work permit, as well as paying a 4,000 rouble monthly fee. In order to obtain a work permit, each migrant must purchase health insurance, provide proof of medical tests for HIV, tuberculosis, drug addiction and skin disease and pass a test on Russian language, history and law. All of these requirements must be fulfilled within a month.

Given that many Central Asian migrants have a poor command of the Russian language, are illiterate about legal procedures for labour migration and come to Russia with little or no money, it is highly unlikely that they would be able to meet all of these requirements within a month. The recent increase in the work permit fees has compelled many Central Asian migrants to work illegally, since they have to choose between working legally and sending money home. They usually end up choosing the latter option. Therefore, most of the migrants have irregular status, for example, lacking migration registration, residential registration or a work permit (see e.g. Ahmadov 2007; Marat 2009; Reeves 2013). A large proportion of these migrants work in the construction sector (Marat 2009), where there is a high

demand for cheap and young foreign labour. Therefore, most of the irregular migrants are concentrated in the construction industry, as it is the only place where they are able to find work without documents.

As an antidote to these trends, the Russian authorities are constantly introducing draconian laws and developing border control infrastructure, for example by widening the grounds for issuing re-entry bans to migrants who have violated laws during their previous stay (see e.g. Maier 2014). Even for breaches of administrative regulations (e.g. minor traffic violations, unpaid mobile phone bills) Central Asian migrant workers – who often return home seasonally – are denied re-entry to Russia. On 23 September 2014, the Russian Federal Migration Service (FMS) announced that nearly one million foreigners were banned from re-entry to Russia in 2014 (Bobylov 2015).

However, these control measures have produced unintended consequences: rather than reducing the number of irregular migrants, they have created additional incentives for irregular migration. First, migration laws are just part and parcel of the ‘unrule of law’ in Russia (Gel’man 2004) which is characterised by the prevalence of informal rules and norms over formal institutions. There is an extensive literature that provides an abundance of evidence on the different dysfunctions of the Russian legal system (see e.g. Humphrey and Sneath 2004; Guillory 2013; Ledeneva 2013). Under these circumstances, one possible inference is that the more restrictive the laws are, the higher the rate of bribes that migrants give to police officers, migration officials and border guards in order to continue to work in Russia. Second, migrants are becoming increasingly aware of the fact that they might not be able to re-enter Russia if they return home seasonally. Therefore, irregular migrants are reluctant to return home, preferring to stay and work in Russia for an indefinite period of time. Accordingly, the FMS’s 2015 statistics show that nearly three million foreign nationals who are now in Russia have already violated the legal terms of stay (Pochuev 2015). Most of these foreigners are citizens of Uzbekistan (40 per cent) and Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (20 per cent) (see e.g. Bobylov 2015).

Using the evidence from international migration literature and legal pluralism scholarship (Menski 1993; Ballard 2006; Shah 2011; Kubal 2013a) as a starting point, it seems reasonable to assume that the existence of millions of irregular migrants have some repercussions for the functioning of formal institutions in Russia, as well as leading to the emergence of informal structures and responses (i.e. a ‘parallel legal order’) that migrants use in order to cope with the restrictive legal environment, regulate their working life and seek redress for grievances (see e.g. Reeves 2013). It is also reasonable to assume that we need to focus on everyday transnational bonds between sending and receiving societies if we are to better understand the impact of migratory processes on informality and governance trajectories. These arguments thus raise the question of how migrants build relationships with employers in Russia, what strategies and tactics they utilise in order to cope with the risks and uncertainties of informal employment and whether it is

74 *Rustamjon Urinboyev*

possible to glean the patterns of a ‘parallel legal order’ of the migrant labour market. Another equally important question arising from this perspective is what effect everyday transnational interactions may have on the practices that migrants engage with in Russia. By ethnographically attending to the *po rukam* experiences of Uzbek migrant workers in Moscow, this chapter intends to address these questions and thereby draw out the implications of the ethnographical material for the informality literature.

Conceptualising ‘transnational informality’

As I argued in the previous sections, the Russian legal environment in general, and the sociolegal context of Russian migrant labour market in particular is characterised by the ‘unrule of law’. Under these circumstances, it can be assumed that migrants do not deal with the ‘rule of law’, but rather invent various tactics and strategies to adapt to the existing ‘informality environment’ in order to ‘get things done’. This means migrants may produce various ‘legal orders’ that provide alternative (to state law) means for regulating their working life and seeking redress for their problems. Such a normative pluralism is referred to as ‘legal pluralism’ in the legal anthropological scholarship (Merry 1988; Griffiths 2003). Legal pluralism emphasises the coexistence and clash of multiple sets of rules that mould people’s social behaviour: the law of the nation state, indigenous customary rules, religious decrees, moral codes and practical norms of social life (Nuijten and Anders 2007). From this point of view, state law is just one among many other normative orders in society. Accordingly, in a place such as Russia, where nearly three million migrants are concentrated in the informal economy, the study of informality should be sensitive to ‘legal baggage’ that migrants carry to their host country. The ‘legal baggage’ may contain different values, different attitudes to state law and different patterns of behaviour towards state law and its institutions (Kurkchivan 2011; Kubal 2013b), which mean that the host country’s legal environment may become even more legally plural with the arrival of new legal cultures. Hence, the legal pluralism perspective is instructive in recognising both formal and informal practices and structures stemming from host country’s sociolegal context as well as from migrants’ ‘legal baggage’ that they bring to their host country.

