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The Political Economy of Non-Western Migration Regimes: Central Asian Migrant Workers in Russia and Turkey

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Central Asian Migrant Workers
in Russia and Turkey

Rustamjon Urinboyev · Sherzod Eraliev



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First of all, we would like to extend our gratitude to hundreds of migrants we have met in Russia, Turkey and Uzbekistan over the course of the last eight years. The stories they shared have inspired us to write about Central Asian migrants in journals, edited volumes, and media outlets. This book, in our view, is a culmination of our years of study of Central Asian labor migration. The initial idea of the book actually came from the intriguing stories and adventures of Uzbek migrants who experienced both Russian and Turkish migrant labor markets. Having informal chats and lengthy discussions over a Turkish tea with them in Istanbul during the last three years, we realized that a majority of them had already been a migrant to Russia, the largest destination for Central Asian, or for that matter, Uzbek migrant workers. During our daily chats, they often compared and reflected on their experiences and adventures in Russia and Turkey. In these discussions, migrants stated their preference for Russia over Turkey and sometimes vice versa. These daily chats inspired us and reinforced our conviction that we should indeed write a book on Central Asian migrants' experiences in Russia

and Turkey. In many ways, these two destinations share striking similarities, as will be discussed in detail in the book, in terms of rules of the entrance, shadow economy, informal employment and migrant precarity. But at the same time, both offer significantly different experiences to migrant workers due to varying informal power geometries and extralegal processes. As this book is conceived as a bottom-up reflection of migrants' everyday experiences of Russian and Turkish migration regimes, we have largely relied on migrants' stories, experiences and life trajectories in completing this project. We thank all the heroes in the book who agreed to share their everyday experiences in Russia and Turkey. We dedicate this book to resilient Central Asian migrants who, despite precarious and exploitative conditions, challenges and hardships, continue to support their left-behind families and communities.

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Istanbul, Turkey
18 January 2022

Rustamjon Urinboyev
Sherzod Eraliev

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CHAPTER 1

Understanding Labor, Law and Informality in Non-Western Migration Regimes

INTRODUCTION

On March 18, 2019, Safar (a pseudonym) was on an airplane heading to Istanbul in search of new adventures. The evening flight from Tashkent to Istanbul on Uzbekistan Airways took just under six hours. Viewing the glittering evening of Istanbul through the airplane window, Safar was full of excitement: the city was indeed beautiful as described in the Turkish soap operas of which he was so fond. This is where he would spend the next several years as a migrant worker, earning and sending home money.

His seven-year-long migrant life in Moscow ended abruptly in October 2018 due to an entry ban that prevented him from returning to Russia for the next three years. Two years ago, he began building a large house of his own in his home village in rural Fergana, Uzbekistan. The unexpected entry ban to Russia thwarted Safar's plan to complete the final work on his house. After returning to Uzbekistan, Safar found it difficult to reintegrate into village life and find a decent-paying job. His quest for a stable income and the need to finish the house construction prompted him to look for new opportunities. He was not the only person in the village to receive an entry ban. Many other entry-banned villagers altered their migration routes to Kazakhstan or Turkey depending upon their connections and preferences. Safar was relieved when he learned about the successful migrant career of Botir, his fellow villager, who worked in Istanbul and encouraged Safar to try his luck in Turkey.

At the Istanbul Grand Airport after passing through customs and passport control, Safar walked toward the airport forecourt, where Botir was waiting for him. Botir welcomed Safar with a smile; they shook hands and hugged each other, since they had not seen each other for five years. Botir had been working in Istanbul for almost five years by then, doing various jobs, such as sending cargo to Uzbekistan, meeting passengers from Uzbekistan at the airport and transferring them to their accommodation as well as finding jobs for other migrants for a fee. Safar paid Botir US\$100 to meet him at the airport and to help with his initial settlement in Istanbul. In a way, this represented an informal adaptation service for Safar, new to the city and unable to speak the local language. In a taxi cab to the city, Botir bragged about his successful migrant career in Istanbul, earning up to US\$1000 per month. However, it seemed odd to Safar that Botir did not have a car of his own if he was that successful. As an experienced migrant in Moscow, Safar knew that a migrant's success definitively included owning a car. Regardless, Safar was happy that after several months of unemployment, he could finally get out of Uzbekistan and begin earning money in Istanbul, allowing him to support his family members and complete construction on his house.

It was already past midnight when they arrived at noisy and busy Kumkapi, a neighborhood located in Istanbul's Fatih district. Through a dark hallway and steep stairs, Botir guided Safar to a two-room apartment filled with a dozen other men, all Uzbeks from different parts of their country. "Here you pay 15 Turkish liras [approximately US\$2] per night. You can stay here until you find a shared room in another apartment," Botir explained to Safar. The cramped room full of bunk beds and filled with the smell of sweat reminded Safar of his migrant life back in Moscow. Tired after a long journey, Safar was happy that he could finally sleep.

The next morning, he awoke to the loud sounds of the *azan* (the Islamic call to prayer) coming from all sides. Although not a practicing Muslim, Safar immediately felt an inner tranquility as he experienced a foretaste of the joy and freedom of fulfilling a Muslim's task of praying. Remembering how difficult it was to practice his religion in Russia, Safar promised himself to pray in one of those grandiose mosques scattered across Istanbul, at least on Fridays. After breakfast, Safar, along with Botir and couple of his friends, began his first day by familiarizing himself with the neighborhood. While walking through the neighborhood, Safar was surprised by the presence of thousands of Uzbeks in

the streets of Kumkapi. In the neighborhood, wherever he looked he saw signs of the Uzbek presence: dozens of cafés serving Uzbek food, many clothing stores and stalls selling fashions suitable to Uzbek culture, numerous cargo companies that ship clothes to Uzbekistan, Uzbek pop songs loudly playing, advertisements for accommodation and job in the Uzbek language and even *nos* (Uzbek snuff) sold by a local Uzbek-speaking Turk. The existence of such an “Uzbek enclave” in the middle of Istanbul was something unimaginable for Safar, who spent many years in Moscow where migrants were dispersed across different parts of the city and had to remain invisible given the repressive legal environment offering few opportunities to display their ethnic and cultural identities (Fig. 1.1).

Because Kumkapi holds the distinction as the most ethnically diverse, impoverished and crime-prone area of Istanbul, police frequently patrol the neighborhood. For Safar, who previously worked in Moscow and regularly paid bribes to Russian police officers, it was quite logical that police are corrupt everywhere and always seek reasons to “milk migrants” (i.e., extort money from migrants). Reflecting on his past experiences, Safar assumed that he would have to minimize his visibility in public places and avoid any possible encounter with Turkish police officers. Based on his Moscow experiences, during those initial days in Istanbul, he was quite anxious about police corruption and quickly hid or ran in the opposite direction whenever a police car approached, an odd behavior which surprised his fellow villagers. However, after spending a few days in Istanbul, Safar realized that Turkey had a relatively liberal legal immigration regime. Unlike life in Moscow, Safar did not need to bribe Turkish police officers and enjoyed relatively free mobility in Istanbul. Another pleasant difference from Russia was the weak enforcement of immigration and labor laws in Turkey. Thus, migrants in Istanbul could easily find work without a residence or work permit given Turkish authorities’ tacit acceptance of cheap and legally unprotected migrant labor.

However, no matter how much he enjoyed walking freely in Istanbul, Safar had to find a job as soon as possible. Botir and other migrants all suggested that Safar seek assistance from a *shirkat* (an intermediary), an individual who will find a job for a migrant for a fee equaling a half-month’s salary. Botir, himself an occasional intermediary, did not have anything to offer Safar at that time, but knew other *shirkats* in the neighborhood. The first job Safar found via a *shirkat* was in a textile sweatshop in the Bayrampaşa district of Istanbul, located in the basement



Fig. 1.1 Daily life in Kumkapi – Uzbek Mahalla

of a building which barely met the minimum standard for working conditions. In that job, Safar's primary tasks involved ironing women's blouses and packaging them for sale. Since he was accustomed to hard work in Russia, he did not mind working long hours in poor conditions. What disappointed him, however, was the low salary: approximately US\$350 per month, working 12 hours a day with a 30-minute break, and one day off from work each week. In comparison, for this arduous schedule and work, Safar could earn as much as US\$1000 a month in Moscow in the construction sector.

Unhappy with the working conditions and low pay, Safar once more cursed the day he met a Russian police officer in the *Prospekt Mira* metro station in Moscow. It was that officer who fined him for an expired residence registration (*registratsiia*), which eventually resulted in a three-year entry ban to Russia. Normally, Safar could find "common ground" with Russian police officers, who would "not notice" any deficiency in Safar's documents for a bribe of 1000 to 2000 rubles (US\$15–30). But, he was unlucky on October 27, 2018, when he was stopped by a police officer in the *Prospekt Mira* station for an ID check. Since Safar's residence registration had already expired, he immediately offered money. However, the police officer refused the bribe because they were conducting a raid in order to fulfill a monthly "illegal migrant catching" quota. So, Safar was fined for failing to renew his residence registration, a fine which led to an entry ban. A month later, when Safar returned to his home village for a funeral, he was unable to buy a return airline ticket to Moscow. At the ticket sales agency, he was told that he had a three-year *zapret na v'ezd* (entry ban) to Russia, an entry ban which possibly resulted from the aforementioned fine.

Now, in Istanbul, briefly recalling all of these past events, Safar could do nothing but accept this low-paying labor-intensive job. Moreover, he learned that most of the other migrants were working in similar conditions for a similar salary. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was no formal employment agreement between the Turkish *patron* (boss) and Safar. The *patron* just took photocopies of Safar's passport and *randeru* (an appointment slip with an immigration office to submit the residence permit application). As the days passed, Safar learned that his *patron* was exploitative, often demanding him to work even faster and harder. The *patron* tried to squeeze every ounce of juice from his workers. Safar often remembered his work in Russia, where employers tried to comply with the minimum working conditions and paid employees for overtime work.

Close to the end of the first month of Safar's work at the sweatshop, the *patron* became even more capricious and began scolding him with or without a reason, often loading him up with difficult tasks. While Safar was considering finding another job, the *patron* himself fired Safar for lack of diligence. Safar received only half of his salary, since the other half went to the *shirkat*.

It was only after holding several similar short-term jobs that Safar learned about an unofficial agreement between dishonest *shirkats* and employers. In this scheme, *shirkats* would regularly provide employers with cheap labor in exchange for half of a monthly salary. It was in the interest of the *shirkat* that migrants remained in a precarious situation and frequently lost their jobs. This meant every time a migrant lost her/his job, s/he was forced to turn to a *shirkat* to find a new position. Thus, the *shirkat* maintained regular communication with employers, encouraging them to fire their worker if they did not like them. This situation contrasts starkly with that in Russia, where migrants could "deploy" Chechen protection racketeers and prison-based criminal authorities against dishonest employers and intermediaries when they acted unfairly and did not satisfy oral agreements. But, in Istanbul, such street-level institutions were not available to Uzbek migrants. Each time after he was sacked from a workplace, Safar went to the *shirkats* with a complaint, but there was nothing he could do against the dishonest *shirkats*, who would blame him for his lack of zeal and flexibility in the workplace.

These exploitative practices far exceeded the hardships Safar experienced in Moscow. In Moscow, when faced with uncertainties and labor exploitation, Safar could rely on his village networks to find a job, whereas in Istanbul such village networks barely existed since Turkey has only recently become a major destination for Uzbek migrants. The lack of strong village networks rendered Safar dependent on the whims of the *shirkats*. He simply felt helpless in Istanbul, despite living in an "Uzbek enclave" in Kumkapi.

Safar's case was, however, rather characteristic of the experiences of male migrants. Interestingly, Uzbek female migrants, representing approximately 75% of the Uzbek migrant population in Istanbul, occupied a better position in the Turkish labor market. This resulted from the fact that there was a high demand for female migrants in the labor-intensive sectors of the Turkish economy, such as in domestic care, textile and garment workshops, supermarkets, cleaning services, hotels

and restaurants. Given this high demand, Uzbek female migrants earned more and could easily move from one job to another, while male migrants earned less and had limited employment opportunities. As a result, Uzbek female migrants occupied a higher position than male migrants and could develop strong networks and information channels in Istanbul.

These existing networks of Uzbek female migrants also provided some support to male migrants. Migrants like Safar quickly tapped into the existing female networks and received support from them when he needed help. Safar also felt women's dominant positions in intimate relationships. There was a high need for male partners among Uzbek female migrants who sought intimate relationships. In Moscow, Safar had little chance to find Uzbek women and he had to pay for sex. But, in Istanbul, he found the opposite situation: women constituted the vast majority of the Uzbek migrant population; hence, an abundance of female migrants resulted in easy access to sex. Occasionally, Uzbek female migrants "rented" Safar and provided him with free dinner and a one-night hotel stay and, in return, he satisfied their sexual desire. Although Safar enjoyed his sexual adventures, the power relations were different this time. The fact that women initiated the intimate relationship and paid for his sexual services deeply affected his dignity and self-esteem. These experiences marked a significant change in Safar's life and worldview about gender hierarchies, since he had to cope with these new realities and accept female dominance given his precarious situation in the Turkish labor market.

Safar's experiences recounted above refined many of our pre-fieldwork assumptions that Uzbek migrants would feel "closer" to Turkey for a host of linguistic, cultural, religious and legal reasons. Instead, his case demonstrated that no matter how liberal the immigration legal regime is, migrants' life trajectories and success in non-Western, nondemocratic migration contexts such as Russia and Turkey hinge upon other micro-level informal rules, kinship networks, gender roles, modes of incorporation into the labor market and the importance of a shared sense of understanding of "the rules of the game" under the conditions of informal employment. Despite the existence of draconian immigration laws and a border control infrastructure, combined with ever-increasing antimigrant sentiments within Russian society, Safar was nostalgic for his Russian experiences and planned to return to Russia as soon as his entry ban expired. The primary puzzle that Safar's story generated was how and why, despite its highly punitive environment, Russia seemed to offer a greater sense of agency and opportunity than that available in Turkey.

At the same time, Safar's story demonstrated that his experiences were gender-specific and that Istanbul offered more agency and opportunities to female migrants than their male counterparts. Consequently, these comparisons, narrated through Safar's experiences, illustrate not just that Istanbul and Moscow provide striking differences and similarities in terms of the migrant experience, moral assessment and legal adaptation, but also shed light on the interconnections between migrant agency, gender, informality and networks of trust and solidarity in non-Western migration locales.

Safar's case also raised numerous theoretical and empirical questions pertaining to the study and conceptualization of contemporary migration regimes still confined to the North American and Western European migration contexts. His case shows that attempts to compare different migration regimes should extend beyond the mere analysis of migration policies and laws. That is, we should also consider the role of micro- and meso-level struggles, alliances and interactions that take place in different migration arenas, such as migrants' internal lifeworlds and social networks, migrant labor market, documentation and legalization practices and shadow economy and street institutions. This implies that we need to place more emphasis on migrants' agency and experiences in these multiple arenas as a lens for comparison. The investigation of migrants' agency and experiences in these arenas enables us to understand how migration governance takes place on the ground, a study of which provides a more comparative perspective of varying migration regimes. In this regard, the following anecdote provided by Safar demonstrates that it is insufficient to focus on migration policies and laws; we also need to consider informal and extralegal processes that shape migration outcomes:

Once, three Uzbeks, childhood friends, met in Uzbekistan in a café for a reunion. Through fate, all three recently experienced migration: to the United States, to Turkey and to Russia, respectively. After several drinks, they all started boasting about their migration experiences in their host countries.

Amirbek (the migrant who worked in the US) arrogantly stated that his migrant life in America was very good: "America is really a land of opportunities. You have everything there; all your human rights are respected. Laws work there and you don't have to pay bribes. Employers cannot exploit you and you receive extra pay if you work overtime. Even though I was on an expired tourist visa and was fully illegal, I had no problem finding a good job. I earned a lot of money, up to US\$5000 a month,

which was enough to buy a new car every month if I wanted to. But once I was caught by the police, they deported me from America to our beloved Uzbekistan, where I am now unemployed. Unfortunately, I cannot go back there anymore.”

Timur (the migrant who worked in Turkey) laughed sarcastically and said that America is nothing compared to Turkey, where the immigration system does not care much about illegal migrants. He said that “I did not earn that much — about US\$400 a month. Laws don’t work in Turkey. Employers exploit you like a slave. But, the good thing is that I lived and worked there without a residence or work permit. Police didn’t bother me with ID checks. I could walk in any part of Istanbul freely. When I left Turkey last month, I just paid a fine at the airport. Because I paid that fine, I can return to Turkey tomorrow and find a job the next day.”