However, the legal pluralism perspective has conceptual limitations, as it is confined to the social processes taking place within the boundaries of a particular nation state. Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002) argue that we need to move away from methodological nationalism and thereby broaden our analytical lens, as migrants are often embedded in multilayered, multisided transnational social fields, involving both those who move and those who stay behind. From this perspective, the concept of the ‘transnational social field’ (Levitt and Schiller 2004) provides useful tools when trying to conceptualise the potential array of political, economic and social relations linking those who move and those who stay behind. Levitt and Schiller (2004: 1009) define

the transnational social field as ‘a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organised and transformed ... National social fields are those that stay within national boundaries while transnational social fields connect actors through direct and indirect relations across borders’. Hence, individuals within transnational social fields, through their everyday activities and relationships, come into contact with the regulatory powers and institutions of more than one state that determine their access and action and organise and legitimise gender, race and social status. Their daily rhythms and activities are shaped not only by more than one state simultaneously but also by social institutions, norms and pressures, such as norms of neighbourhood communities, networks of reciprocity and exchange, social sanctions (gossips, ostracism), that exist within many states and across their borders (ibid.).

There is another scientific field of importance to this study that investigates how the village-defined moral economy (e.g. traditional modes of trust, obligation, shame and neighbourliness) is extended across borders. The most pertinent literature that comes to mind in this respect is Velayutham and Wise’s (2005) notion of a ‘translocal village’. Building on Appadurai’s work on translocalism (1995), Velayutham and Wise develop the notion of the ‘translocal village’ to describe a particular form of moral community based around village-scale, place-oriented familial and neighbourly ties that have subsequently expanded across extended space. This concept allows us to visualise the everydayness of material, family, social and symbolic networks and exchanges that connect two different localities (that is, Uzbekistan’s Shabboda village to Moscow in this chapter). Hence, the reproduction of the translocal village takes place through the extension of affective regimes of guilt, shame, neighbourliness and obligation. In this connection, this concept has a strong relevance to this chapter as it helps to explain the direct links between a particular village (and its governance structures) and Uzbek migrants’ everyday life and practices in Moscow.

Thus, equipped with the concepts of transnational social fields, the translocal village and the legal pluralism perspective, it could be inferred that the study of informal practices and structures cannot be confined to the political and geographical boundaries of a particular nation state and that we also need to focus on the intersection between the practices, exchanges and experiences of those who have migrated and those who have stayed in place. Using this framework allows for a more systematic study of the transnational informal practices that have not been sufficiently addressed by traditional informality scholarship.

Methodological considerations

This chapter is based on eight periods of multi-sited transnational ethnographic fieldwork in January–September 2014 in Moscow, Russia and Fergana, Uzbekistan, as part of a project on migration and legal cultures in post-Soviet

76 *Rustamjon Urinboyev*

societies. The field sites were chosen because Moscow is the city with the largest number of Uzbek migrants, whereas Ferghana is one of the main migrant-sending regions in Uzbekistan because of its population density and high unemployment rate. I had the advantage of knowing the Uzbek and Russian languages. Due to my village background and Uzbek ethnicity, I was well connected to the Uzbek migrant worker community in Moscow. This enabled me to participate in migrants' daily life and thereby become a typical migrant worker.

During these eight field trips, a rich stock of ethnographic material was collected, mainly through observations and informal interviews. For the purpose of this chapter, the ethnographic material was collected in two different settings: Moscow province and Fergana region.

First, I conducted an ethnographic study at a construction site in Solnechnogorsk town, Moscow province, where Uzbek migrant workers live and work. Being in the 'field', I closely followed the everyday life and experiences of Uzbek migrant workers, observing their relationship with migrant middlemen and Russian employers (e.g. Russian middleman, construction firms). These observations gave me first-hand information on (a) how migrants, migrant middleman and Russian employers negotiate and agree on the terms and conditions of informal employment, (b) the strategies and tactics that migrants use to get paid for their work, and (c) the role of 'street actors and laws' (i.e. Chechen racketeers) in mediating financial disputes between migrants and migrant middleman.

Second, simultaneously, keeping up with the pace of developments in the Uzbek migrants' lives in Moscow, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in the Fergana region, in the village I call Shabboda, where migrants and middleman hail from. My aim was to explore the processes of everyday material, emotional, social, and symbolic exchanges between Shabboda village and Moscow and how these transnational interactions impact the outcomes of practices that Uzbek migrants (and other actors) engage with in Moscow. During the field research, I regularly visited migrants' left-behind families and carried out observations and informal interviews with village residents at 'migration talk hotspots' such as the *guzar* (village meeting space), *choyxona* (teahouse), *gaps* (regular get-togethers) and life-cycle events (e.g. weddings, funerals) where the bulk of village information exchange regarding remittances and migration takes place.

During the field research, I strove for spontaneity and sudden discoveries and therefore went to field sites 'blank', without any pre-designed fieldwork strategy or theoretical understanding. Moreover, I treated migrants as experts on the migration situation in Russia, thereby refraining from bringing in my own perspective. My position in relation to my informants was fluid, sliding between 'insider' and 'outsider' status. I was an 'insider' when relations between migrants, their left-behind families, middleman and Russian employers were smooth, but I became an 'outsider' when conflict arose among the parties. In such circumstances, I approached each actor privately and maintained the

confidentiality of information. The informants were asked for their consent to participate in the study. Due to the sensitivity of the data, I have changed the names and whereabouts of all informants and omitted any information that could be dangerous to the relevant individuals.

Uzbek migrants' *po rukam* experiences in Moscow

In search of empirical clues, on 23 January 2014, I travelled to Moscow, Russia for ethnographic field research. The afternoon flight from Copenhagen to Moscow on Aeroflot took just under three hours. I arrived at Moscow Sheremetyevo airport in the evening. After going through customs and passport control, I walked towards the airport forecourt, where Misha, an Uzbek migrant worker, was waiting for me in his car. As Misha and I hail from the same district in Fergana, Uzbekistan, I was excited to meet my *zemlyak* (fellow countryman) for both personal and academic reasons. Misha welcomed me with a smile; we shook hands and hugged each other, as we had not seen each other for seven years. Afterwards, I put my belongings in the boot, got into the car and we quickly headed to the north-east of Moscow city where my hotel was located.

Sheremetyevo airport is not so far from Moscow city centre; it takes 25–30 minutes to drive to the centre outside the rush hour. But as I arrived in the evening when traffic congestion on the Moscow Ring Road is at its highest, our trip lasted more than two hours. Nonetheless, the traffic jam was a good opportunity for us to hold some catch-up conversation about what had happened since the last time we met. I briefly told Misha about my migration research and asked him if he could help me collect data about Uzbek migrant workers' everyday life and experiences in Moscow. Misha seemed interested in my work and promised that he could put me in touch with migrant workers. Misha is one of the pioneer migrants who brought many of his co-villagers and acquaintances (circa 200 migrants) to Moscow. He arrived in Moscow in 2002 when labour migration was still a new phenomenon in Uzbekistan. He currently works as a *posrednik* (middleman) in the construction sector, acting as an intermediary between migrant workers and Russian construction firms. The last time I had met Misha, in Moscow in August 2007, he was working as a taxi driver, earning \$US500–600 per month. This was where Misha made Russian acquaintances and built up extensive networks that later paved the way for him to become a *posrednik* in the construction sector – the highest rung on the career ladder that many migrant workers strive to reach. He apparently was very fond of his work and believed that his role as a *posrednik* was pivotal in the migrant labour market.

I was truly intrigued by Misha's success story and subsequently became interested to know more about his work. I particularly wondered what role and functions the *posrednik* fulfilled in the migrant labour market, how a *posrednik* builds relationships with migrant workers and Russian employers and whether there was some form of written (formal) contract that regulates

78 *Rustamjon Urinboyev*

the terms and conditions of working relationships between different parties. When I asked him these questions, he explained that he usually concludes *po rukam* ('handshake') style agreements with migrant workers, Russian *posredniks* and construction firms. He also said that his work has nothing to do with the law and beardedness; rather he relies on *ko'cha qonunlari* (laws of the street) and *erkakchilik* (literally 'manliness') rules to get things done. Although I had some pre-understanding of the migrant labour market situation in Moscow, the terms and slang Misha used were new to me. Seeing my puzzled face, he quickly noticed my poor knowledge of street life and provided the following account of how things work in the construction industry, particularly focusing on his *posrednik* role and how he concludes *po rukam* agreements with migrant workers, Russian *posredniks* and construction firms:

The construction industry and the way it works resemble a pyramid. It is wide near the bottom and narrows gradually as it reaches the top. This means you find *zakazchiks* [clients], *genpodryadchiks* [general contractors] and *subpodryadchiks* [sub-contractors] at the top of a construction pyramid and a huge army of migrant workers at the bottom. Migrant workers do all the work but those who are at the pinnacle take almost all the money and leave very little for migrants. We, *posredniks*, are located in the middle of the pyramid and hence our role is the most delicate and problematic one. Most migrant workers hate us, believing that all *posredniks* deceive and exploit them; but strangely enough, if any chance arises, all migrants want to be a *posrednik*.

Let me explain more in detail how this pyramid is built. At the top of the pyramid we have the *zakazchik*, an organisation that receives state funding for the implementation of various construction projects. The *zakazchik* usually concludes an agreement with a *genpodryadchik* for the implementation of construction, installation and design projects. According to the agreement, the *genpodryadchik* is fully responsible for the implementation of construction–installation and design work. However, the *genpodryadchik* is not directly involved in the construction work, as they mainly act as a coordinator and intermediary agent, using several *subpodryadchiks* as assistants for implementing construction work. A *subpodryadchik* is a construction firm [hereafter 'firma'] that is supposed to perform construction, installation and design work by finding and employing skilled builders.

Actually this is where all of the fairy tales about the law end and the real *po rukam* style work begins. Typically, the *firma* tries to implement construction projects as cheaply as possible. If the *firma* employs Russian citizens, it has to pay decent salaries, employment tax and social security contributions. But the cost of the labour force becomes very high if it opts for this option. Therefore, the *firma* prefers migrant workers to Russian citizens since migrants don't require any papers [work permit and employment contracts] and work much harder and longer even if they get

paid a lot less than Russian citizens. But the *firma* never contacts migrants directly, trying to avoid possible legal problems in case migrants are caught during an *FMS oblava* [raid conducted by the Russian Federal Migration Service]. Instead, the *firma* usually works via its representative. The representative's main task is to find a *posrednik*, usually a Russian citizen [hereafter 'Russian *posrednik*'] who can link the *firma* with migrant workers. The agreement between the *firma* representative and the Russian *posrednik* is reached by shaking hands [*po rukam*], which means that the *firma* doesn't have any legally binding relationship with the Russian *posrednik*.

In turn, the Russian *posrednik* is expected to find well-skilled migrant construction workers who can perform the tasks in accordance with the standards set by the government. Of course, it is difficult for the Russian *posrednik* to build workable and trustworthy relationships with migrants given that most migrants' command of the Russian language is poor. Moreover, the Russian *posrednik* cannot properly coordinate the work process and ensure that the migrants he enters into a relationship with are well skilled in construction work. Therefore, Russian *posrednik* contacts an Uzbek or Tajik *posrednik* [hereafter 'migrant *posrednik*'] with whom he has previously worked. The agreement between the Russian and migrant *posredniks* is concluded by shaking hands. Many construction projects in Moscow are implemented *po rukam* style. Legally speaking, nobody is formally employed to perform construction work, but interestingly enough, many construction projects in Moscow are being completed every month, thereby giving the impression that high-rise buildings are growing like trees, without any human involvement.