When it was Ramat’s (the migrant who worked in Russia) turn to talk about his experience, he modestly said that he earned up to US\$800 per month. He added that “in Russia laws don’t work, human rights do not exist and the police and immigration are not nice. But, still, Russia is a land of opportunities. You can make a lot of money and be successful if you are good at bending laws and giving bribes or providing favors. Everything is possible in Russia if you have money. If you are caught by the police, you can pay a bribe and they let you go. If your employer is exploiting you or not paying your salary, you can use the street racketeers to solve problems. You can also fix immigration problems with money. For example, I got an entry ban, but I can bribe immigration officials or border guards and return to Russia.”

These stories left Amirbek and Timur (migrants who worked in the US and Turkey) wondering how it was possible to have so much leverage and to navigate in such a repressive and corrupt country like Russia.

This anecdote offers intriguing insights into the three different worlds of migration regimes, where migrants experienced contrasting working conditions and varying levels of immigration law enforcement. On the one hand, it shows that nondemocratic regimes such as Turkey and Russia are more open to migrants because they tacitly accept undocumented migration, ignore migrants’ rights and deny access to the social protection system, which produces a cheap, legally unprotected and deportable migrant labor force. On the other hand, it illustrates that liberal democracies such as the US are not easily accessible to migrants; however, once accessed, migrants enjoy more rights and better conditions. This anecdote also shows the divergence in immigration law enforcement among three migration regimes, indicating that migrants enjoy greater agency

to negotiate and bend immigration laws in nondemocratic states given opaque legal systems and ubiquitous corruption. Consequently, the anecdote presented above and Safar's experiences suggest that we need to go beyond the traditional approaches in comparative migration studies that largely focus on the comparison of migration policies and laws across various migration regimes. Rather, we might arrive at different findings when we try to understand and compare various migration regimes through the lived experiences of migrants. This bottom-up approach enables us to see the other side of the coin, that is, how migration policies and laws are perceived, experienced and renegotiated in the daily lives of migrant workers. These points thus lead to the following questions: Can existing migration regime frameworks, which are largely based on Western-centric approaches, be applied to the context of nondemocratic migration regimes? How can we account for the differences in state–society relations, legal cultures and governance patterns when comparing different migration regimes? And, how does the focus on migrants' agency and experiences as a lens for comparison help us understand, compare and reconceptualize contemporary migration regimes? These represent the guiding questions reflected in this book.

THE RATIONALE

This book is conceived as a critical reflection on contemporary migration regime scholarship, and, more generally, on comparative migration studies. Here, we aim to critically engage with and contribute to the following fields of research.

First, an extensive literature on immigration regimes exists, although this literature remains largely based on the study of migrants' experiences and immigration policies in the context of Western liberal democracies in North America, Western Europe and Australia. A growing body of literature argues for the necessity of advancing existing theories in migration studies beyond Western-centric perspectives (Boucher & Gest, 2015; Breunig et al., 2012; Düvell, 2020; Gest & Boucher, 2021; Mirilovic, 2010; Natter, 2018; Urinboyev, 2020). Given the predominant research focus on migration processes in Western liberal democracies, major non-Western migration destinations elsewhere in the world remain underrepresented by existing theories within migration studies—including those top migrant-receiving countries such as Brazil, China, the Gulf states, Indonesia, Malaysia, Russia and Turkey (Boucher & Gest, 2015; Natter,

2018). According to the World Migration Report (IOM, 2019), 12 of the 20 top destinations for international migrants in 2019 consisted of countries not belonging to the traditional western countries of North America, Western Europe and Australia. As editors of the *International Migration Review* (a leading journal in migration studies) admit, 80% of articles published in the journal since 2016 geographically focus on North America or Western Europe. This uneven geographic coverage is explained by the limited attention granted to migration dynamics beyond North America and Western Europe. “It also highlights the challenges that scholars writing about the wider geography of international migration face in attempts to situate their work in relation to hegemonic perspectives about two global regions” (IOM, 2019, p. 138). As Reeves (2013) maintains, this lacuna can be explained in part by the ongoing legacies of the “three-worlds division” of social-scientific labor (Chari & Verdery, 2009; Pletsch, 1981), which tend to focus on global South–North migrations, whereas migration processes in non-Western contexts remain underrepresented in comparative and theoretical debates about contemporary migration regimes. Consequently, without a comparative and comprehensive analysis of a large diversity of migration countries, we run the risk of relying on approaches and theoretical frameworks with limited applicability to non-Western migration contexts.

A second component to our rationale is that the dominant literature on contemporary migration regime typologies primarily focuses on Western-style democracies (Boucher & Gest, 2015; Düvell, 2020; Gest & Boucher, 2021). Addressing this gap is particularly important when considering the fact that many new migration hubs are nondemocratic, which in turn requires us to revise or produce new frameworks of analysis beyond existing migration regime typologies. In Western-style democracies, as Sassen (1996) and Joppke (1998) argue, the state’s arbitrary power and penchant to curtail migrant rights are significantly constrained by the international human rights regime, independent national courts and an active civil society. Unlike Western-style democracies, nondemocratic (and non-Western) immigrant-receiving countries are often characterized by autocratic regimes, poor human rights records, a weak rule-of-law and arbitrary law enforcement, systemic corruption, a large shadow economy and poorly organized civil societies and labor unions (Breunig et al., 2012; Mirilovic, 2010; Natter, 2018; Urinboyev, 2020). This implies that autocracies are less constrained than liberal democracies in terms of respecting and upholding the human rights of citizens

(including those of migrants) and ignoring a population's antimigrant sentiments, leverage which enables autocratic regimes to adopt more liberal immigration policies (Breunig et al., 2012). Given these differences, we cannot assume that frameworks constructed in the context of (Western) liberal democracies apply within the context of nondemocratic migration contexts.

Third, we also need to consider the variations within and across nondemocratic regimes when exploring the interconnections between regime type and immigration policymaking. The literature focusing on the interconnections between regime type and immigration policymaking continues to focus on the differences in immigration policymaking between democracies and autocracies (Boucher & Gest, 2015; Mirilovic, 2010), whereas relatively little attention has been devoted to the variations and similarities in immigration policymaking within and across authoritarian regimes (with the notable exceptions of Adamson & Tsurapas, 2020; Natter, 2018). An analysis of the comparative political-regimes literature demonstrates the rapid proliferation of political regimes that no longer fit within conventional classifications of democracy and authoritarianism (Diamond, 2002; Levitsky & Way, 2010). Different terms and names have been proposed to conceptualize these regimes: hybrid political regimes, competitive authoritarianism, electoral authoritarianism, partially liberalized regimes, semidemocracy, pseudo-democracy, illiberal democracy, semi-authoritarianism, soft authoritarianism, defective democracy or Freedom House's "partly free" (Carothers, 2002; Diamond, 2002; Schedler, 2015; Zakaria, 1997). Thus, the immigration regime classifications and theories should reckon with the significant differences among nondemocratic regimes, which necessitates new approaches and tools. This implies that rather than merely juxtaposing democracies and autocracies as "two different worlds of immigration regimes," it might also be useful to comparatively explore how immigration policymaking and enforcement vary within nondemocratic regimes.

Fourth, existing immigration regime typologies, as Boucher and Gest (2015) have rightly pointed out, often do not sufficiently clarify their indicators of comparison or characterize entire immigration regimes when examining some of their features. Other studies focus on specific dimensions such as labor migration, citizenship or integration outcomes or compare migration policies and laws, yet fail to place them within the broader perspective or framework of migration regime types. In other words, existing typologies suffer from unsystematic comparative analyses

that insufficiently explain the rationale behind the aggregation of various features of immigration regimes (*ibid.*). As a result, the consolidation of complex and divergent migration policies and laws into broader migration regime typologies may obscure the important internal differences among countries rather than facilitate comparative empirical investigation (Finotelli & Michalowski, 2012). This task is especially challenging in the context of nondemocratic migration contexts, where a discrepancy exists between formal migration policies and laws (“law in books”) and their actual implementation (law in action), a gap which makes it difficult to construct the “building blocks” of a typology (Collier et al., 2012). In this respect, when comparing different migration regimes, we need to account for informal processes, practices and migrants’ agency that affect the outcomes of immigration policymaking.

AIMS AND INTENDED CONTRIBUTIONS

Based on the above considerations, the central aim of this book is to contribute novel empirical and theoretical insights to scholarly debates on contemporary migration regimes and, more broadly, to comparative migration studies. In undertaking this task, we rely on a multi-sited transnational ethnographic study of Uzbek migrant workers in Russia, Turkey and Uzbekistan, conducted between January 2014 and January 2022. Drawing from our rich ethnographic data, we attempt to contribute to the literature in the following five distinct ways.

First, we respond to Boucher and Gest’s call, proposed in their paper “Migration studies at a crossroads: A critique of immigration regime typologies” (2015), to move beyond the Western-centric, largely democratic, migration regime typologies. This task is accomplished by presenting ethnographic material on Uzbek migrants’ everyday experiences in Moscow, Russia and Istanbul, Turkey. We focus on Russia and Turkey because they are archetypal non-Western, nondemocratic contexts as well as key international migration hotspots (UNPD, 2020). Yet, both Russia and Turkey remain underrepresented in comparative and theoretical debates on contemporary migration regimes (Düvell, 2020; Reeves, 2013; Urinboyev, 2020). Therefore, analyzing these two non-Western migration regimes is of huge importance given our need to address the uneven geographic coverage in the study of migration regimes, whereby current studies are limited to the analysis of migration regimes in North America and Western Europe (IOM, 2019, p. 138). Our ambition is

thus to provide novel empirical material, a comparative perspective and methodological tools capable of informing efforts to construct approaches and theoretical frameworks for the study of non-Western migration regimes.

Second, we aim to contribute new empirical insights into migrants' agency and daily experiences with immigration laws and policies in nondemocratic contexts. The dominant understanding is that in Western-style democracies the state holds limited power in curtailing migrant rights due to the international human rights regime, independent national courts and civil society pressure, while autocracies can better leverage restrictions to migrant rights (Breunig et al., 2012; Mirilovic, 2010). In other words, migrants in nondemocratic regimes are portrayed as passive recipients of state policies with little or no agency. However, these approaches that portray migrants as passive entities aggrandize the power of immigration laws and policies as a crucial factor defining migrants' "fate" in the host country. Given that nondemocratic regimes lack a rule of law, have a large informal economy and are plagued by corruption, immigration policymaking and enforcement are largely shaped by informal regulatory processes in which street-level bureaucrats, employers, middlemen and migrant workers negotiate the contemporary migration system. Using the case of Uzbek migrant workers in Russia and Turkey, we demonstrate how migration governance processes in nondemocratic contexts are shaped by the informal power structures and by extralegal negotiations that respond to the needs and interests of various actors involved in the chain of migration policymaking and implementation.

Third, in this book, we also intend to extend on the knowledge base related to the interconnections between political regime type and immigration policymaking. Rather than focusing on the differences in immigration policymaking between democracies and autocracies, we examine how immigration policymaking and migrants' experiences significantly vary across nondemocratic states. The comparative political regimes literature shows a waning usefulness in classifying political regimes into democracies and autocracies given the rapid increase of "in-between" regimes, which are neither clearly democratic nor conventionally authoritarian (Diamond, 2002; Levitsky & Way, 2010). This suggests that migration regime typologies that juxtapose democracy–autocracy binaries should also account for variations within nondemocratic contexts. These processes will be illustrated through the multisited ethnographic

study of Uzbek migrant workers in Russia and Turkey, two archetypal nondemocratic migration contexts.

Fourth, we intend to contribute to efforts aimed at developing immigration regime typologies. Reckoning with Boucher and Gest (2015), we argue that a need exists to clearly specify indicators or dimensions for comparison. The existing typologies primarily focus on migration regimes in Western Europe and North America, comparing and classifying (1) migration outputs such as immigration laws and policies; (2) immigration control policies; (3) English-speaking settler societies, European States with post-colonial and guest worker migration systems as well as new countries of immigration; (4) the “settler societies,” the Nordic countries with “colonizers” and the highly restrictionist “noncolonizing” countries; and (5) “classic countries of immigration,” “reluctant countries of immigration” and “recent countries of immigration.” These typologies do not cover non-Western migration regimes such as Brazil, China, the Gulf states, Malaysia, Russia and Turkey, even though they have already become top migration hubs worldwide. Another factor adding to this shortcoming is that many non-Western migration regimes are nondemocratic, meaning there is a need to create new frameworks of analysis beyond the existing democratic state-centric paradigms. This task becomes more challenging since nondemocratic regimes often suffer from a weak rule of law and arbitrary enforcement, whereby a discrepancy exists between formal migration policies and laws (“law in books”) and their actual implementation (law in action). Therefore, when comparing immigration regimes in nondemocratic contexts, it is more fruitful to focus on migration outcomes (what actually happens on the ground) and migrants’ agency than on migration outputs (policies, laws and regulations) and formal opportunity structures. With these considerations in mind, we focus in this book on migration outcomes in Russia and Turkey by providing comparative ethnographic material on Uzbek migrant experiences with immigration laws and policies in Moscow and Istanbul.

Fifth, this book aims to extend the scholarship on Central Asian migration, which has grown significantly in the last decade. The overwhelming majority of research on this topic covers the issues of labor migration to and within Russia (Abashin, 2014; Dave, 2014a; Eraliev & Heusala, 2021; Kubal, 2016; Kuznetsova & Round, 2018; Reeves, 2015; Schenk, 2018; Turaeva & Urinboyev, 2021; Urinboyev, 2020). This is understandable, since Russia remains the primary destination for

Central Asian (including Uzbek) migrant workers. Moreover, Central Asian migrants constitute the largest migrant population in Russia. Yet, a recently growing body of research extends to the Gulf states, Kazakhstan, Japan, South Korea and Turkey (Bashirov, 2018; Dadabaev & Soipov, 2020; Dave, 2014b; Inci & Altintop, 2020; Stephan-Emmrich, 2018), reflecting the recent diversification of destinations for migrants from the region. However, the number of such studies remains rather insignificant. Although the abovementioned countries are mostly non-Western, migration processes and outcomes take a different shape and form in all of these contexts. Here, we aim to fill this gap in two ways: (1) we explore migration processes in Turkey through the prism of Uzbek migrants; and (2) we present a comparative perspective on Central Asian migrants' experiences in Russia and Turkey. In this book, we provide intriguing empirical material given that many of the informants (migrants) we encountered during our fieldwork worked both in Russia and Turkey, allowing us to collect rich data on migrants' life histories and experiences in these two migration contexts.

UNDERSTANDING AND COMPARING MIGRANTS' AGENCY AND MIGRATION ARENAS IN NONDEMOCRATIC CONTEXTS

As outlined above, many non-Western migrant-receiving countries are nondemocratic, lack a rule of law, have a large informal economy and are plagued by systemic corruption. In such nondemocratic migration regimes, migration governance processes are largely shaped by informal power structures and extralegal negotiations that take place in multiple social arenas, leading to different outcomes and unintended consequences (Eder, 2015; Fargues, 2009; Garcés-Masareñas, 2010; Killias, 2010; Urinboyev, 2020). This implies that, even if we conduct a thorough investigation of the formal migration policies and laws, our analysis may not reflect actual *de facto* circumstances (Money, 1999). Given the gap between government immigration policy and actual immigration outcomes, efforts aiming to compare migration regimes may benefit further from focusing on migrants' agency and migration outcomes than on migration outputs (laws and policies). As Boucher and Gest (2015) suggest, focusing on migration outcomes may prove more fruitful when comparing different migration regimes given that outcomes reflect what actually happens "on the ground"—that is, the reality as experienced by migrants. This is especially true in the context of nondemocratic

regimes, where policies and laws are poorly implemented or implemented in ways that often contradict their original aims and spirit. One possible inference from such discussions is that it might be more productive to focus on migrants' agency and experiences of migration policies and laws (migration outcomes) when comparing various migration regimes.