I am one of those migrant *posredniks* who enters into *po rukam* working relationships with Russian *posredniks*. Generally, as a migrant *posrednik*, I can fulfil three functions depending on the nature of the *zakaz* (job offers): *posrednik*, *brigadir* and *prorab*. I may act as a *posrednik* and provide *firmas* with skilled migrant workers. In this case I am not involved in any construction work and my main responsibility is to secure a salary for migrant workers. For my *posrednik* service, I get a *dolya* (share), which means every migrant gives 10–15 per cent of his salary to me. Sometimes I work as a *prorab*, leading and supervising large group of migrants in construction projects. In such cases, I don't do any physical work and my main task is to control the quality of work. I can also be a *brigadir* if I form a construction team consisting of 10–15 migrants. Unlike the *posrednik* and *prorab*, the *brigadir* leads the *brigada* and does physical work like all other migrants in the *brigada*. The only advantage is that the *brigadir* gets a higher salary than the others due to his leadership role and rich experience in construction work.

Very few *posredniks* are able to combine all these three functions. I am a universal *posrednik*. Due to my rich life experience I am not afraid of taking risks and therefore can work in all these three capacities. In order

80 *Rustamjon Urinboyev*

to be a universal *posrednik*, one must speak Russian fluently, know ‘street life’, have a lot of Russian acquaintances, build a reliable brigada and be highly skilled in construction work. I arrived in Russia 12 years ago and worked at different places and interacted with both good and bad people. I have extensive connections within the construction sector [e.g. construction firms and Russian *posredniks*], so they contact me with various *zakaz*. I connect migrant workers with Russian employers, negotiate the terms and conditions of the construction work and serve as a guarantor of the contract to all parties involved.

I have a trustworthy working relationship with a Russian *posrednik*, who contacts me with many *zakaz*, asking me to form a brigada for the implementation of various construction and installation works. We discuss and agree on the financial terms and conditions of the construction work by assessing its type, duration and magnitude. The Russian *posrednik* takes responsibility for the salaries and timely provision of materials and equipment needed for construction work. My main role is to find well-skilled migrant construction workers, take full responsibility for the quality of the construction work and address migrants’ daily concerns [e.g. accommodation, food] and legal problems [e.g. police problems]. It is not so easy to find well-skilled and reliable migrant construction workers. I have to make sure that the migrants don’t steal construction materials and perform their tasks in accordance with state standards. I try to find migrants whom I know and trust, and who follow my instructions. If I approach migrants that do not share a common village or district origin with me, it is unlikely that they would agree to work with me. There have been many *lohatron* [‘fraud’] cases in Moscow where *posredniks* have cheated on migrants and didn’t pay their salaries. Therefore I build my construction brigada by inviting my village acquaintances and *mahalla* [local community] friends and neighbours to work for me. It is easier that way instead of having to establish relationships with a new lot of people. My co-villagers don’t ask me to provide a written contract. My *erkakcha gap* [literally ‘man’s word’] is enough for them. Given that many migrants are paperless, *po rukam* style work is the best option as it allows migrants to work without any documents.

As you see, being a migrant *posrednik* means taking on lots of obligations. But my work also has advantages. For instance, I don’t have to do physical work and my main role is to lead and supervise the brigada so that they do everything properly. I don’t take that much money for my service because almost all members of my brigada are my co-villagers and *mahalla* acquaintances. I just take 15 per cent *dolya* for my work.

This spontaneous conversation with Misha was an excellent introduction to migrants’ everyday life in Moscow, which enabled me to obtain my first insights into how Uzbek migrants cope and gain access to the labour market in the restrictive Russian legal environment. In referring to *po rukam*, Misha

was actually talking about the highly informal nature of migrant labour market in Moscow. This was the first time I learned about the informal contract between migrant workers, middleman and Russian construction firms where migrants could get access to the labour market without any work permits and Russian language skills. Hence, *po rukam* style construction work seemed like a sophisticated and highly efficient system that benefits all the parties involved. However, Misha's story was not fully complete, as he did not talk about the cases where one of the parties (the migrant, Russian *posrednik* or construction firm) fails to comply with the *po rukam* contract. Given the highly informal nature of the migrant labour market in Moscow, I wondered how the *po rukam* contract works in practice and whether there are any regulatory structures in place that can resolve disputes when one of the parties does not fulfil their contractual obligations.

I think Misha's story unconsciously refined many of my initial assumptions about the migrant labour market and generated specific research questions that became the focus of my fieldwork. Even though I had spent just a few hours in Moscow, it felt like I had already immersed myself in the field. In this regard, my interest in *po rukam* experiences of migrant construction workers was quite a spontaneous process. Misha, having noticed my interest in his work, invited me to visit his workplace in Solnechnogorsk (Moscow province) so that I could acquaint myself with his construction team (hereafter 'brigada'). This invitation was a wonderful opportunity for me to see and experience migrant workers' everyday life, so I accepted it with a great enthusiasm. Before leaving me at the hotel, Misha said that he would pick me up from my hotel tomorrow at 8 a.m. I thanked him and we agreed to meet the next day.

As planned, on the next day, Misha picked me up from my hotel and we headed to Solnechnogorsk. For Misha, it was just a typical working day, but this trip was a very special experience for me. We arrived at the construction site at about 10 a.m., at which time all of the brigada members were working on the 17th floor in spite of the freezing cold weather (the outdoor temperature was –25 degrees Celsius). As the brigada was busy working I tried to do some observation on the construction site and gathered information about brigada members and their living and working conditions. Misha's brigada consists of 12 migrant workers and their main job is to install new windows in mid- and high-rise buildings. On average, the brigada works 10–12 hours per day, without taking any days off. They are allowed to take a day off only in exceptional circumstances, for example if there is a lack of materials (e.g. silicone caulking, nails) needed to complete the window installation. Misha purchases the necessary food items (bread, vegetables, rice, pasta, cooking oil, etc.) and the brigada make meals for themselves. This means every day one migrant, on a rotating basis, is assigned to prepare lunch and dinner for everyone. There is no clear boundary between work and non-work activities in the brigada's everyday life. The same construction site serves as both workplace and accommodation. The brigada's accommodation is located on

82 *Rustamjon Urinboyev*

the fourth floor and consists of two rooms: one narrow, cramped room full of rudimentary bunk beds, with old mattresses, blankets and old clothes used as pillows, and one slightly bigger room for handwashing, cooking and eating facilities that fails to meet even basic hygiene standards. The indoor temperature is around 20 degrees due to the presence of two electric heaters. The brigada has access to an outdoor toilet, but there is no bathroom facility available for their use.

The brigada returned to their room at about 1 p.m. to have lunch. Almost all brigada members have smartphones with access to the Internet. They regularly used Odnoklassniki (a popular social media site in the post-Soviet space) in order to check the latest news, view photos of girls and send instant messages to their left-behind families and friends. Some migrants made phone calls to their family, telling them that they were fine and would send money home as soon as they got their salary. Mansur, today's 'chef on duty' prepared *osh* (a festive Uzbek rice), so all members of the brigada looked satisfied and happy. The *osh* was served in a large bowl and shared by everyone sitting at the table. While eating *osh* they mainly discussed how to avoid errors in installing windows and perform tasks in accordance with state standards. As brigada leader, Misha gave instructions, distributing tasks and telling them to be more industrious. The brigada members attentively and obediently listened to his instructions and orders, treating him as a boss. Some migrants who smoke asked Misha to bring Winstons (cigarettes) the following day, while others requested him to top up their mobile phones. One of the migrants asked Misha to send money to his family, as his father needed money for urgent medical treatment. Although Misha had not yet received payment from Stas (the Russian *posrednik*), he tried to fulfil the requests of his brigada using his personal savings. Misha also tried to meet the bathing needs of the brigada. He said that today he would take three brigada members to his apartment in Moscow city so that they could take a shower and get some rest. As an observer, I felt that Misha was acting not only as a *posrednik* but also exhibiting paternalistic leadership by treating his brigada in a fatherly manner and providing for their needs on a rotating basis. The roles and relationship between Misha and his brigada seemed well organised and balanced, giving me the impression that a *po rukam* style contract indeed works.

As I visited the construction site on a daily basis, I was able to develop a close relationship with all members of the brigada. As the brigada members and I hail from the same district, almost all of them knew or had heard about me, which led to my being accepted as *svoi* ('our own') – an 'insider' with whom both work and non-work issues could be shared and discussed. In turn, I also tried to show open-mindedness and briefly told them about my research, introducing myself as a migration researcher writing about Uzbek migrant workers in Russia. Accordingly, my first field trip (23–29 January 2014) helped me establish a close relationship with the migrant communities and enhanced my understanding of Uzbek migrants' everyday working life and experiences in Moscow.

Another research aim that spontaneously emerged in the course of my field research was to explore the processes of everyday material, emotional, social, and symbolic exchanges between Misha's brigada and their left-behind families and communities. My assumption was that technological developments would produce simultaneity of events and instantaneous interactions between migrant sending and receiving societies, possibly leading to the emergence of transnational ties and networks. As all brigada members used smartphones and social media, I inferred that there must be a daily exchange of information between the brigada and their sending community. I was particularly interested to investigate whether it is possible to glean the patterns of transnationalism in the case of Misha's brigada and their left-behind families and communities, and if so, how these transnational interactions impact the outcomes of practices that Misha and his brigada (and other actors) engage with in Moscow.

Armed with these research questions, I travelled to the Fergana region, Uzbekistan for two weeks of fieldwork during 31 January–15 February 2014. Shabboda, where the families of Misha and his brigada live, is a village in the Fergana region, consisting of 28 *mahalla*, and has a population of more than 18,000 people. The income-generating activities of the village residents are made up of multiple sources, ranging from cucumber and grape production, remittances, raising livestock for sale as beef and informal trade, to construction work, daily manual labour (*mardikorchilik*), fruit-picking jobs and brokerage. However, remittances sent from Russia constitute the main source of income for many households. Likewise, migration is a widespread livelihood strategy, simply a 'norm' for young and able-bodied men in Shabboda village. We mainly see elderly people, women and children on the streets of the village during the 'migration season'. Wherever I went and whomever I talked with, the central topic of conversation was migration and remittances. Most village residents had sons or close relatives working in Russian cities, predominantly in Moscow. Accordingly, they seemed well informed about the living and working conditions of migrants in Russia. This was largely due to technological developments that had reduced the importance of distance and created an everyday information exchange between Shabboda village and Moscow. Shabboda, in this sense, was a truly 'translocal village', as everyday material, family and social exchanges directly connected it to Moscow.

Misha and his brigada's Moscow adventures were the centre of 'village talk'. Given that Misha provided many village residents with jobs in Moscow, his family members enjoyed high social status and prestige in the village. Therefore, when invited to weddings, Misha's father was always offered a 'best table' and served more quickly than others. Misha was especially praised by the parents of his brigada for employing and taking care of their sons. However, not all villagers shared this view. Some of the residents I encountered said that Misha's *posrednik* work was not compatible with the principles of Islam as he took *dolya* from migrants' salaries without doing any physical work. Some even believed that Misha 'eats a lot' and covertly steals from his

84 *Rustamjon Urinboyev*

co-villagers. Despite these negative views, most village residents I encountered expressed positive views about Misha.