The theoretical premise of the book stems from an understanding that no single, integrated set of rules exist within any society, whether encoded in law, sanctified by religion or enshrined as rules for daily social behavior. Quite simply, no uncontested universal normative code guides people's lives—the outcomes of laws, regulations and policies are determined by the struggles, alliances and interplay between various social forces which take place in different social arenas. Thus, if we aim to understand and compare migrants' agency and experiences in various migration regimes, we should examine not only formal immigration laws and regulations (migration policy outputs), but we also need to examine how these laws and policies are perceived, experienced and negotiated by the multitude of actors involved in migration processes (migration outcomes). Thus, when comparing various migration regimes, we should not only examine migration outputs and formal opportunity structures but also focus on migration outcomes, a process which can be articulated by exploring power struggles, alliances and interactions in varying arenas of migration governance where street-level bureaucrats, employers, intermediaries, landlords and migrant workers among others interact with one another. We argue that in these social arenas, rules are not clear cut and power relations are unequal, although each actor has some degree of agency and may exert influence over the final outcome. In this book, we refer to these various arenas shaping the outcomes of migration policies and laws as "migration arenas."

To explain and conceptualize the struggles and interactions within various migration arenas, we draw on Eugen Ehrlich's theory of living law, developed in his *Fundamental Principles of the Sociology of Law* (Ehrlich, 1912). Ehrlich's concepts of living law and social associations are instructive for understanding why many states fail to valorize their laws and policies in everyday life in spite of their coercive power. Ehrlich argues that the law is not the only regulator of political, social, intellectual and economic life, but that many other normative orders influence social behavior more effectively than the law. For Ehrlich, society consists of a multitude of social associations, among which lies the state. He distinguishes between the law created by the state (juristic law and statutes)

and informal norms produced by various social associations (living law). This means that coercion and normative pressure stem not only from the state, but also from social associations. As Ehrlich notes, social associations whether organized or unorganized—whether called country, home, residence, religious communion, family, circle of friends, social life, political party, industrial association or the good will of a business—make certain demands upon individuals in exchange for that which they give. Furthermore, the norms dominating within these associations influence individuals' social behavior more forcibly than the laws of the state. Individuals conduct themselves according to the law only when made imperative by their social relations and associations. Therefore, it is not state law, but the living law that dominates everyday life even though it is not posited in legal propositions and emerged independently of state law from the inner order of various social associations (Banakar, 2008; Urinboev, 2013). In this sense the social order is established, maintained and transformed via the continuous struggles and interplay between various social associations. Thus, Ehrlich's theory of living law is highly instructive for those interested in understanding the social arenas and contexts in which various formal and informal regulatory structures and norms interact and thereby shape the outcomes of migration policies and laws.

Although Ehrlich's living law theory provides useful insights, it is primarily concerned with the interplay between the state and social associations. This theoretical perspective, however, insufficiently explains the inner workings and dynamics of social associations, meaning we need additional theoretical tools to analyze the relations, struggles and norms within different associations. In this respect, we utilize Bourdieu's (1993) theory of social fields to understand and conceptualize social positions, power relationships and norms in different migration (social) arenas. In his theory of social fields, Bourdieu maintains that the social world consists of various social fields, such as political fields as well as the religious field, artistic field, legal field and economic field among others. Each field, dedicated to a specific type of activity, is relatively autonomous, has its own specific governing rules and is led by actors or groups (i.e., elites) who possess a certain type of capital (e.g., political, economic, social, religious, scientific, etc.) and recognition. Owing to their capital and recognition, elites have the prerogative of providing the legitimate interpretation of actions, practices and representations in specific areas of activity, rationalizing and systematizing them in the form of explicit norms.

Put simply, a field is an arena of struggles for positions and resources within which the actors and groups think, act and take positions. The outcome of these struggles depends upon the volume and structure of the capital of actors and groups. In these struggles, each actor or group aspires to preserve or increase their position and resources in their respective field. Actors who are relatively well established in the field have a certain interest in preserving or strengthening the established order, while newcomers use strategies aimed at undermining the status quo, which is often unfavorable to them. Sometimes, actors situated in a specific position within a given field may enter into alliances with the actors who hold a homologous (similar) position in another field or in the general social structure. However, the established actors enjoy greater opportunities to preserve the status quo than newcomers given their symbolic capital, which grants them legitimacy to secure a monopoly in their field. Fields are thus characterized by struggles and alliances that continuously mold the internal power balances (Hilgers & Mangez, 2014).

The above considerations imply that each actor involved in a given field has a certain agency vis-à-vis the other actors. Our understanding of agency is informed by Emirbayer and Mische's (1998, p. 963) conceptualization of human agency as the "temporary embedded engagement by actors of different structural environments through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment which both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing situations." Our understanding also relies on Sewell's (1992, p. 20) definition of human agency: "To be an agent means to be capable of exerting some degree of control over the social relations in which one is enmeshed, which in turn implies the ability to transform those social relations to some degree." This conceptualization of human agency implies that the action and practices of individuals are in a constant and mutually transforming interaction with the existing social structures, which in turn simultaneously shape the possibilities and limitations of individual agency. This implies that migrants experience varying degrees of agency as they move across multiple migration arenas (fields) with their own inner orders and different power geometries.

Thus, armed with Ehrlich's living law perspective and Bourdieu's social fields theory, we infer that we cannot satisfactorily understand immigration policymaking and migrants' experiences without considering the informal regulatory practices, struggles and alliances that occur in different social arenas (fields/associations) pertaining to migration, which

in this book we call “migration arenas.” While acknowledging the importance of existing migration regime typologies, we propose that it might be more productive to focus comparative efforts on the study of migrants’ agency in multiple migration arenas. This approach is particularly useful in the context of nondemocratic regimes. As we stated earlier, migration governance processes in nondemocratic contexts are shaped by the informal power structures and extralegal negotiations, which often lead to a significant gap between policy design and implementation. The core argument is that when comparing migration processes in nondemocratic contexts, we should move beyond the analysis of formal migration policies and laws, thereby focus on migration outcomes (what actually happens on the ground). This lens can be achieved by examining struggles, alliances and interactions in various migration arenas. These migration arenas may include, but are not limited to, such social fields or associations as (1) the documentation and legalization regime; (2) the labor market surrounding migrant labor; (3) intermediaries; (4) the immigration law enforcement regime; (5) migrants’ inner lifeworlds and social networks, transnational practices, solidarity and social safety nets; (6) street institutions; and (7) religious institutions among others.

METHODOLOGY

This book relies on a multisited transnational ethnography of Central Asian migrant workers in Moscow, Russia and Istanbul, Turkey, conducted between January 2014 and January 2022. The fieldwork in Moscow took place over a total of 15 months from January 2014 through November 2019, whereas the fieldwork in Istanbul took place between January 2019 and January 2022. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting travel restrictions, we were able to make six fieldwork trips to Istanbul between July 2020 and January 2022. This allowed us to gain unique insights into migrants’ lives in Istanbul during the pandemic. Given the strict travel restrictions to Russia, we were forced to limit our data collection to online interviews through social media applications. These field sites were chosen for several reasons. Moscow is the capital city and largest megapolis in Russia, featuring the highest number of migrant workers. Therefore, Moscow’s attitudes and policies regarding labor migration greatly influence developments in other regions of Russia, where local officials, politicians and journalists reproduce Moscow’s policies in their home territory (Abashin, 2016; Schenk, 2018). Likewise,

we chose Istanbul because it is the largest megapolis and primary migration hub in Turkey, hosting more than half of the country's migrant population (Düvell, 2020; İçduygu & Aksel, 2015).

Both of us (the co-authors) have extensive expertise in conducting fieldwork on migration. We speak Uzbek, Russian, Turkish and other Central Asian languages (Kyrgyz and Turkmen), are originally from Uzbekistan, understand Central Asian culture and have spent lengthy time periods conducting research and fieldwork in Russia, Turkey and Uzbekistan on migration. Drawing from our unique “ethnographic toolkit” (Reyes, 2020), we gained access to the Central Asian migrant worker communities in Moscow and Istanbul. In addition, a significant proportion of the migrants we interviewed in Istanbul had previously worked in Moscow. Thus, owing to their previous migration experiences in Russia, many of our informants in Istanbul were able to compare the Russian and Turkish migration regimes based on their individual experiences of the law, labor market and host society, thus providing a collection of unique narratives that led us to write about Central Asian migrant networks in Istanbul and Moscow (Fig. 1.2).

The ethnographic material was primarily collected through observations, informal interviews, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews, supplemented by regular contact with informants using smartphone-based instant messaging applications such as Telegram Messenger, WhatsApp and IMO. Our observations frequently turned into informal chats and interviews owing to the numerous questions that arose on the spur of the moment. The interviews were conducted in the Uzbek, Russian, Turkish, Turkmen and Kyrgyz languages. Rigorous procedures and techniques for collecting data were applied: observation and informal interviews were documented in field diaries in addition to audio recordings. We also utilized digital data collection strategies by maintaining regular contact with migrants via smartphone-based social media applications, allowing us to observe the developments in their lives when we were away from our field sites. During our fieldwork, we applied various data collection strategies, which included participating in migrants' daily lives; renting mattress space in shared apartments where migrants lived; being present at migrants' workplaces at different times; observing migrants' negotiations with employers, landlords and intermediaries; accompanying migrants on the streets and via public transportation where they are often stopped by police officers; inviting migrants to lunch or dinner in cafés; and “hanging out” with them in bars.



Fig. 1.2 Authors waiting for the arrival of Uzbek migrants (informants) at the O'zbekim restaurant in Kumkapi—one of the key hotspots for Uzbek migrants in Istanbul

In Moscow, we conducted 10 focus group interview discussions and 130 semi-structured interviews with Central Asian (Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek) migrant workers. The interviews and observations were carried out at construction sites, bazaars, dachas (cottages), farms, dormitories, shared apartments, cafés, railway stations and on the streets of Moscow, where Uzbek and other Central Asian migrants work, live and socialize. In Istanbul, we collected rich empirical data through observations, 10 focus group discussions and 85 semi-structured interviews with Central Asian migrants (Kyrgyz, Turkmens, Uzbeks and Uzbeks from northern Afghanistan). Our interviews and observations took place at cafés, bars, shared apartments, sweatshops, hotels, shopping centers and on the streets of Istanbul. Unlike in Moscow where migrants are dispersed across different parts of the city, in Istanbul, Central Asian migrants have their own enclave in the Kumkapi neighborhood. Therefore, as a part

of the data collection strategy, we frequently visited Kumkapi, where the majority of Central Asian migrants live, work and socialize.

During our fieldwork, we sought to understand how migration policies and laws work on the ground. To do so, we focused on migrants' experiences in different social arenas and situations: (1) the migrant labor market and working conditions; (2) immigration laws, policies and sanctions, such as work permit and residence registration, deportations and entry bans; (3) intermediaries in labor, document and housing issues; (4) migrants' encounters with the host country's legal system, such as immigration officials, the police, courts and border guards; (5) migrants' encounters with informal channels and street institutions; (6) migrant networks, transnational practices, informal coping strategies, legal culture and traditions, solidarity and social safety nets; and (7) religious institutions and practices. We conducted face-to-face interviews relying on a conversational process, which lasted from 35 minutes to up to two hours. In some cases, we also conducted follow-up interviews in order to gather additional information on informants' experiences. In selecting migrants for our study, we paid special attention to diversity across age, gender, social status, occupation, educational background, legal status and migration experiences (experienced or newly arrived migrant). In terms of sampling, we used random, snowball and purposive sampling techniques to increase the diversity of our informants. To reflect the gender composition of the Uzbek migrant populations in Russia and Turkey, male migrants constituted the majority of our informants in Moscow, while in Istanbul, most informants were female migrants (Fig. 1.3).

During our fieldwork, research participants were fully informed about the purpose and methods of our research project. To ensure maximum anonymity, the names and whereabouts of all informants have been changed, and only the most generic information about the informants and fieldwork sites are provided. As we mentioned earlier, our dual identity (researchers with an Uzbek background) significantly shaped our access to participants, data and fieldwork sites, a social position which requires some reflection regarding how these characteristics influenced the fieldwork dynamics (Wasserfall, 1993). While acknowledging that there is no completely neutral or objective knowledge (Ritchie et al., 2013), we nevertheless tried to avoid obvious and conscious bias by attempting to be as neutral as possible when collecting, interpreting and presenting our data and analysis. During our field research, we occupied multiple statuses (Merton, 1972), experiencing both "insider moments"



Fig. 1.3 Group interview with Uzbek migrants in Istanbul

with participants (May, 2014) and assuming the position of the “outsider within” (Zempi & Awan, 2017). We were “insiders” when we approached informants through a mutual contact or gatekeeper who enjoyed their trust. Being accepted as insiders enabled us to gain easy access to migrants’ everyday lives. At times, when we approached informants without a mutual contact or a proper introduction, we were “outsiders,” viewed as two strangers (e.g., agents of Uzbekistan’s State Security Service) collecting information about migrants. This was due to the fact that our informants (migrants) originate from Central Asian countries with authoritarian and repressive political regimes. We are aware that our fluid identity, sliding between the “insider” and “outsider” positions, may have influenced the content of our interview data. We are also aware that our gender (both authors are male) may have affected our interactions with female and male migrants differently. However, given that we conducted a large number of interviews with both male and female migrants and relied on different data collection strategies, we were able to cross-check and triangulate different datasets.

TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Perhaps noted from previous sections, we use a variety of terms and concepts that require clarification and definition. First, the term “migration regime” is frequently used in this book. Currently, no consensus among migration studies scholars provides a definition of “migration regime.” Herein, in line with most migration scholars (Boucher & Gest, 2015; Horvath et al., 2017), we rely on Krasner’s (1982, p. 185) definition of regimes as “principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actor expectations converge in a given issue-area.” Thus, we use the term “migration regime” to refer to the sum or totality of a country’s migration policies, laws and regulations, alongside their actual implementation on the ground as manifested in the workings of state officials responsible for migration management, in the practices of employers and migration intermediaries and in the experiences of migrant workers. This definition allows us to apply the term “migration regime” to a specific country, such as, for example, Russia or Turkey.

We must also define terms in relation to noncitizens and their legal statuses. We use the terms migrant (or migration) and immigrant (or immigration) interchangeably, given that the distinction between a permanent and temporary stay has become blurred in an increasingly

transnationalized world. In relation to one's legal status, we use undocumented to describe people living or working in a foreign country without the documents prescribed by the host country's laws. In keeping with Kubal (2013), we refrain from using the term illegal migrants because of its stigmatizing and politicized nature.

BOOK STRUCTURE AND CHAPTER OUTLINES

Chapter 2 comparatively analyzes immigration laws and policies developed by Russian and Turkish authorities over the last three decades, discussing the differences and commonalities between Russian and Turkish migration regimes. We provide an overview of historical events and factors that shaped the current immigration policies of the two countries. In particular, we demonstrate how better economic opportunities, the existence of sociocultural links and relatively liberal immigration regimes attracted millions of migrants to find employment in Russia and Turkey. We also show that Russian and Turkish immigration laws and policies have produced unintended consequences, namely a significant gap between migration policies and laws (migration outputs) and their actual implementation on the ground (migration outcomes). Given complicated legalization procedures, the authorities' tacit acceptance of legally unprotected and cheap migrant labor, along with legal uncertainties, many migrants resort to working in the informal economies, where they can work without documents. Chapter 2 concludes by arguing for the need to consider these peculiarities when comparing the Russian and Turkish migration regimes, manifested in the workings of state officials responsible for migration management, in the practices of employers and migration intermediaries and in the experiences of migrant workers.

Chapter 3 focuses on migrants' internal lifeworlds, social networks and transnational practices as a migration arena. In this arena, migrants build their own parallel world based on its own legal order, information channels, social safety nets and networks of trust and reciprocity. These processes will be illustrated through the case study of Uzbek migrant workers upon which the empirical data and analysis focus. Comparing Central Asian migrants' experiences in Moscow and Istanbul, we describe the importance of patterns of residence, transnational communications, social networks and a shared sense of "the rules of the game" in migrants' life trajectories in the host society. These migrant lifeworlds regulate contractual relationships and obligations among migrants, exerting an

identifiable impact on the outcomes of many practices that migrants (and other actors) employ while in Moscow and Istanbul.

Next, in Chapter 4, we examine migrants' experiences with the documentation and legalization regime as a key migration arena. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section explores how the laws and regulations governing residency and employment of foreign nationals in Russia and Turkey are interpreted, enforced, followed and negotiated during encounters with state officials, employers, intermediaries and migrant workers. The second section presents our results from observations, informal interviews and focus group discussions in addition to semi-structured interviews with migrant workers focusing on migrants' daily interactions with judges, police officers, migration service officials, tax agency officials and border guards.