After a two-month break, I returned to Moscow for follow-up fieldwork during 5–15 April 2014. Like the last time, I visited Misha's brigada in Solnechnogorsk on a regular basis. But this time things were different. Although the brigada had already completed half of the window installation work, they had not been paid for their work since January. I also learned that two migrants had already quit the brigada due to payment delays and that other members were also considering leaving. On the whole, the brigada's daily conversation primarily revolved around the questions of why they were experiencing payment problems and what measures they could take in order to get paid for their work. At the same time, they were under strong pressure to send money home, because their left-behind families were dependent on remittances to meet their basic needs. Misha's situation was especially delicate because he had actually failed to secure the migrants' salaries. But he insisted that he was also a *musofir* (alien) in Russia just like everyone else, and blamed Stas and the firma representative for the payment problems. The brigada seemed to feel empathy towards Misha and did not hold him responsible for the payment delays.

Despite being present on the construction site on a daily basis, Stas kept avoiding any possible contact with brigada members, completely refusing to discuss financial issues with them. He often stated that he had made an agreement with Misha, not with the brigada, so he discussed all matters only with him. This situation eventually led to hostility and frustration, as brigada members felt ignored and voiceless even though they did all the hard work. As a result, the brigada questioned Stas's honesty and discussed several options for how to retaliate if they did not receive the promised salary. Several migrants suggested that they should either break all of the installed windows or steal construction materials. Others suggested that they should do physical or material harm to Stas, for instance by burning his car or punishing him physically. However, given his personal responsibility for the brigada's actions, Misha asked the brigada to be more patient and refrain from taking any collective measures; otherwise, their salary and safety would be at stake. In Misha's view, the only realistic solution would be to continue to work with Stas, given the fact that the brigada members were working without any legal work permits. Even if they worked legally and filed a complaint with the Russian Federal Migration Service or court, the migrants' chances of success was near zero, since Stas and the firma could easily win the case by paying a bribe to the state officials. Misha believed that migrants are nobody in Russia and thereby warned the brigada that they might easily end up in prison if they caused material or physical damage to Stas. Fearing the consequences of their plans, the brigada obeyed Misha and decided not to take any retaliation measures against Stas. However, the brigada were reluctant to do any further work, demanding that Stas paid at least one-third of their salary. As a brigada leader, Misha had to keep things going and convinced the brigada that he

would secure their salary by the end of April if they completed the window installation work. The brigada continued to work in April, believing that Misha would keep his word.

Thus, the situation in the brigada was developing in completely different ways from what I observed during my first fieldwork. Feelings of helplessness and anger were clearly visible in the brigada's daily conversation. Despite the payment delays, most brigada members seemed to trust and accept Misha's leadership. However, two brigada members did not trust Misha and decided to quit the brigada. These events signalled that something serious was under way or taking place in the brigada that I was probably unaware of due to my 'outsider' status. In this regard, I looked to the left-behind families and communities of the brigada as an alternative source of information.

To further understand the situation, I travelled to Fergana for more field research between 27 April and 21 May 2014. After arriving in Shabboda village, I visited Misha's and the brigada's families in order to find out what was actually happening in the brigada's life. The first thing I noticed was that the brigada's Moscow disputes and problems were gradually moving to the village. Family members were well informed about the latest developments in Moscow. From my conversations, I found that Misha had failed to live up to his promises and could not secure the brigada's salary by the end of April. These developments eventually led to the brigada splitting and subsequently, a dispute arose between Misha and the brigada over money. At the same time, the brigada's family members started to put pressure on Misha's family and demanded that either Misha or his parents must take responsibility for their sons' salaries. However, Misha's parents refused to take any responsibility, arguing that the dispute should be discussed and resolved in Moscow, where it was taking place, not in the village. In mid May, I learned that Misha had made a new promise that he would get money from the Russians by the end of June, and thereafter all of the brigada members would get paid for their work. Their family members decided to wait one more month, hoping that Misha would keep his word this time. Subsequently, dispute halted and remained muted in the village. Most people I met at the village's 'migration talk' sites, e.g. the *guzar* (village meeting space), *choyxona* (teahouse) and weddings, were still unaware of these developments.

When I returned to Moscow in the summer of 2014 (29 July–6 August 2014), I learned that the brigada had totally split and the migrants were working in different places. Most of them had found new jobs at a construction site in Balashikha city (Moscow province), while others were working at the bazaar or meat warehouse. Misha no longer had employees and was working alone, doing *haltura* (daily window installation work) for individual (private) persons. Misha and the brigada members were in open confrontation, as Misha had again failed to fulfil his promise. Since the brigada worked informally, they were aware of the fact that they could not resort to legal measures to address their grievances. However, not wanting to lose their money, the brigada instead approached a group of Chechen protection

86 *Rustamjon Urinboyev*

racketeers, asking them to recover their money from Misha and, offering 20 per cent of the total sum of the money as a payment for their protection service. I have discovered that Chechen racketeers were known as the *qozi* ('judges') among Central Asian migrants, providing an alternative (to the state) justice and dispute settlement through threats and violence. However, the brigada's appeal to the racketeers was futile, as Misha had stronger connections at the OMON, the Special Purpose Mobility Unit of the Russian Police. When I asked Misha about the details of the incident, he passionately talked about his triumph over the Chechens:

I tried to explain to the brigada why payment was delayed, but they didn't want to understand me. Things are simply beyond my control. Even though we are all co-villagers, they didn't show any mercy and shamelessly used Chechen racketeers against me. I was willing to pay them but after what they did to me they wouldn't get anything from me. This incident happened in mid July. They called me demanding that I must pay their salary immediately. I told the brigada that I would give them money as soon as I get payment from Stas. Afterwards, the tone of the conversation suddenly changed and they started to threaten me saying that they would give me to the Chechen racketeers. Many migrants get terrified when they hear the word Chechen, because Chechens are violent and rule street life in Moscow. So the brigada thought that I would be also scared to death and surrender immediately.