Chapter 5 investigates the migrant labor markets in Russia and Turkey as migration arenas, focusing on the daily interactions, struggles and alliances among employers, intermediaries and migrant workers. Here, we also focus on the gendered experiences of these processes in two migration regimes. These processes will be described through a "thick description" of Central Asian migrants' daily lives and experiences in the Russian and Turkish migrant labor markets.

In Chapter 6, we focus on the "shadow economy and street" as a migration arena, examining migrants' encounters with street institutions and non-state actors in Moscow and Istanbul. Our emphasis on the "street" as a separate arena of migration is motivated by the understanding that a large proportion of Central Asian migrants operate in the informal economies both in Moscow and in Istanbul, an informal lifeworld associated with a high incidence of wage theft, trafficking, exploitation, fraud, robbery, sexual abuse, violence and other risks. Under these conditions, migrants may seek redress from street institutions and non-state actors when faced with risks, threats and uncertainties. Here, we describe these processes through the life histories of two female Uzbek migrants (Leyla and Zarina) and one male Uzbek migrant (Shurik), three migrants who worked in Moscow and Istanbul between 2011 and 2022.

Finally, Chapter 7, the concluding chapter brings together the primary empirical and theoretical findings from previous chapters, allowing us to consider them against the theoretical framework outlined in this introduction. Here, we discuss our key findings, our contributions to the study of migration regime debates and potential avenues for future research. The distinct theoretical framework developed in the Russian and Turkish

contexts is placed within the broader comparative migration studies scholarship, and we discuss its relevance and the scope of applicability to the study of migration regimes in other contexts.

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Russian and Turkish Migration Regimes in a Comparative Perspective

RUSSIA AND TURKEY AS NEW MIGRATION HUBS

Global political developments, economic growth and trade liberalization since the 1980s have changed the political and economic landscapes of most regions in the world. First, the collapse of the Soviet Union (and the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe) led to the movement of large segments of populations. For example, the dissolution of the Soviet Union alone left tens of millions of people divided into several countries. Second, the gravity of global economic power traditionally centered on North America, Western Europe and Japan shifted to different parts of the world. Subsequently, we have witnessed the economic rise of countries such as Brazil, China, the Gulf states, India, Malaysia, Russia, South Africa, Turkey and many others. These regions, owing to their improved economic conditions, began receiving increasingly large numbers of migrants. As the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2019) reported, 12 of the top 20 destinations of international migrants in 2019 included countries not belonging to the club of “traditional countries of immigration” (i.e., countries in North America, Western Europe and Australia), which included such new migration hubs as India, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Arab Emirates. Another factor contributing to the emergence of new migration hubs necessitated liberalizing visa policies within such states given their need

for a cheap, docile and legally unprotected labor force (Duvell, 2020; İçduygu, 2015; Jain & Oommen, 2017; Killias, 2010; Schenk, 2018; Urinboev, 2020).

These developments indicate that the international political economy of migration continues to undergo significant transformations. In light of these trends, we can no longer confine the analysis of global migratory trends to the traditional countries of immigration. Rather, we must also extend our analysis to the aforementioned new migration hubs in studies of international migration. These considerations informed our approach in this book, which focuses on a comparative analysis of Russian and Turkish migration regimes. Therefore, in this chapter, we comparatively analyze immigration laws and policies developed by Russian and Turkish authorities over the last three decades, discussing the differences between and commonalities across Russian and Turkish migration regimes. We begin with a brief overview of historical events and factors shaping the current immigration policies in the two countries. As we show in this chapter, Russian and Turkish immigration laws and policies have carried unintended consequences: a significant gap exists between migration policies and laws (migration outputs) and their actual implementation on the ground (migration outcomes). Due to complicated legalization procedures, authorities' tacit acceptance of legally unprotected and cheap migrant labor alongside legal uncertainties, many migrants resort to working in the informal economy where they can work without documents. Thus, we argue for the necessity of considering these peculiarities when comparing the Russian and Turkish migration regimes, which manifest in the workings of state officials in charge of migration management, in the practices of employers and migration intermediaries and in the experiences of migrant workers.

THE RUSSIAN MIGRATION REGIME

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 as well as the political and economic instability in the newly independent republics transformed Russia from a country of emigration to a country of immigration (Laruelle, 2007). Thus, two dominant trends emerge when analyzing Russia's post-Soviet immigration history. In the 1990s, migratory flows to Russia were largely characterized by forced migration, where more than 10 million people, predominantly ethnic Russians and other Russian-speaking communities, returned to Russia (Pilkington & Flynn,

2006). However, in the mid-2000s, large-scale labor migration dominated, whereby Russia received millions of migrant workers from other post-Soviet republics (Demintseva, 2017) due to the rapidly growing Russian economy, on the one hand, and economic decline in other post-Soviet republics, on the other (Denisenko & Chernina, 2017). Another contributing factor to the massive labor migration was the visa-free border regime under a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) agreement, allowing the citizens of most post-Soviet republics to enter Russia without restrictions (Abashin, 2014).

Accordingly, Russia has emerged as a key migration hub worldwide, host to the more than 11 million foreign-born individuals residing within its territory (IOM, 2020). However, undocumented migrants are not included in these official statistics. Accordingly, no consensus exists among migration scholars and experts regarding the actual number of migrants living in Russia. That is, the figures provided vary, placing the number of migrants living in Russia somewhere between 9 and 18 million individuals depending on the source used (Abashin, 2016; Reeves, 2015; Schenk, 2018). Large Russian cities, such as Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Krasnodar, Tyumen and Yekaterinburg, serve as the primary magnets for migrants (Streltsova, 2014). The vast majority of migrant workers enter Russia from three Central Asian countries—Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (Malakhov, 2014). Because Russia maintains a visa-free regime with the CIS states, nearly all migrants from Central Asia enter Russia legally and become undocumented only after failing to obtain a work permit and residence registration.

The development of immigration laws and policies in Russia can be divided into two periods: (a) the 1990s and (b) the 2000s to present. The first migration laws adopted in the 1990s (the “Federal Law on Refugees and the Law on Forcibly Displaced Persons”) primarily aimed to facilitate the return of forced migrants and refugees (predominantly “ethnic Russians”) to Russia through the introduction of simplified procedures for receiving refugee status or a permanent residence permit in Russia. Another key legislative action in the 1990s focused on passing several decrees and laws on “compatriots abroad.” These decrees and laws aimed to support individuals who formerly held USSR citizenship and resided in countries once a part of the USSR, and who wished to maintain their ties and loyalty to post-Soviet Russia. The immigration laws of the 1990s were thus ad hoc, piecemeal and liberal in the sense that they primarily served

to regulate the return to Russia of ethnic Russians and other Russian-speaking communities from the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union (Schenk, 2018).

Following the onset of the massive labor migration from Central Asia to Russia characteristic of the 2000s, Russian migration policy and the official rhetoric toward citizens of former Soviet republics shifted significantly. Given that Russia received millions of migrant workers from Central Asia and Caucasus during a relatively short period of time, both the Russian public and politicians appeared largely unprepared to face the new reality of becoming a country of immigration (Malakhov, 2014). The adoption of a new law in 2002, “The Law on the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens in the Russian Federation,” represented one of the first serious attempts by Russian authorities to regulate the flows of immigration based on a preferred versus non-preferred migrants rationale (Abashin, 2016). That law significantly tightened ethnic and cultural requirements for foreign citizens seeking to secure a permanent residence permit and Russian citizenship. New migration management mechanisms, such as a migration card, visa procedures, quotas for temporary residence permits and work permits for foreigners from visa-requiring countries as well as requirements for registration at a place of accommodation were introduced. These legislative changes clarified the migration status of foreign citizens and unified procedures for registering and issuing work permits (Denisenko & Chernina, 2017).

Yet, despite Russian authorities’ attempts to coherently regulate labor migration, these new procedures for obtaining work permits emerged as too complex, unclear and contradictory for visa-free migrants from CIS (post-Soviet) countries. While the law clearly described the procedures employers must follow in order to hire a worker from a visa-requiring country, no separate procedure was described for the hiring of migrants from visa-free countries. This meant that all migrant workers from CIS countries remained completely dependent upon their employers to submit the documents required to secure legal work status (Schenk, 2018). Furthermore, this ambiguity explains why millions of migrant workers from CIS countries resorted to the shadow economy, where they could work without any type of work permit. Another factor enabling migrants to operate in the shadow economy was the possibility of crossing the border visa-free and remaining in Russia for up to 90 days, which could be easily prolonged by leaving the country and immediately returning.

Thus, before the expiry of their 90-day stay, migrants typically traveled to the Russia–Ukraine or the Russia–Kazakhstan border to renew their migration card, thereby allowing them to stay legally in Russia for another 90 days in accordance with the “Law on the Rules of Entry and Exit from the Territory of the Russian Federation of 1996” (revised in 2012 and 2013). According to expert estimates, 3–5 million migrants worked in the shadow economy from 2002 through 2005 (Ivakhnyuk, 2006; Krasinets, 2009; Tyuryukanova, 2008), while the number of undocumented migrants reached less than 1 million individuals in the period between 1999 and 2000 when labor migration remained largely unregulated (Zayonchkovskaya, 2000).

These developments sent shockwaves rumbling across Russia and led to the widespread perception both among state officials and the general public that immigration was out of control. As a result, several amendments were made to the “Law on the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens” in 2006. On the one hand, the amendments simplified the legalization procedures for migrants from CIS countries in terms of registering where they lived or worked, applying for a work permit on their own and moving between different employers. On the other hand, new restrictions regarding work permit quotas were introduced, which applied to citizens of post-Soviet countries. Under this new legal immigration environment, CIS migrants had two options available to them for acquiring a work permit. The first option relied on securing a work permit through an employer, who applied for a quota allocation during the previous year. The second option required migrants to obtain a work permit independently, either by applying for a permit on their own or through an intermediary. These aspects of the law were viewed as a shift toward liberalizing the Russian immigration policy, since migrants could obtain work permits on their own and move freely between employers (Schenk, 2018). Owing to the quota of 6 million work permits for 2007, many migrants legalized their status and the number of documented migrants increased from 570,000 in 2006 to 2.4 million in 2008 (Denisenko & Chernina, 2017). More than half of these work permits were issued to citizens of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (Zayonchkovskaya & Tyuryukanova, 2010).

However, following the 2008–2009 economic crisis, the Russian migration regime again shifted dramatically. That crisis led to a decrease in the total flow of migrant workers by approximately 15% to 20% (Zayonchkovskaya & Tyuryukanova, 2010). Consequently, Russian

authorities also reduced the work permit quota from 6 million in 2007 to 3.4 million in 2008 (Denisenko & Chernina, 2017). Apparently, the decision to reduce the quota was made without carefully evaluating the shifting demand for a foreign labor force. Because Russia quickly recovered from the economic crisis, the total flow of migrants again returned to its previous levels. Yet, despite these trends, the quota steadily decreased year-by-year (standing at 1.6 million in 2014 in its final year), thereby pushing increasing numbers of migrants into the shadow economy (Schenk, 2018). This decrease was largely due to the legal requirement that every employer must submit applications to regional authorities by May of each year, indicating their need for a certain number of foreign workers with specific skills and qualifications. Thus, the size of the yearly quota was determined in accordance with the number of applications submitted by employers. Many entrepreneurs, however, particularly small business owners, were ineligible within such quotas due to the complicated bureaucratic procedures and legal restrictions. Even the introduction of “out-of-quota” work permits (known as “*patents*”) in 2010 did not significantly improve the situation, since *patents* were only valid for migrants entering into employment with individual citizens for personal, household and other nonbusiness purposes. As a result, many were forced to operate in the shadow economy, hiring migrants without any work documents (Denisenko & Chernina, 2017). From their side, millions of CIS migrants—predominantly Central Asian migrants—continued their established practice of prolonging their stay in Russia by renewing their migration card at a nearby border before the 90-day grace period expired.

In an attempt to reduce the scale of undocumented migration, Russian authorities further tightened the laws, strengthened the border infrastructure and introduced highly punitive measures. Consequently, between 2012 and 2015, Russian authorities adopted more than 50 laws and regulations aimed at reducing undocumented migration through severe administrative and criminal penalties for violating migration laws (Denisenko, 2017). The most visible evidence of these new tendencies accompanied the introduction of an entry ban (*zapret na v'ezd*). In 2013, Russian authorities introduced the entry ban as an immigration legal sanction and began applying it to foreign citizens who violated the conditions on the length of stay, migration and employment. In July 2013, more severe amendments were added to the entry ban legislation, according to which a three-year entry ban was issued to foreign citizens

who committed two or more administrative offenses within a period of three years (Kubal, 2016). Administrative law violations included offenses such as speeding or parking tickets, violations to highway codes, living in a place not indicated in the official residence registration or not being able to present a valid form of identification when stopped by the police. The three-year entry ban could be issued to a foreign citizen who committed two administrative law violations during their stay in Russia. An entry ban was typically issued by a staff member of the Main Directorate for Migration Issues of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (formerly the Russian Federal Migration Service) after cross-referencing police databases for petty administrative offenses with the database containing information about foreign citizens' residence status in Russia (Kubal, 2016).¹ In addition to the entry ban, another new law, known as the "90–180 rule," entered into effect in January 2014, stipulating that foreigners can remain in Russia for only 90 days within any 180-day period. These restrictions made it impossible for migrants to cross the border every three months and re-enter Russia to begin a new grace period. In addition, additional sanctions were introduced to ensure migrants' compliance with the "90–180 rule." Accordingly, migrants who illegally stayed for more than 270 days were subsequently banned from entering Russia for 10 years, those who overstayed for 170–270 days could not enter the country for 5 years and those who overstayed less than 170 days were not allowed to enter Russia for 3 years (Denisenko, 2017).

The Russian migration regime underwent a further significant transformation in 2014 and 2015. One of the key changes included abolishing the system of work permit quotas for citizens from visa-free countries in 2015, and the introduction of a single *patent* system that covered all forms of migrant employment. Until 2015, migrants could use the *patent* only for entering into employment with individual citizens for personal, household or other similar purposes. However, as of January 1, 2015, *patents* became the primary channel for legal employment among all foreign workers (including CIS citizens) entering Russia under the visa-free

¹ In addition to the Main Directorate for Migration Issues, up to 16 Russian state agencies can issue an entry ban. These include the Federal Security Service, the Ministry of Defense, the Russian Financial Monitoring System, the External Intelligent Service, the Ministry of Justice, the Federal Drug Control Service, the Federal Service on Surveillance for Consumer Rights Protection and Human Well-Being and the Federal Medical Agency among others.

regime, regardless of whether they worked for an organization, individual entrepreneur or individual. *Patents* are typically issued for a period of 1–12 months, after which they can be renewed for another 12 months. However, the new *patent* system became more problematic than the previous quota system. Despite its liberal nature, it introduced complicated bureaucratic procedures and substantial legalization fees that further pushed migrants into the shadow economy (Urinboyev, 2020). Within 30 days of arrival, migrants are required to navigate lengthy, expensive and cumbersome legalization procedures, which require obtaining, among other items, language competency test results, a medical examination, health insurance and residence registration alongside the payment of various fees. Thus, it is exceptionally difficult to complete all of the procedures within the required 30-day period, both from a bureaucratic and a financial point of view. On average, the cost of all these items and the general fee for the *patent* reach approximately 25,000 rubles (about US\$400), placing a heavy financial burden on migrants who have just arrived with little or no money (Nikiforova & Brednikova, 2018). Furthermore, after obtaining a *patent*, migrants must pay a monthly fee for the *patent*, the amount of which depends on the region in which the migrant works [e.g., 5000 rubles (US\$80) in Moscow].² In addition to paying a monthly fee, migrants must renew their residence registration every three months, costing approximately 3000 rubles (US\$30–45) each time. All of these legalization expenses fall well beyond the financial capacity of migrants given their meager incomes. Even those migrants who received a *patent* find it difficult to remain “legal” and eventually resort to the shadow economy, largely because a migrant’s average monthly salary is 25,000 rubles (US\$400), a sum significantly lower than the salary of Russian citizens. Consequently, these expensive legalization procedures further pushed migrants into the shadow economy where they can work without any documents (Kuznetsova & Round, 2018; Schenk, 2018). In the next section, we discuss the brief history and current developments in Turkish migration regime, where we can also observe the “legal production of migrant illegality” (De Genova, 2004).

² As citizens of a member-state of the Eurasian Economic Union, Kyrgyz migrants are exempt from obtaining a *patent*.

THE TURKISH MIGRATION REGIME

Since its foundation in 1923, the Turkish Republic (hereafter, Turkey) has experienced several stages to its immigration and emigration processes. For the last three decades, Turkey has transformed from a traditional country of emigration to a country of immigration and transit. During the first half of the twentieth century, people of Turkish origin from territories formerly belonging to the Ottoman Empire were encouraged to immigrate. For example, from 1923 through the end of World War II more than 840,000 people of Turkish origin from Bulgaria, Greece and other Balkan countries moved to Turkey (Kirişci, 2000). At the same time, the non-Muslim (mostly Greek and Armenian) population in Turkey, many of whom had already left in the years following World War I and during the establishment of the republic, was discouraged from remaining in the country in the decades that followed.

In the 1960s, in line with agreements with post-war European countries experiencing labor shortages, Turkey began exporting its labor force in large numbers, with Germany standing as the largest recipient of a Turkish labor force. Turkey officially sent nearly 800,000 migrant workers to Europe between 1961 and 1974 (Içduygu, 2009), while the actual figures given family reunification may be several times higher than official figures indicate. In the 1980s, a large number of Turkish migrants also worked on infrastructure and construction projects in the oil-rich countries of the Middle East and North Africa. Simultaneously, Turkish people continued moving from rural to urban areas, transforming cities like Istanbul and Ankara into megacities.

In the decades that followed, the geographic location of Turkey in many ways predetermined its transformation from a country of emigration to an immigration/transit country from neighboring countries. Several geopolitical transformations in Turkey's surroundings in the last three decades combined with economic changes in the country contributed to its transition to both a transit and receiving state. The collapse of the Soviet Union served as one of those important factors, triggering a shift in the migration landscape not only in the post-Soviet space, but also in neighboring areas including Turkey. The fall of communism and the introduction of market economy reforms in former Soviet and communist states created mass unemployment and pushed people, especially women, to seek trade opportunities and temporary employment in Turkey (Kaşka, 2009).

To the east of Turkey, political unrest in Syria, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq (the war in Syria, the war in Afghanistan, the Iran–Iraq war and the Gulf crisis) pushed hundreds of thousands of people to move to safer places, whereby Turkey served as both a passageway and a destination in which to seek asylum. The Turkish authorities’ reluctance to receive asylum seekers led to the rise of irregular migration. As a result, a large number of irregular, or “illegal” according to Turkish law, migrants became “entrenched in urban poverty in the peripheral squatter settlements, together with internal migrants (İçduygu & Aksel, 2015, p. 124).

İçduygu and Aksel (2015) maintain that several factors in the early 2000s accelerated Turkey’s transformation from a country of emigration to one of immigration: the globalization of world trade, its impact on Turkey’s liberal market economy and, last but not least, political liberalization reforms due to Turkey’s ambition to become a member of the European Union (EU). During this period, Turkey implemented four legislative changes in order to harmonize its legislation with EU standards. First, the country’s penal code criminalized the trafficking of human beings and migrant smuggling levying severe penalties to perpetrators. Second, the “Law on Work Permits for Foreigners” (No. 4817, 2003) and its accompanying regulations simplified the employment of foreigners within Turkey with work permits, accompanied by hefty fines for illegal employment to be paid by both employees and employers. According to the law, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security is the sole authority responsible for issuing work permits. Although the law simplified the employment of foreigners in the Turkish economy, hiring a foreigner remains a complicated and expensive procedure. Unlike the situation in Russia, it is not the foreign employee, but the employer who applies for a work permit in Turkey, who then must pay employment tax and social security contributions, a requirement that increases the employment costs and, thus, discourages the legal employment of foreigners. Work permits are granted for one year, then for three years and only subsequently for six years provided the employee continues working in the same industry. Because hiring a foreigner is more expensive and associated with burdensome bureaucratic procedures, employers often hire foreign workers informally without any formal employment contract.

Another change in legislation in 2003 was the precondition of three years of cohabitation among Turkish and foreign nationals following

their marriage which would allow a foreigner to obtain Turkish citizenship. Previously, many female migrants obtained their residence and work permits via fictitious marriages to Turkish men (İçduygu, 2009). In reality, this change in law rendered migrant women more dependent on their husbands and vulnerable to intimate partner violence in their first years of married life since divorcing before the obligatory marriage period ended meant losing the chance to obtain Turkish citizenship (Ekiz Gökmen 2011, cited in Williams et al., 2020).

As mentioned above, Turkey's desire to become a part of the EU served as an important driving force behind harmonizing its migration policies with international—more specifically, European—standards. The Action Plan on Migration and Asylum adopted by the Turkish government in 2005 and the Roadmap Towards a Visa-Free Regime with Turkey agreed upon with EU officials in 2013 laid out the legislative and policy changes Turkey was obliged to adopt as a precondition to accession negotiations. However, uncertainty over Turkey's EU membership prospects in the years that followed dissuaded Turkish authorities from implementing these changes (İçduygu & Aksel, 2015). Looking ahead, even the refugee deal of 2016 did not help to improve EU–Turkish relations, which further deteriorated due to growing authoritarianism in Turkey and Ankara's active foreign policy, which brought the EU accession process to a standstill.

Notwithstanding these developments, Turkey's legislation and policies continued to evolve, reflecting the changing environment in the Turkish labor market and sociopolitical developments in the region. The new “Law on Foreigners and International Protection” adopted in April 2013 (LFIP, No. 6458) brought together formerly scattered regulations and by-laws governing the entry, stay and deportation of foreign nationals. This law also institutionalized the governance of immigration and asylum in Turkey. As such, the General Directorate of Migration Management (GDMM), established under the Ministry of Interior, became the government body responsible for immigration affairs. Along with politico-legal aspects, the Turkish authorities were also economically motivated, reflecting the country's growing economic development and further globalization in the world economy. Thus, the law recognizes the presence of irregular migrants and shifts away from a security approach to one concerned with international mobility in general, while, simultaneously, “provid[ing] no rights for irregular migrants, aside from procedural guarantees in cases of detention and deportation” (Üstübcü, 2018, p. 80).

İçduygu and Aksel (2015) list four categories of migrants in Turkey: irregular labor migrants; transit migrants; asylum seekers and refugees; and regular migrants. However, the distinction between the first three categories of migrants in particular remains blurred: asylum seekers or transit migrants, waiting for their journey to third countries, are often engaged in the informal labor market in order to sustain themselves in Turkey, thus join the Turkish labor market as undocumented migrants.

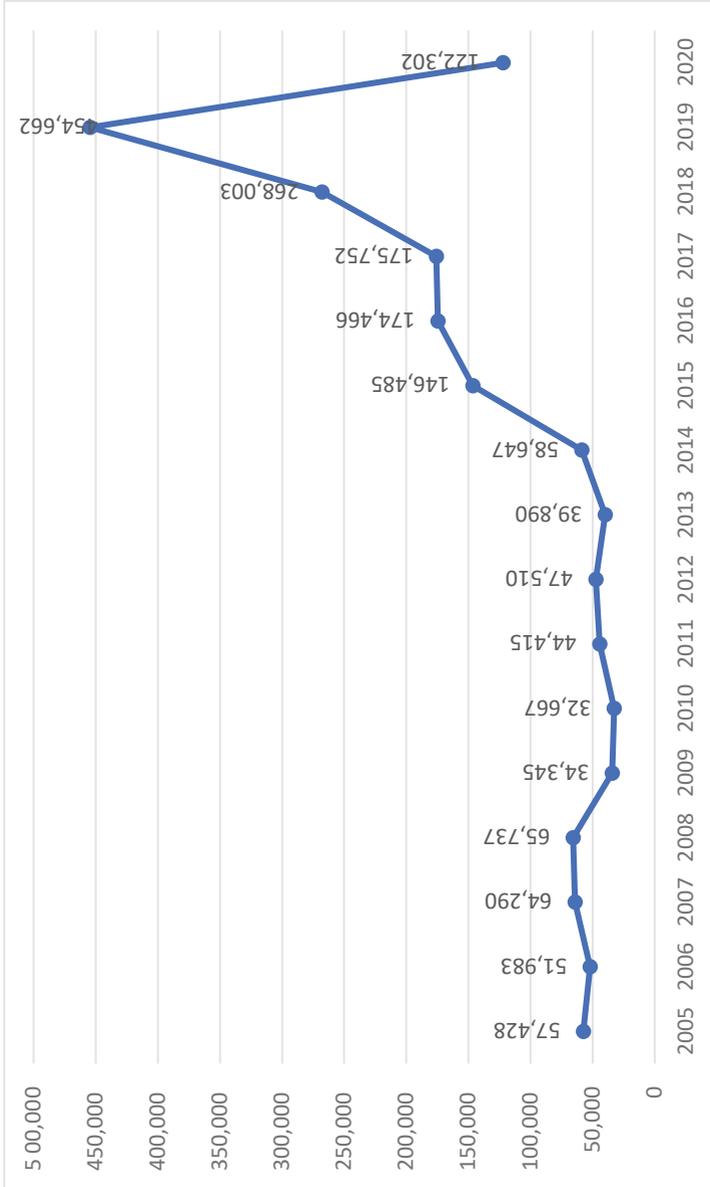
Another significant factor contributing to a growing number of undocumented migrants in Turkey is the country's asylum regime. Although Turkey is a signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, it held a closed-door approach to asylum seekers from non-European countries. In other words, Turkey would not grant refugee status to individuals fleeing countries other than those which are European. This was the case when people fled conflict zones *en masse* in the 1980s and 1990s (i.e., Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq). The geographic limitation clause had its roots in Turkey's long-standing citizenship and naturalization regime. As İçduygu and Aksel (2015) maintain, despite liberalizing policies related to migration governance, Turkey continues to limit the formal immigration to individuals of "Turkish descent and culture," an approach closely related to the concept of "Turkishness" dating to the 1930s and even extending to the Ottoman period. By applying a geographic limitation to asylum seekers, Turkey hoped to discourage large groups of individuals from economically and politically unstable Asian and African countries from settling within its border. In reality, however, hundreds of thousands of people from the Middle East found a "home," albeit temporary and unstable, in Turkey (İçduygu, 2009). For example, in addition to the mass movement of 500,000 Kurds from Iraq during the first Gulf War in 1991, more than 100,000 asylum seekers arrived in Turkey in the 1990s and the 2000s (İçduygu & Aksel, 2015).

In addition, the Civil War in Syria and the concomitant mass influx of a Syrian population marked a critical juncture in Turkey's governance of asylum seeking and irregular migration. The first groups of Syrians began arriving in Turkey just weeks after violence erupted in April 2011. Because Syrians could enter Turkey without a visa at that time, increasing numbers of people continued arriving until Turkey announced that asylum seekers would be granted a "temporary protection" status (Makovsky, 2019). The number of new arrivals kept rising as the conflict continued, eventually making Turkey the most likely destination for asylum seekers in the world.

Today, Turkey hosts close to 4 million Syrians, including 3.6 million individuals with “temporary protection” status. At the same time, Turkey has not officially lifted the geographic limitation to the Geneva Convention. While only around 320,000 Syrians live in designated accommodation, the remainder are scattered throughout the country, including 500,000 people in Istanbul alone (DGMM, 2021). Given their precarious legal status, a large number of Syrian refugees resort to informal employment (Caro, 2020). For example, about 1.5 million people were estimated to be employed in the informal economy in 2018 (Kirişçi et al., 2018). Given that up to 1.5 million Syrians with temporary protection status consist of children 0–14 years of age, we can imagine the scale of informal employment among Syrian refugees (DGMM, 2021).

Furthermore, transit migrants entering Turkey hoping to reach European countries also constitute a large proportion of irregular, or undocumented, migrants in the country. Between 1995 and 2009, more than half of the roughly 800,000 irregular migrants who entered the country with the help of smugglers were irregular transit migrants (Iraqis make up the largest proportion of these) (İçduygu, 2011). As Turkey increased its commercial and investment relationships with its neighboring countries, it shifted to a “trading state” with flexible visa policies (Toksöz, 2020). In other words, Turkey’s open-door (visa-free) policies aimed at boosting its tourism and trade sectors in the early 2010s and the resulting economic development in the country have attracted increasing numbers of migrants. This in turn contributed to growth in informal employment. Figures on the apprehension of irregular migrants during a 15-year period provide evidence of the growing number of irregular migrants. For example, as Table 2.1 shows, on average up to 50,000 irregular migrants were apprehended between 2005 and 2014, while in 2015 that figure nearly tripled to 146,485 increasing tenfold to 454,662 in 2019. The steep drop in apprehensions in 2020 coincides with the closure of borders and restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Interestingly, of 24,578 irregular migrants apprehended in the period from January through March 2021, 886 were from Uzbekistan and 637 were from Turkmenistan (DGMM, 2021). The rise in the number of irregular migrants and their apprehension can be partly attributed to the growing number of apprehensions at Turkey’s borders with European countries; however, those caught attempting to cross through the Aegean Sea consisted of around 13% of all apprehensions in 2019 (IOM, 2020). Thus, the increase can only be explained by Turkish authorities’

Table 2.1 The number of irregular migrants apprehended by year (2005–2020)



intensified struggle against irregular migration, which again indicates the growing number of irregular migrants in the country.

Despite ever-increasing irregular migration, the Turkish immigration regime continues to remain comparatively liberal against that in Russia. Naturally, according to Turkish immigration legislation, irregular migration needs “to be controlled, prevented and combatted and irregular migrants are to be removed” (Geç, 2018, p. 75). However, Turkey’s policies indicate the country’s tacit acceptance of irregular migration. According to Turkish legislation, an undocumented migrant is defined as an individual who enters or leaves Turkey or is present in Turkey while breaching immigration law (i.e., via passport, visa, residence permit and work permit legislation). Yet, unlike Russia, where foreigners who overstay and violate immigration laws face severe penalties, migrants in Turkey can work without documents, suffer less from police corruption and enjoy relatively unimpeded mobility in the city given Turkish authorities’ tacit acceptance of undocumented migration. Occasional raids at workplaces in search of undocumented migrants do not, in general, decrease the level of irregular migration and informal employment.

As shown above, both Russia and Turkey share many common features in terms of nondemocratic rule, weak rule of law, poor human rights record, weak civil society, widespread corruption and large informal economies, which do not allow migrants to engage in legal claim-making and collective mobilization. As a result, informal work, non-payment of wages, discrimination in the form of unequal pay for equal work, and long working hours and exploitation are common working life experiences of Uzbek migrants in both Russia and Turkey. These hardships are often accompanied by poor housing, lack of access to public healthcare and exposure to general discrimination and xenophobia. Notwithstanding these similarities, the Russian and Turkish migration regimes differ from one another considerably when we attend to migrants’ experiences in various migration arenas, a migration outcome which will be illustrated through empirical case studies of four migration arenas (parallel worlds of migrants, documentation and legalization, migrant labor market and the street world and shadow economy) in the subsequent chapters.

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Parallel Worlds of Uzbek Migrants in Russia and Turkey

INTRODUCTION

During our 15 months of ethnographic fieldwork in Russia from January 2014 through November 2019, we traveled extensively within Moscow, running from one side of the city to another in search of informants. This was due to the fact that there were no ethnic enclaves in Moscow, whereby Uzbek migrants were dispersed and lived in various parts of the city. Rather than having physical, face-to-face meetings, many Uzbek migrants stayed in touch with one another via smartphones and social media, virtual platforms enabling migrants to socialize and maintain their daily communication. Given their undocumented or semi-legal status, many of our Uzbek migrant informants kept a low profile, and, not wanting to visit public places such as cafés and shopping malls, preferred to be interviewed either at their workplaces or in their accommodation. Thus we had to travel to different districts in or around Moscow in order to interview our informants, a data collection process that took considerable time, effort and resources. Before beginning our fieldwork in Turkey, we assumed that a similar situation would greet us in Istanbul, requiring us to travel extensively within the megacity, jumping from one migrant network to another. However, in Istanbul, our data collection process became much easier and less time-consuming given the existence of several Uzbek migrant enclaves, such as Kumkapi, Aksaray, Yenikapi and Laleli, where thousands of Uzbek migrants resided and worked. It was possible to spot many

Uzbek migrants freely walking and chatting on the streets without having to worry about their undocumented status and police raids. Although we traveled to sweatshops in different parts of Istanbul (e.g., Bağcılar, Bayrampaşa, Ümraniye, Zeytinburnu and Bakırköy), most of our interviews took place in the aforementioned Uzbek enclaves located in the Fatih district of Istanbul.