Seemingly, the brigada underestimated me. I have been living in Moscow since 2002, so I have also lots of powerful connections on the street. I told the brigada that they can give me to any Chechen racketeer. At the same time, I informed them that if they used racketeers against me, we, all sides, must abide by the 'laws of the street'. According to the street laws, if the brigada decide to use Chechen racketeers as *qozi* [judge], they must fully waive their claims against me, because they are transferring the case to the racketeers. In other words, they quit the game automatically. In that case, I owe money to the Chechen racketeers, not to the brigada. This means the brigada demands money from the Chechens, as they take full responsibility for recovering the money from me. If the Chechens don't succeed, the brigada lose all the money and I no longer owe anything to the brigada. Hence, I told the brigada that they must be men and abide by the street rules if they use racketeers. They accepted these conditions and we agreed that our relationship ended here.

A few days later, the Chechen racketeers contacted me by phone. We agreed to meet for a *razborka* [violent showdown] in Moscow's Bibirevo district on 17 July 2014 at around 10 p.m. During the phone conversation they told me that I owed them 800,000 Russian roubles and that I must bring this amount to the *razborka*; otherwise, they warned me that my life would be in danger. But I answered them that they wouldn't get even a single rouble from me and that they could do with me whatever they

want. I knew that the *razborka* would be violent as I refused to pay. Therefore, I contacted my friends who work at the OMON, requesting them to protect me during the *razborka*. They are always eager to protect me, because I thank them with *ko'ki* [Uzbek metaphor for US dollars].

As agreed, I arrived at the meeting point at 10 p.m., of course, together with my five Russian friends. Not wanting to be identified as police officers, my friends didn't wear their uniform, so they all looked like typical street guys. As I expected, the Chechens were 25 minutes late. At around 10.30 p.m., seven Chechens arrived. However, after seeing that I was accompanied by five tall Russians, they didn't dare to approach me. Without saying a single word, they quickly returned to their car and drove away in an unknown direction. Since then, I have never seen or heard them.

Misha looked psychologically strong and criticised the brigada members for their unfair and greedy behaviour. Referring to the street laws, he believed that he was no longer obliged to pay the brigada. Thus, for Misha, this was the end of the dispute.

During this fieldwork, I invited all 12 brigada members for dinner at an Uzbek cafe in order to see 'the other side of the coin'. From my conversation with them, I learned that they were still determined to continue 'the battle'. While acknowledging Misha's victory 'on the street', they still insisted that Misha must pay the brigada's salary, regardless of the circumstances. In particular, Baha openly expressed his views and said:

Of course, we lost the game according to the laws of the street. But this doesn't absolve Misha from responsibilities. His actions are not compatible with religious norms. According to Islam, it is *haram* [sinful] to steal someone's money. It is also *haram* to take *dolya* from someone's salary. We worked hard even during the cold winter months and fulfilled our work duties, while Misha gave us orders and did not do any physical work. We agreed that he would take at least 15 per cent *dolya* from our salaries, so his main task was to guarantee that we receive money on time. So if he can't get money from Stas or the firma, this is his personal problem, not ours. We shook hands with him, not with the Russians. We don't care whether he pays our salary from his own pocket or gets it from the Russians. He is constantly blaming the Russians, but we don't want to hear anything about his private deals with the Russians. The only thing we care is our *po rukam* agreement with Misha.

Bek, the youngest member of the brigada, argued that almost all Russian people are honest and never cheat migrants (*O'ris aldamaydi*). He believed that Misha was just using Stas as an excuse to steal their money. On the other hand, Nodir, another migrant, was of the opinion that Misha and Stas were accomplices and were 'staging the show together' to fool the brigada. While

observing their conversation, I noticed that they were considering various options to recover their money from him. When I asked what measures they were most likely to take, they replied that they were going to spread gossip about Misha in the village, hoping that it would force him and his family to pay their salary.

Accordingly, shortly after the Moscow field research, I travelled to Fergana (7 August–2 September 2014) in order to follow the latest developments in the village. From my observations there it became apparent that the dispute was again moving to Shabboda village. Brigada members were constantly calling their families in the village, asking them to put more pressure on Misha's family by spreading gossip at *guzar*, *choyxona* and weddings where people gather and conduct the bulk of village information exchange. When I visited these social spaces, I observed that most village residents already possessed information about how 'Misha exploited and "ate" his fellow villagers' money'. Most residents were of the opinion that Misha was supposed to secure the brigada's salary irrespective of the circumstances, since the brigada trusted him and worked hard during the cold winter. They argued that a person must never assume this role if he cannot keep his word. Some villagers even accused Misha of human trafficking and exploitation, which is a criminal act according to Uzbek legislation. Moreover, the villagers held Misha responsible for the brigada's legal problems, since the migrants did not have money to get work permits due to the payment delays and therefore were banned from re-entering Russia for five years. The villagers also referred to religious norms to interpret Misha's actions, saying that it was not acceptable to take *dolya* from someone's salary in Islam. In this way, Misha was seen as a bad Muslim who earns money through *harom* means.