These data collection experiences refined many of our pre-fieldwork assumptions, leaving us to consider the role and importance of patterns of residence (absence/presence of ethnic enclaves), transnational communications, social networks and a shared sense of “the rules of the game” in migrants’ life trajectories in the host society. We specifically wondered whether the existence of ethnic enclaves provided a greater agency to and opportunities for Uzbek migrants in Istanbul than in Moscow. Based on these considerations, in this chapter we focus on migrants’ internal life-worlds, agency and transnational communication practices as some of the crucial migration arenas in Russia and Turkey. In these arenas, migrants build their own parallel world based on its own legal order, information channels, social safety nets and networks of trust and reciprocity. We argue that the way in which migrants organize their transnational practices (i.e., parallel worlds) shape the outcomes of many of the practices migrants (and other actors) employ while in Moscow and Istanbul. These transnational practices may serve as some form of “informal legal orders” regulating interpersonal relations, contractual obligations and networks of trust and reciprocity. Before presenting the empirical data, we first provide a brief overview of the political economy of Uzbek labor migration to Russia and Turkey, showing how better economic opportunities, the existence of sociocultural links and relatively liberal immigration regimes have attracted millions of Central Asian migrants to find employment in Russia and Turkey. We will also present the basic characteristics of the case study group—that is, Uzbek migrant workers—upon whom the empirical data and our analysis focus.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF UZBEK LABOR MIGRATION TO RUSSIA AND TURKEY

Uzbekistan became an independent state in 1991 following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Following on the heels of global (Western) good governance discourse, the political leadership of Uzbekistan made multiple bold claims about their strong commitment to the ideals of democracy,

a market economy, human rights and the rule of law as well as their intention to dismantle Soviet-style governance (*cf.* Perlman & Gleason, 2007). However, the complex and multidimensional nature of the challenges to political stability Uzbekistan faced in the 1990s for various reasons rendered the government skeptical of genuine democratization and market reforms. As such, the need to prioritize political stability over reforms was justified by the unstable political situation in Central Asia during the 1990s. This included ethnic clashes between Uzbeks and Turks in 1989, ethnic conflicts between the Uzbek and Kyrgyz people in southern Kyrgyzstan in 1990 and the civil war in neighboring Tajikistan between 1992 and 1997 (Fane, 1996; Megoran, 2017; Warikoo & Norbu, 1992). Consequently, Uzbek authorities made it clear from the beginning that the “big bang” or shock therapy approach to transition would not suit Uzbekistan (Ruziev et al., 2007). Instead, Uzbekistan adopted a gradualist approach, maintaining Soviet-era welfare policies and centralized control over the priority sectors of the economy (Spoor, 1995). Thus, Uzbekistan continued to depend on imported consumer goods, currency controls and the exploitation of rural labor. Authorities understood that a rapid transformation of the economy would affect the lives of millions, likely leading to social unrest. Hence, the Uzbek model of transition clearly reflected concerns regarding political stability and the peculiarities of the post-planned economy. In general, preserving economic stability and social and political order became the overarching rationale for rejecting all manner of economic and political reforms recommended by international institutions and for developing a strict border regime (Fumagalli, 2007).

However, that gradual reform strategy appeared to serve as a short-term remedy. Although the gradualist approach to transition helped prevent a sharp loss in output and a consequential increase in unemployment and social unrest during the early years of the transition, by 2000 it became clear that the economy had stagnated (Ruziev et al., 2007). This largely resulted from an active government intervention, creating significant administrative barriers and a high tax burden, thereby causing high transaction costs for national businesses and fueling the informal economy (Ergashev et al., 2006). As Kandiyoti (2007, p. 44) maintains, the partial market reforms the government implemented in pursuit of stability paradoxically resulted in the inefficient allocation of resources and widespread corruption requiring increased recourse to coercion. Simultaneously, the government took a series of severe measures to

liquidate—or formalize—informal economic activities (bazaars and petty cross-border trade), which provided alternative means of survival for hundreds of thousands of people (Ilkhamov, 2013). This left little room for informal income-earning strategies. While the Uzbek economy has been categorized as experiencing above-average growth rates (about 7–8%) since 2004 (IMF, 2012), these indicators hardly reflected everyday life in Uzbekistan, where many people, especially in rural areas, struggled to make ends meet (Ilkhamov, 2013; Ruziev et al., 2007). Eventually, such developments compelled millions of Uzbek people to resort to labor migration as their primary livelihood strategy, with Russia and Turkey becoming the major destinations among Uzbek migrants.

UZBEK MIGRANTS IN RUSSIA AND TURKEY

Russia remains the primary destination for Uzbek migrant workers due to its visa-free regime, its relatively better wages and the high demand for foreign labor (Laruelle, 2007; Urinboyev, 2016). Labor migration from Uzbekistan to Russia began in the mid-2000s (Abashin, 2013). According to statistics from December 2020, more than two million Uzbek citizens were present within the territory of the Russian Federation (Florinskaya & Mkrtchan, 2020). The vast majority of Uzbek migrant workers in Russia are young men with a secondary school education (Eraliev & Urinboyev, 2020). Most of these migrants originate from rural areas, have a secondary school education and possess a poor command of the Russian language. Therefore, they are mostly employed in low-skilled and low-paying jobs. Owing to the high cost of accommodation and precarious working conditions, migrants rarely bring their spouses to Russia. They send the bulk of their earnings to their left-behind families, leaving little for themselves to cover cost of their basic needs. However, trends from recent years reveal a growing share of female migrants entering the Russian labor market. Women comprise around 15% to 20% of the migrants from Uzbekistan (Rocheva & Varshaver, 2017). While construction sites, farms and similar industries requiring physical strength required primarily employ men, female migrants can find jobs predominantly in trade (supermarkets and shops), catering (restaurants, hotels and food factories) and domestic (care) and cleaning services (Eraliev & Heusala, 2021).

Another popular destination for Uzbek migrants is Turkey. The first Uzbek migrant-shuttle traders appeared in Turkey as early as the 1990s.

However, widespread migration began only in the 2000s and 2010s with economic improvements in Turkey coupled with growing unemployment in Uzbekistan. The share of Uzbek migrants to Turkey have increased rapidly since the mid-2010s due to the tightening of immigration laws, particularly the entry ban legislation, which forced many Uzbek migrants to reorient their destination (Urinboyev, 2020). Unlike Russia, female migrants constitute the majority of migrants in the Turkish labor market due to the high demand for the female labor force in sectors such as domestic care (taking care of children, the sick and elderly), cleaning services and the textile and garment industries (Toksöz & Ulutaş, 2012). Male migrants primarily work in services (hotels and restaurants), textile and garment factories as well as in the construction industry. The majority of Uzbek migrants find jobs in Istanbul, the country's largest city and the largest transit hub in the region. There are no clear figures on the number of Uzbeks in Turkey. However, remittances sent to Uzbekistan through official channels provide us with a clue regarding the existence of a large number of Uzbeks in Turkey. In 2020, remittances from Russia (with more than two million Uzbek migrants) exceeded US\$4.6 billion, while remittances from Turkey reached US\$200 million (CBU, 2021). Moreover, given the existence of the shuttle trade between Turkey and Uzbekistan, a large proportion of the remittances to Uzbekistan are transferred through informal channels. This gives us reason to estimate that more than 100,000 Uzbek migrants are currently working in Turkey.

Being undocumented and employed in the informal economy represent a way of life for many Uzbek migrants in Russia and Turkey. In Russia, in an attempt to fight undocumented migration, the authorities further tightened immigration laws and introduced highly punitive measures. Among these legal interventions, the entry ban law was the most severe immigration law sanction. Migrants who committed two or more administrative offenses or who overstayed their permits were subsequently banned from entering Russia for three, five and ten years depending on the length of the overstay. By February 2014, 600,000 migrants, primarily from Central Asia, had received entry bans; this figure reached two million migrants by mid-2016 (Kirillova, 2016). These legislative interventions have produced mixed results. Some migrants learned to sidestep restrictions by buying "clean fake" (Reeves, 2013) immigration papers, while others limited their return trips home and concentrated instead on one long stay, during which they attempted to earn as much as possible. Simultaneously, a large number of entry-banned

migrants returned home and were forced to choose other destinations for labor migration, such as Kazakhstan or Turkey, while awaiting the expiry of their entry ban. This led to an increase in the already growing number of Central Asian—especially Uzbek—migrants in Turkey.

Migrants experience a similar restrictive legal environment in Turkey. Unlike in Russia, however, it is not the employee, but the employer who applies for a work permit in Turkey. Because hiring a foreigner is more expensive and associated with difficult bureaucratic procedures, employers often hire foreign workers informally. Therefore, the large proportion of migrant workers in Turkey resort to the informal economy where they can find employment without any documents (Toksöz et al., 2012). Yet, unlike Russia, where foreigners who violate immigration laws face severe penalties, migrants in Turkey can work without documents, suffer less from police corruption and enjoy relatively unimpeded mobility in cities due to the relatively liberal legal immigration regime. Those who overstay have two options when leaving Turkey: they can either choose to receive an entry ban for a long period or pay a fine (the amount depends on the length of the overstay) at the border and return a couple of months later. Owing to such a relatively liberal immigration regime, informality is part and parcel for the migrant labor market in Turkey.

Notwithstanding the above similarities, considerable differences exist when it comes to Uzbek migrants' patterns of residence in Moscow and Istanbul, two megacities in Russia and Turkey, respectively, with the highest concentrations of migrant workers. In other words, Uzbek migrants' experiences in Moscow and Istanbul represent two different forms of migrant incorporation and adaptation into the host societies: the latter is based on an ethnic enclave, with its own spatial structure and border, and the former centers around a virtual environment (digital *mahalla*), where smartphones and social media serve as the means for place-making and networking (Urinboyev, 2021). These differences have an identifiable impact on migrants' (and other actors') coping strategies, transnational communication, social networks and trust and reciprocity-based relations. We provide a thick description of these processes in the sections that follow.

DIGITAL *Mahalla* IN MOSCOW

Unlike in Istanbul, there are no ethnic enclaves in Moscow leaving migrant communities dispersed and situated in different parts of the city.

Some insignificant exceptions exist in parts of Moscow, areas that host industrial zones and fruit and vegetable markets such as Kapotnya (Cherkizov) or Food City (representing “migrant friendly” districts), where it is possible to see a higher concentration of Central Asian migrants. The absence of ethnic enclaves can largely be explained by the social mixing and the absence of spatial segregation in Moscow, inherited from the Soviet period, allowing migrants to find accommodation in any area of the city (Demintseva, 2017). While there are numerous Uzbek cafés in Moscow, these are not tied to any specific locality and often relocate from one place to another. Migrants typically work long hours without any days off in different parts of the city, leaving little or no time for physical meetings with their ethnic communities and networks. Another reason for the absence of ethnic enclaves results from the economic and social stratification in Moscow. Unlike in Istanbul where migrant-oriented jobs are concentrated in specific districts and neighborhoods, in Moscow jobs are not tied to a specific locality. Instead, Uzbeks’ insertion into Moscow’s labor market is much more dispersed, whereby it is possible to spot Uzbeks in any district. We must also consider the role of corrupt policing practices that compel migrants to minimize their presence in public places. Even if migrants possess all of the documents required by law, they are often asked for bribes when stopped by the police on the street or in the metro. Because of these experiences, Uzbek migrants do not congregate in public places in Moscow and try to make themselves as invisible as possible. Despite these challenges, rapid improvements in communications technologies (e.g., smartphones and social media) have enabled Uzbek migrants to create some form of permanent, smartphone-based transnational identities, communities and activities in Moscow. These smartphone-based networks typically involve migrants from the same village or town in Uzbekistan. The existence of such smartphone-based communities and identities creates a sense of social responsibility among Uzbek migrants. Migrants quickly inform each other and mobilize resources when someone falls ill, cannot get their salary for their work, is caught by the police, needs to send something home or desperately needs money (Fig. 3.1).

We illustrate these processes through empirical examples that focus on the everyday lives and smartphone-mediated communications practices of Uzbek migrants in Russia. The majority of Uzbek migrants included in our empirical examples hail from the same village located in the Fergana region of Uzbekistan. Owing to the extensive use of smartphones both by



Fig. 3.1 Food City—Moscow’s “little Uzbekistan” where it is possible to spot a large number of Uzbek migrants

migrants in Moscow and their left-behind families in Uzbekistan, there is an everyday information exchange between migrants and villagers. Since most village residents have sons or close relatives working in Russia, daily conversations in migrants’ home villages revolve around the interpersonal relations of migrants in Russia, remittances, deportations and entry bans. One of key features of these social relations is the informal social control exercised by *mahallas*, local community-based organizations which can be found in all regions of Uzbekistan. As explained earlier, due to the inability of the Uzbek state to provide sufficient employment opportunities and social protection, villagers frequently rely on social safety nets and mutual aid practices that take place within the realm of their family, kinship group and *mahalla*. Villagers meet one another on a daily basis to discuss and arrange mutual aid practices, which, in turn, produce reciprocity, affection, shared responsibilities and obligations among villagers. These reciprocal relationships produce economic and social interdependency between villagers, generating an expectation that villagers should help and support one another, particularly when they are in vulnerable situations. Thus, social pressure and sanctions can be applied to a village member or their family and kinship group if s/he (or they) is (are) not acting fairly or not helping neighbors or village members who encounter



Fig. 3.2 Villagers meet for a plov once a month in a garage turned into a temporary accommodation. Zelenograd, Moscow province

difficult situations. In an effort to avoid social pressures, villagers often try to help members of their family, kinship group or *mahalla*.¹

These *mahalla*-level norms, identities and mutual aid practices continue to shape the villagers' life trajectories and choices even when they are in Russia. When talking to migrants, it became apparent that their decision to migrate to Russia not only stemmed from economic considerations, but was also connected to kinship relationships between migrants, returning migrants and nonmigrants. Villagers believe that going to Moscow means joining *mahalla*-specific and village acquaintances there. Once they arrive at Moscow's Domodedovo or Vnukovo airport, they are quickly met and picked up by fellow villagers. Thus, villagers imagine their future migrant life as integrated into their *mahalla* and village networks, which already extend to Moscow through smartphones and social media platforms (Fig. 3.2).

The use of smartphones is quite common among migrants in Russia (Urinboev, 2021). The majority of Uzbek migrants we encountered in Moscow owned a smartphone (e.g., Huawei, Samsung or iPhone) with

¹ Similar processes were also observed by Isabaeva (2011) in her study of labor migration and remittances among the people of Sopu Korgon, a village in southern Kyrgyzstan.

internet access, enabling them to use social media platforms and applications to exchange daily news with migrants residing in Moscow as well as with their left-behind families and communities in Uzbekistan. Telegram Messenger, WhatsApp and IMO are the most popular and widely used social media platforms among Uzbek migrants in Russia. Migrants hailing from the same community, village or town in Uzbekistan usually create their own social media-based groups (i.e., Telegram or IMO groups), in which they share various news items, videos and photos, as well as update one another with Moscow and village news and spread gossip and rumors when someone acts unfairly toward other migrants.

Although members of the migrant community we studied did not share communal living spaces or worked in different parts of Moscow, they remained in touch with one another in Moscow and made video calls to their left-behind families and village networks. These daily digital communications not only enabled migrants to be “here” and “there,” but also served as a tool to create some form of “digital *mahalla*” that provided an alternative social safety net under the conditions of a shadow economy and legal uncertainty. Given their precarious livelihoods in Moscow, Uzbek migrants “exported” many of their village-level mutual aid practices to Moscow in order to tackle the challenges of legal insecurity and shadow economic employment, such as the nonpayment of salaries, police corruption, exploitation and forced labor, street brawls and extortion and many other informal practices that occur beyond the law. Smartphones and social media applications served as platforms for carrying out such activities. For example, Uzbek migrants quickly informed one another and mobilized resources when someone fell ill, was caught by the police, needed to send something home or desperately needed money.

Smartphones are especially crucial in migrants’ daily encounters with law enforcement agencies. Take the following example, revolving around being stopped by corrupt Russian police officers, as explained by Abduvali (38, male), an Uzbek construction worker:

We usually avoid public places because there are hundreds of police officers on the streets looking to extort money from us [migrants]. Instead, we use smartphones and social media to resolve problems, socialize with our co-villagers in Moscow as well as to maintain daily contact with our families, *mahalla* and village friends in Fergana. It is Moscow, and things are unpredictable here; we rely on our village connections when we get into trouble. We are all migrants here, so we cannot turn our backs when our

fellow villagers are in trouble. But, in order to reach your co-villagers, you must always have a mobile phone with you, and you must memorize their phone numbers. For example, let's assume that you are a migrant worker who is caught by a police officer and brought to a police station. Normally, police officers keep you in the cell for a few hours and check your documents very carefully, a thing usually done to further scare migrants. After finishing the check, police officers give you two options: (1) you can pay a bribe immediately and go home or (2) if you have no money, police officers allow you to phone your friends so that they can bring money and secure your release. The second scenario is more common, and you need to call your co-villagers for help. Therefore, you must always have your mobile phone with you. A police officer might allow you to use their mobile phone to contact your co-villagers, but not all police officers are nice. If you do not have a phone with you and are caught by the police, there is a high risk that the police officers will transfer your case to court for deportation.

This is one of the many examples showing how the digital *mahalla* shapes migrants' life trajectories in crisis situations. On April 14, 2014, we spent a day together with Baha, a migrant construction worker from rural Fergana. Baha does not have a stable job, but he usually receives various short-term offers from private clients to, for example, install windows or fix apartment doors. After we had dinner, we took a taxi to the parking garage in Moscow's Babushkinskaya district, where Horin, another migrant from rural Fergana, works. Baha did not explain why we were going to visit Horin, but we assumed that he was going to introduce us to him. Horin and his boss Kolya welcomed us at the garage entrance and we all shook hands. After a brief chat, Baha told us that we would need to join Horin and Kolya and go to the Medvedkovo district where Kolya's apartment was located. We did not know why we were going there, but we quickly learned that Horin had asked Baha to repair his boss' broken door. We concluded that Baha had received a job offer and that he was going to earn some money now. It took Baha nearly two hours to repair the door. Based on our knowledge of pay rates in the construction sector, we were confident that he would get at least 1500 rubles (US\$ 40) payment for his work. Surprisingly, Baha did not receive any compensation for his work, except that Horin promised that he would invite us for dinner the following week. Although we had a good understanding of the migrant labor market in Moscow, this situation puzzled us. In our view, Horin had clearly abused Baha's kindness

by just expressing his gratitude and not translating that thanks into some cash. When we asked about it, Baha explained:

Our *musofirchilik* [migranthood] life in Moscow can be compared to how we live in our *mahalla* in Uzbekistan. You know, in our *mahalla* people help one another during weddings, funerals, house construction, irrigation, infrastructure building, road asphaltting and so on. It is the *hashar* — the collective effort — of the *mahalla* to solve day-to-day problems. Without *hashar* it is very hard to get things done. Since we are all *musofir* [migrant] in Russia, it is very important that we continue this tradition and support one another. We are nobody in Russia, the lowest class of workers, without any rights. Russians treat us worse than dogs, simply we are all *churka* [dumb] to them. Therefore, we need to stick together and live like one *mahalla*.

As you see, I helped Horin and did not ask for any payment. Horin enhanced his status (*plyus bo'ldi*), since he fulfilled his boss Kolya's request at no cost. I know that Horin appreciates my help and he will also do some favor for me if I ask him for help. I helped him today, and he will help me tomorrow. If you ask for money for everything, you would be alone tomorrow when you get into trouble. You don't die from hunger if you have a good relationship with your *mahalla* and village networks. We are all *musofir* here, so you must be kind and generous to your *mahalla* networks, otherwise you cannot survive in Russia.

We observed a similar incident on a Wednesday afternoon, July 30, 2014, when we and Zaur were in the car heading toward a construction site in Balashikha, a small city in Moscow province. Unlike his co-villagers who work in the construction sector, Zaur works as a clerk at a grocery store in Moscow city, a status that led to him being known as *Russkiy* (Russian) among his co-villagers, given that he receives a higher salary and is not obliged to engage in *chornaia rabota* (black/unskilled work). Because Zaur is considered more successful and better connected than other migrants, people from his village often contact him with requests.

As we neared the construction site, Zaur received a phone call from Uzbekistan. He usually picks up calls if they come from Uzbekistan and immediately answered. It was Zaur's neighbor, Ozoda, who had an urgent request. From their phone conversation, we learned that Ozoda's husband, Ulugbek, who works in a greenhouse farm in Vologda city, recently had an appendectomy and was on a train bound for Moscow. Ozoda was quite worried about her husband since he was physically

unable to work and had no money to purchase train tickets to return to Uzbekistan. It was obvious that Ozoda had asked Zaur to help her husband with his return journey. After finishing the conversation, Zaur said that we needed to return to Moscow and meet Ulugbek at Kazanskiy railway station when he arrived from Vologda. On our way to the station, we asked Zaur to explain the details of the phone conversation in more detail. He provided the following account:

Ulugbek and I come from the same *mahalla*. He is in a critical situation now, since he has neither good health nor the money to return to Uzbekistan. There is no train from Vologda to Tashkent for the next ten days, so he must come to Moscow first and then take another train to Tashkent. Actually, Ulugbek could have taken a direct train from Vologda to Tashkent if he stayed there for ten more days. But, he knows that his *mahalla* networks would take care of him if he comes to Moscow. Therefore, he is now on his way here. Ulugbek is very clever. He didn't contact me directly. Instead, he contacted me through his wife since he knew that I wouldn't refuse if someone contacts me directly from Fergana. Of course, I have no other choice but to cover Ulugbek's expenses from my own pocket. First, I am now driving from Balashikha to Kazanskiy railway station and burning gasoline. If you take a taxi, you will spend at least 3000 rubles (US\$90) for this trip. Second, Ulugbek wants to return home as soon as possible, but train tickets to Uzbekistan are usually sold out. One needs to buy a ticket at least three days before traveling. This means I have to bribe the train *provodnik* (conductor) and arrange a place [without a valid ticket] for him. In addition, there are many thieves and racketeers in Kazanskiy railway station that extort money from migrants. I have connections there and I can make sure that Ulugbek safely boards the train and reaches home without any problems. Third, Ulugbek does not have any money to pay for his travel expenses. This means I have to bribe the *provodnik* from my own pocket, and I know that Ulugbek will not return this money to me. This would be treated as my "*mahalla* obligation". But I hope he will appreciate my help and tell our *mahalla* about my *odamgarchilik* (good deeds). This is enough for me. You see how much trouble and how many expenses I have and the time I lose just to save face in the *mahalla*. If I refuse to help Ulugbek and other *mahalla* acquaintances, my *mahalla* community will spread gossip about me saying that I have no *odamgarchilik*. Of course, I am in Moscow now and could just ignore the gossip, but I have to consider my family members' situation, since they are the ones who bear the consequences of my decision.

We arrived at Kazanskiy station at 4 pm. Ulugbek's train arrived one hour later, and events unfolded exactly as described by Zaur. After meeting Ulugbek at the station, we all headed toward a small fast-food café where migrants can obtain work permits and residence registrations. There we met one Uzbek woman from Uzbekistan's Andijan region who was well-connected with train *provodniks*. Zaur paid her 7500 rubles (US\$210) and she then guided us toward the station and quickly arranged a special seat for Ulugbek on a Moscow–Tashkent train. After a short conversation with the conductor, she assured us that Ulugbek was now in safe hands and would be in Uzbekistan in five days. Zaur gave Ulugbek an additional 1000 rubles (US\$35) and told him that he can use it for his food expenses during the long trip. We shook hands with Ulugbek and watched as the train departed for Uzbekistan.

The repatriation of a deceased migrant from Russia to Uzbekistan provides yet another relevant example of the role of the digital *mahalla* in migrants' daily lives. Uzbek migrants, like other Central Asian migrants (Reeves, 2015; Round & Kuznetsova, 2016), experience difficult living and working conditions in Moscow, including discrimination, hazardous working conditions and physical violence. They are, therefore, aware that the threat of death is ever-present in their daily lives in Moscow. As one of our informants said, "Death can be the fate of any migrant in Russia, since we are working in a *bespredel* (limitlessness or lawless) country where anything can happen." Cognizant of their own precarious livelihoods, migrants voluntarily contribute to repatriation expenses if someone from their *mahalla* or village dies from a work-related accident, disease or attack from a neo-Nazi skinhead. Given these risks, Uzbek migrants tend to capitalize on their *mahalla* traditions (such as norms of reciprocity and solidarity, as well as good neighborliness) as a means to cope with the challenges of being a foreigner in Russia. When someone died, news spread swiftly among villagers as migrants immediately contacted their village networks via smartphones and social media. Because the threat of death was ever-present in migrants' lives, news of a death deeply affected everyone, and many migrants stepped forward to assist with the repatriation expenses. There was no standard amount for contributions, and migrants determined how much to contribute based on their own financial situation and income level. As such, Uzbek migrants viewed their contribution to body repatriation as a form of insurance in the case of their own death, as illustrated in the following:

I always make a contribution towards body repatriation, because I know my co-villagers would do the same for me if I were to suddenly die from a work-related accident or disease. Body repatriation is *hashar* — a collective, mutual-aid project to which everyone is expected to contribute. If you are greedy and do not contribute, there is a high likelihood that your body will not be taken care of if you die. Nobody wants his body to remain in Russia. We all want to be buried in our homeland. (Nodir, 26, male, Uzbek migrant worker)

Accordingly, smartphones and social media serve as the everyday technologies for reproducing the digital *mahalla* in the context of Moscow. Other studies have similarly shown that mobile phones do not “fracture” localities, but extend and reproduce them in migrant-receiving societies (Alencar et al., 2019; Awad & Tossell, 2021; Ruget & Usmanalieva, 2019; Urinboyev, 2017). However, the literature on migration and mobile phones tends to focus on their transnational role, primarily exploring how the availability of mobile phones increases the frequency and magnitude of transnational interactions, blurring the distinction between “here” and “there.” The case of Uzbek migrants demonstrates that smartphones and social media not only facilitate the intensity of everyday exchanges between Moscow and Fergana, but, also, and more importantly, reproduce a digital Uzbek *mahalla* that regulates the daily mutual aid practices and behaviors of village residents both locally and transnationally.

At the time of writing, the role of these smartphone-based mutual aid practices proved especially pivotal during the COVID-19 pandemic, which had dramatic and unprecedented effects on migrants’ everyday lives in Russia and beyond. As the number of coronavirus cases drastically increased, Russia, along with many other countries around the world, introduced strict lockdown measures to prevent the spread of the virus. While Russian regions had some degree of autonomy in defining the level of COVID-related restrictions, in Moscow, where many Uzbek migrants worked, the city government introduced strict lockdown measures. As a result, a considerable number of Uzbek migrants, particularly those working in the service industries, factories and bazaars, lost their jobs. This led to a catch-22 situation, whereby migrants neither had the savings necessary to cover their living expenses nor the possibility of returning to their home country due to travel restrictions introduced by the Russian government on March 18, 2020. Despite the COVID-related restrictions,

some sectors of the Russian economy—notably, the construction sector—continued to operate. Since the majority of Uzbek migrants whom we interviewed worked in the construction sector, they quickly assisted their unemployed co-villagers, providing them with temporary jobs and accommodation at construction sites. In cases when it was impossible to find jobs, villagers collected money, pooled their resources and provided food products to community members who needed them. These mutual aid practices were possible owing to the extension of village-level social norms, expectations and obligations that created a strong intragroup solidarity among migrants.

UZBEK ETHNIC ENCLAVE IN ISTANBUL

In this section, we provide empirical examples of Uzbek migrants' patterns of residence and adaptation strategies in Istanbul. Kumkapi, the most ethnically and culturally diverse quarter of the Fatih district, is now a primary hub for the Uzbek migrant community in Istanbul. Considered home to Armenian and Greek minorities for centuries, Kumkapi's ethnic composition began to rapidly change with the emigration of those minorities during the 1950s and the settlement of internal migrants from various parts of Turkey (Biehl, 2014). Thanks to the neighboring shopping areas of Laleli, the Kumkapi quarter started attracting international migrants from countries ranging from Moldova to Pakistan, from Syria to Senegal in the subsequent decades. But, recently, Kumkapi has become a predominantly Uzbek quarter (with African-dominant adjoining streets), where thousands of Uzbek migrant workers reside and work. Like many migrant communities that have established their own enclave economies centered around shipping companies, ethnic restaurants and hairdressers (Biehl, 2014; Şaul, 2013; Yükseser, 2004), Uzbek migrants have also built their own economic infrastructure. The existence of such an enclave not only provides affordable and easily accessible services, but also serves as spaces for socializing and place-making.

Accordingly, Kumkapi, in the words of many Uzbek migrants we encountered there, is an “Uzbek *mahalla*,” where it is possible to spot hundreds of Uzbek migrants on the streets and almost everyone, even local Turks and Kurds, speaks or understands the Uzbek language. There are numerous Uzbek cafés and restaurants and many businesses involving Uzbek migrants. It is quite easy for Uzbek (as well as other) migrants to find accommodation in Kumkapi, which typically involves sharing an

apartment with up to 10 to 15 other people. Uzbeks who live in other districts of Istanbul come to Kumkapi during weekends in order to meet and socialize with their friends in Uzbek cafés. Therefore, many newly arrived migrants stay in shared apartments in Kumkapi, undergoing their initial adaptation to the Turkish labor market. The emergence of an Uzbek *mahalla* in Kumkapi can be explained by the vicinity to the shopping areas of Laleli (frequented by a large number of shuttle traders from Uzbekistan) with its informal employment possibilities and the availability of cheap accommodation in the quarter. In addition, the availability of cargo services in the area means that during their holidays Uzbek migrants working in other parts of Istanbul can shop in the neighborhood and send their garments and remittances to their home countries directly from the Kumkapi area. Gradually, this led to a growing number of Uzbek cafés and businesses owned by and employing Uzbek migrants. Consequently, this recent transformation of Kumkapi into an Uzbek enclave led to the emergence of an informal adaptation and social control infrastructure, where it is possible to receive information about accommodation and jobs, meet new people and join different networks, learn how to navigate the immigration rules and gather information and rumors about Uzbek migrants living in Istanbul (Fig. 3.3).

During our fieldwork in Istanbul, we primarily focused on a number of Uzbek migrant hotspots in Kumkapi, where it is possible to find a large number of Uzbeks. Although there are many Uzbek dining places



Fig. 3.3 Kumkapi—Uzbek ethnic enclave in Istanbul’s Fatih district

in and around Kumkapi, the most popular and well-attended place among Central Asian migrants is O'zbekim, a restaurant presumably owned by a well-known Uzbek singer Yulduz Usmonova. At O'zbekim, we observed that this restaurant is more than a dining place where migrants eat pilaf (a festive Uzbek dish), socialize, date and celebrate birthdays, exchange the latest news in their migrant life, share and ask around for potential jobs and accommodation opportunities and spread gossip and rumors about abusive *shirkats* and exploitative employers. The Golden Sky Hotel is another key Uzbek hotspot in Kumkapi, providing accommodation primarily for Uzbek shuttle traders who travel between Tashkent and Istanbul on a weekly basis. While shuttle traders typically buy garments in Istanbul and then take them to Uzbekistan to sell in local markets, on their way to Istanbul they bring Uzbek goods and products, such as dried fruits, rice, cigarettes, *nos* (Uzbek snuff), sausages and spices among others, items in high demand among Uzbek migrants. Given its dual role, both as accommodation and an Uzbek product distribution hub, the Golden Sky Hotel was almost always full of Uzbeks.

In addition to these hotspots, Uzbek migrants also had their informal social service facilities in Kumkapi, such as a health clinic, pharmacy and kindergarten, where migrants could receive treatment from Uzbek health professionals, buy Uzbek medicines and leave their children with Uzbek babysitters. There was also one mosque located in the middle of Kumkapi, which Uzbek migrants not only attended for daily prayers, but also received services such as *nikah* (religious marriage) and religious healing. In addition, many companies located in the neighborhood offer cargo services to Central Asian countries. Quite often, when passing by these cargo companies, one can see several Uzbek migrants, predominantly women, sitting inside the cargo office and talking about their daily lives and problems. Some Uzbek migrants speak loudly and angrily on their phones, often complaining about their financial problems (Fig. 3.4).