The relationship between the families of Misha and the brigada was especially problematic. The brigada's families regularly visited Misha's house and made scandal on the street, telling all the neighbours about the money conflict. They also spread gossip at wedding ceremonies where the majority of villagers gather. Moreover, the *oqsoqol* (community leader) and *imom* (leader of the mosque) interfered and warned Misha's parents that the details of the dispute would be made public during the Friday prayers at mosque if Misha refused to pay his fellow villagers' salaries. The brigada's families were also considering using legal measures as a last resort if the situation persisted:

We are currently spreading gossip about Misha in the village. We hope this strategy will give some result. If Misha's parents continue to ignore us, we will contact Uzbek law enforcement bodies, for example, *uchastkovoy* [local police], *prokuratura* [public prosecutor] or SNB [National Security Service]. But we are not rushing to take that measure. Misha is our neighbour and we don't want to ruin his life. So we want to give him one more chance before officially reporting him to the law enforcement bodies.

Misha's family was thus under huge village pressure. Most villagers began to look at them as bad Muslims who do not hesitate to eat harom food. From my observations I noticed that life was no longer endurable for Misha's family, as they had to face daily hints and sarcastic remarks on the village streets. Misha's father's situation was particularly bad. Because of the widespread gossip and rumours about his son, he could no longer attend village *guzar* and weddings where most people socialise. When I asked Misha's father how he was going to solve this problem, he replied that he would call Misha these days and ask him to pay his debts immediately. Thus, the village pressure was slowly changing the course of developments.

Immediately after Fergana fieldwork, I headed to Moscow (2–30 September 2014) to find out whether village events were having any impact on Misha and the brigada's actions in Moscow. As I expected, Misha was well informed about the latest village news. He was very frustrated and angry at the brigada, but at the same he was pragmatic and knew that he needed to do something to settle the dispute once and for all, otherwise his family would continue to suffer from village pressure. When I asked him how he was going to settle it, he said that he had already borrowed money from his friends and that he would pay the brigada's salary within a few days. After a few days, I invited all of the brigada members for lunch at an Uzbek cafe located in Moscow's Babushkinskaya district. From our conversation, I learned that Misha had indeed paid them, so all of them looked satisfied. Hence, the extension of village-level affective regimes of guilt, shame and gossips across borders proved to be an enforcement mechanism that determined the outcome of a dispute. Although Misha was able to stand against the Chechen racketeers, village pressure eventually turned out to be his 'Achilles heel' that forced him to pay the brigada's salaries from his own pocket.

Discussion and concluding remarks

The dispute that arose between Misha and his brigada reveals something about the nature of the migrant labour market in Moscow, which, to a large extent is informal but has well-functioning regulatory mechanisms. As shown in the previous section, there are a myriad of structures, both formal and informal, that negotiate and regulate the 'rules of the game' in the migrant labour market across borders (e.g. construction firms, Russian and migrant middlemen, Chechen racketeers, Russian police officers, migrants' left-behind families, village residents, *imom* and *oqsoqol*, and (symbolically) Uzbek law enforcement bodies). Hence, the Russian migrant labour market is governed by plural legal orders that interact across borders simultaneously.

The ethnographic data contributes additional empirical evidence to the informality literature, particularly that concerned with the post-Soviet context, that the lack of formal rules does not necessarily mean that there are no rules. Hence, informality grows and establishes itself as a governance tool in areas where the state cannot or does not want to rule, thereby leaving room

for citizens' initiatives (Polese *et al.* 2014; Davies and Polese 2015). My data also confirms the findings of Williams and Round (2011) that 'the informal' never exists in a vacuum but in a constant, reiterative relationship with 'the formal'. In this sense, it can be stated that the informality I observed in the Russian migrant labour market does not qualitatively differ from the mainstream accounts of the shadow or second economy that we find in the scholarly literature about post-Soviet societies (see e.g. Ledeneva 1998; Humphrey 2002; Williams and Round 2011; Morris and Polese 2013, 2015). However, my research differs in one aspect from the previous research by adding the 'transnational' perspective to the study of informality. As argued in the previous sections, most accounts of 'post-Soviet informality' tend to confine the unit of analysis to social processes taking place within the boundaries of a particular nation state. However, an investigation of the Uzbek migrant workers' *po rukam* experiences takes us beyond conventional understandings of informality into the subject of 'transnational informality' and the plural legal orders that operate beyond nation states.

I have argued that the informal practices in post-Soviet societies are becoming transnational in light of migratory processes and therefore we need to move away from methodological nationalism and broaden our analytical lens to include everyday transnational bonds when analysing informal processes. As my findings indicate, due to the inability or unwillingness of the Russian authorities to regulate the migrant labour market, another parallel legal order has emerged as a governance tool. In other words, when informal structures within the boundaries of a particular nation state cannot provide functional regulation, this vacuum may be filled by informal structures located in another country. Hence, the case study of Uzbek migrant workers' *po rukam* experiences demonstrates the existence of 'transnational informality' that serves as a regulatory mechanism of informal labour in Moscow's construction sector. Hence, drawing on the concepts of transnational social fields, the translocal village and legal pluralism, this study suggests that there is a need to rethink the concept of informality so that it is no longer automatically equated with the boundaries of a single nation state.

Note on transliteration

Throughout the chapter, Russian and Uzbek words are spelled according the standard literary form. They are used based on the following two criteria: (1) whether a Russian/Uzbek word or phenomenon is central to the study; (2) if an English translation does not fully capture the meaning of the Russian/Uzbek word or phenomenon. Russian and Uzbek words are presented in italics. The principal exceptions are *po rukam*, *posrednik*, *brigada*, *firma*, *harom* and *dolya*, since these words are frequently used or have a central place in the chapter.

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