One of the noteworthy features of Kumkapi is that it serves both as a labor market site and a residential area for many Uzbek migrants. While walking through the streets of Kumkapi, it is possible to see many advertisements for jobs and shared accommodation written in the Uzbek language. Accommodation in shared apartments is a widespread practice among migrants, where up to 15 Uzbek migrants share one apartment. Some apartments are male or female only, while others are mixed: common facilities such as the kitchen and bathroom are shared by both genders, but individual rooms are male or female only. The

resulted from the fact that Uzbek labor migration to Istanbul was not based on chain migration involving a large number of people from one village or town in Uzbekistan all migrating to Istanbul. Instead, village or town origin ties prevalent in Moscow were not strong in Istanbul; hence, many migrants did not share a common village or town origin. This suggests that migrants did not feel village pressure or face gossip or other social sanctions when they organized their livelihood strategies in Istanbul. These differences in Uzbek migrants' livelihoods in Moscow versus Istanbul are captured by Juma (32, male, Uzbek migrant), who worked in both cities:

Even though we [Uzbek migrants] work and live abroad, our actions and decisions are still influenced by *mahalliychilik* (localism). For example, when I worked in Moscow, I could rely on my fellow villagers' support when I faced problems. There were many people from our village working in Moscow. But after I received a *zapret* (entry ban), I could not return to Russia and, therefore, came to Istanbul hoping that I would earn more here. Unfortunately, I faced many problems here with *shirkats* and employers. But the worst thing here in Istanbul is that you have nobody to rely on when you are in some urgent trouble. Of course, you can find thousands of Uzbeks on the streets of Kumkapi, but they are not from my village and they don't care if you ask for help. There is no unity among Uzbek people even though we have same ethnicity (*millat*). People help only if you are from the same village or *mahalla*.

These observations were confirmed in our daily observations of migrants' daily life in Kumkapi. Having a shared village or town origin seems to represent an important source of social responsibility and solidarity in migrants' life trajectories. While walking through the streets of Kumkapi, we came into contact with many Uzbek migrants who originated from different regions and districts of Uzbekistan. Despite our efforts to identify a pattern of chain migration during our numerous fieldwork trips to Istanbul, we found that village and kinship networks were not prevalent in Kumkapi in the sense that only a small number of migrants hailed from the same village or town. This lack of ethnic solidarity and support networks was especially visible in migrants' daily lives. Even though up to 15 Uzbek migrants shared one apartment, there was little sense of solidarity when one tenant encountered problems or needed urgent help due to an illness, a lack of money or conflicts with abusive employers or *shirkats* (Fig. 3.5).



Fig. 3.5 An informal prayer room in Kumkapi where Uzbek migrants pray and get religious healing services

Another factor that contributed to the lack of solidarity was the perception—real or imagined—that agents of the Uzbek State Security Service (SNB) were collecting information about the daily lives and religious practices of Uzbek migrants in Kumkapi. Because Uzbekistan has an authoritarian regime which utilizes coercive strategies and extensive surveillance to control its citizens’ religious activities, there was little trust within the Uzbek migrant community in Istanbul. This is illustrated in the following interview excerpt:

There are many Uzbek SNB [Uzbek State Security Service] agents wandering the streets of Kumkapi. They dress like typical migrants and some of them even have beards. They do so deliberately in order to hide their identity and thereby collect information about migrants who read *namaz* (prayers). SNB agents specifically search people linked to ISIS and send people to Syria. There are also many migrants who committed a crime in Uzbekistan and escaped to Istanbul. SNB agents also hunt for them. As a result, everyone is afraid when talking to other Uzbeks they do not know well. In short, no one trusts anyone here and the more you approach Uzbeks, the more trouble you face. (Shunqor, 39, male migrant from Uzbekistan)

We also experienced these fears and suspicions during our fieldwork in Kumkapi. For instance, when we approached Uzbek migrants without gatekeepers to the community, individuals would typically refuse to interact with us. Even if they talked with us, they were quite cautious and reluctant to share their personal stories. The following interview excerpt also illustrates this:

I think those who have worked in Turkey for five or six years will be checked [when they return to] Uzbekistan. Their phones are checked. So, you should not “like” different kinds of videos [on social media]. Then, one should not download religious things [content on their smartphones]. When I returned from Russia [to Uzbekistan], I was called and interrogated. Here, I pray, learn the Arabic alphabet and keep fasting. Here, religious lectures at mosques are a free choice. But, I have to be careful to openly talk about these things to people I do not know, especially if they are from Uzbekistan. (Saida, 29, female migrant from Uzbekistan)

The lack or absence of tight-knit Uzbek migrant communities also serves to empower individuals in terms of exerting less social control and

pressure. This is especially true in relation to [divorced] female migrants who experienced domestic violence and *mahalla* pressure in Uzbekistan and came to Istanbul in search of opportunities for a better life. While in Uzbekistan their choices and dating strategies were constrained by local social norms and traditions, in Istanbul they found themselves in a new social environment providing them more agency to make choices and freely organize their personal lives. Given the fact that the vast majority of Uzbek migrants in Turkey are female, male migrants were unable to influence Uzbek women's choices. This was not the case in Moscow, where Uzbek male migrants had more control over the lives of female migrants (Eraliev & Heusala, 2021). Istanbul thus offered more agency to female migrants vis-à-vis male migrants. Paradoxically, even though Turkey is viewed as a Muslim-majority country with persistent gender hierarchies and male-dominated gender norms (Akyüz & Sayan-Cengiz, 2016; Ün, 2019), for many Uzbek female migrants we interviewed in Istanbul, Turkey represented a place of greater agency and opportunity than that available in Russia. This situation led to mixed feelings among migrants. Many male migrants we encountered complained about “spoiled” Uzbek women, stating that Uzbek women preferred to have Turkish male partners, as described by Murod (42, male, Uzbek migrant):

Unfortunately, many Uzbek women who come to Turkey are becoming “spoiled” after a few months. Back in Uzbekistan, they were under *mahalla* and family control. But here we have no *mahalla*, women are on their own and do what they want. Turks have more money than us and can buy our women.

But this perspective is not shared by Iroda (36, female, Uzbek migrant) who believes that only a small number of Uzbek women enter into relationships with Turks, while the majority of women try to avoid any romantic relationships:

There are all kinds of people here. The purpose of coming [to Turkey] is the same for everyone: to make money, but everyone makes money in different ways. There are also bad, filthy women. Even good women are considered bad because of them. As a result, many Uzbek men in Turkey think that most Uzbek women are bad and “spoiled” and gossip about

us. The way local Turkish men behave towards us also may give such an impression. For example, on the streets, they [Turkish men] think you are one of them, and they try to flirt with you. There are many Turks who walk after you, suggesting that you have some tea or get to know one another. I had experienced the same thing. I chased him away, saying “*yürü git!*” The culture is different here, men are impudent. Even though they have never met this woman before, they would just come up and suggest getting to know one another. Maybe they think we Uzbek women are foreigners and we do not have anyone.

The lack of social solidarity and social safety nets among Uzbek migrants in Turkey became particularly discernible during the COVID-19 pandemic. Like many countries around the world, Turkey also introduced strict lockdown measures in April 2020 that lasted several months. This meant that many Uzbek migrants lost their jobs and had to remain indoors due to strict quarantine measures. Unlike Moscow where migrants relied on their village and kinship networks (i.e., digital *mahalla*) during the lockdown period, these fallback mechanisms were not available in Istanbul. This vacuum was filled in by mosques and Turkish employers who expressed their solidarity and offered various types of financial and in-kind support to migrants. These processes were confirmed by our fieldwork observations from July through August 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, when we visited shared apartments in Kumkapi and Aksaray asking migrants about their experiences during the lockdown.

To conclude, Moscow and Istanbul represent two different migrant lifeworlds in terms of organizing interpersonal and transnational relations and identities. The empirical examples presented here show that the existence of a separate ethnic enclave and the concentration of a large number of co-ethnic migrants in a specific locality do not necessarily translate into tight-knit communities with a strong degree of social control and solidarity. Rather, smartphone-mediated digital communities may produce more social responsibility and solidarity. These insights are instructive when we attempt to understand the role of patterns of residence and their impact on the modes of migrant incorporation into the host society and labor market.

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Documentation and Legalization Arenas in Moscow and Istanbul

INTRODUCTION

During our ethnographic fieldwork in Istanbul—in the Kumkapi neighborhood where the majority of Uzbek migrant workers reside and work—we encountered many Uzbek migrants who were compelled to reroute their migration destination from Russia to Turkey following the introduction of the entry ban legislation in Russia in 2013 and 2014. Since that ban, Turkey has become a popular destination since Uzbeks can travel visa-free and can work and reside there without any immigration documents. One of the primary factors contributing to these new migratory trends is the relatively liberal migration regime in Turkey, where authorities tacitly accept cheap and undocumented migrant labor. As such, more than 90% of the migrants we met during our fieldwork did not have a work permit (*çalışma izni*). Even those migrants who identified themselves as “legal” only possessed a residence permit (*oturma izni*), which only grants a holder the right to remain in Turkey, although they are not legally entitled to work. Despite their undocumented status, Uzbek migrants enjoyed relatively unimpeded mobility in the Istanbul since Turkish police and immigration officials turned a blind eye to undocumented migrants. These observations allowed us to infer that informality represents a way of life for many Uzbek migrants in Istanbul.

Our Istanbul observations sharply contrasted with developments in Russia, where authorities introduced draconian immigration control laws

and punitive measures in order to combat undocumented migration, enacting more than 50 laws and regulations between 2012 and 2015. The most punitive measure was the introduction of an entry ban (*zapret na v'ezd*) for three to ten years, a sanction that applied to foreign citizens who committed two or more administrative offenses (e.g., violations to the length of stay, migration laws, employment laws, traffic rules, etc.). In mid-2016, Olga Kirillova, head of the General Administration for Migration Issues of the Ministry of the Interior of Russia, reported that the total number of foreign citizens banned from entry approached 2 million people (Interfax, 2016). The vast majority of these migrants were citizens of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (Troitskii, 2016). In addition to legislative barriers, migrants must contend with corrupt state officials. Today, anyone walking on the streets of large Russian cities (e.g., Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, etc.) can easily witness police officers checking the documents of Central Asian migrants. This is particularly visible on the Moscow metro, where police officers frequently stand at the top of escalators to stop migrants (Round & Kuznetsova, 2016). Thus, migrants in Russia are compelled to minimize their visibility in public places in order to avoid hungry Russian police officers and immigration officials often seeking reasons to extort bribes from migrants (Dave, 2014; Urinboyev, 2020).

This brief overview of Turkish and Russian immigration controls and measures demonstrates that Russia relies heavily on punitive measures to manage labor migration, while Turkey adopted a laissez-faire approach by loosely enforcing migration laws. If we view these differences at face value, we may conclude that fewer undocumented migrants exist in Russia than in Turkey. However, in Russia, it is nearly impossible for migrants to remain “legal” due to the legal uncertainty, arbitrary bureaucratic practices and weak rule of law (Kubal, 2016; Reeves, 2013). As a result, legal restrictions and punitive measures further contribute to the increase in the number of undocumented migrants. Migrants learn to sidestep restrictions by buying “new passports” or “clean fake” immigration papers from the numerous “legalizing firms” operating in Russia (Reeves, 2013). They also limit their return trips home and concentrate instead on one long stay, during which they attempt to earn as much as possible, understanding that this might be their only opportunity to do so. Thus, the frequency of border crossings has decreased, and many entry-banned migrants have begun overstaying in Russia without valid documents, thereby increasing the share of undocumented migrants in

the labor market. Recent statistics have confirmed this trend, revealing that more than 1 million people have overstayed their visas and are illegally present in the territory of the Russian Federation (Yushkovskaya, 2021).

Unlike in Russia, Turkish authorities take a more pragmatic and commercial approach to undocumented migration. Migrants who overstay in Turkey can choose to avoid an entry ban by paying a fine (*ceza parası*) when leaving the Turkish territory, a legally accepted practice enabling migrants to return to the country several months later. While Turkish authorities regularly conduct raids to apprehend and expel undocumented migrants (VOA Turk, 2019), these raids are rather unsystematic given that they focus on migrants from select countries (e.g., Afghans, Iranians and Pakistanis) and remain incompatibly small given the scale of undocumented migration. As a result, a large proportion of migrants can and continue to reside and work in the country without immigration documents. Thus, comparing Russian and Turkish migration regimes shows that, despite their varying approaches to immigration control, both countries have arrived at similar migration outcomes, a process which we empirically illustrate in this chapter.

This comparison of Russian and Turkish migration regimes also fits with broader discussions in the “migrant illegality” literature. A wide swath of research explores how immigration laws produce various forms and categories of “migrant illegality” (Calavita, 1998; De Genova, 2002; Goldring et al., 2009; Jordan & Düvell, 2002; Kubal, 2013; Menjívar, 2006; Ngai, 2014; Willen, 2007). For instance, De Genova (2002) argues that immigration laws should be viewed as a deliberate strategy nation-states deploy to produce cheap and legally unprotected undocumented migrants enabling their inclusion in the labor market under the condition of “enforced and protracted vulnerability”. In her study of immigration laws in Spain, Calavita (1998) also found that immigration laws were written and enforced in a way making it nearly impossible for immigrants to retain legal status over time. This implies that Spanish immigration laws primarily aim to control the lives of immigrants rather than control immigration. Thus, migrant illegality represents not simply a form of legal status and a sociopolitical condition, but also “a mode of being-in-the-world” (Willen, 2007).

The insights developed within non-Western migration contexts suggest that an undocumented status is not a “dead end”, but rather may also be a conscious adaptation strategy. The growing body of literature focusing

on migrants' experiences in non-Western migrant-receiving countries argues that undocumented migrants' experiences are not uniform everywhere, but rather contingent upon the sociopolitical context, legal environment, economic system and various cultural factors (Anderson & Hancilová, 2011; Dave, 2014; Fargues, 2009; Garcés-Mascareñas, 2010; Killias, 2010; Urinboyev, 2020). The bulk of these studies maintain that an undocumented status may actually enable migrants to escape the constraints imposed by immigration laws and policies. Olivia Killias (2010), through the narrative of Arum, an Indonesian undocumented migrant worker in Malaysia, describes how working legally leads to greater subordination and exploitation, whereby migration through illegal channels represented a strategic choice and enabled Arun to circumvent the "legal", state-sanctioned migration scheme. Examples from the Gulf States also demonstrate how an undocumented status does not necessarily lead to exploitation and subordination (Fargues, 2011; Fargues & Shah, 2017; Pessoa et al., 2014). Fargues and Shah, in their edited volume *Skillful Survivals: Irregular Migration to the Gulf* (2017), show that for many migrants working in the Gulf states undocumentedness is preferred, even though such migrants understand that it may lead to arrest, a jail term and deportation. They prefer this status because undocumented migrants enjoy greater freedom over their working lives and can make independent choices, whereas migrants working legally typically remain tethered to one specific employer for a fixed sum of money unable to move between jobs. Thus, migrant "undocumentedness" or "illegality" does not automatically deprive migrants of their agency, but may actually entice them to seek alternatives, thereby allowing them to avoid any constraints imposed by draconian immigration laws and policies (e.g., Donato & Armenta, 2011; Garcés-Mascareñas, 2010; Urinboyev & Polese, 2016).

The above considerations thus lead us to suggest a context-sensitive analysis of migration regimes, analyses which account for the gap between migration outputs (migration laws and policies) and migration outcomes (actual implementation, or what happens on the ground). Overemphasizing the role and impact of migration outputs may result in underestimating the interactions and struggles that take place within specific migration arenas. In other words, we argue that only focusing on migration outputs cannot satisfactorily explain "what happens on the ground" given the existence of a variety of actors and interests surrounding a migration industry. This task becomes especially important when we

comparatively investigate the migration regimes of different countries, particularly those with similar migration outputs, but different sociolegal and political contexts, a factor potentially leading to different migration outcomes. In what follows, we highlight these processes through empirical data on Uzbek migrants' daily encounters with the host country's legal environments in Russia and Turkey.

MIGRANTS' DOCUMENTATION AND LEGALIZATION STRATEGIES IN RUSSIA

As we described in Chapter 2, Russian authorities are continuously tightening migration laws and further developing the border control infrastructure. As of January 1, 2015, *patents* (work permits) became the primary channel for legal employment for all foreign workers (including CIS citizens) entering Russia under the visa-free regime, regardless of whether they worked for an organization, an individual entrepreneur or an individual. To obtain a *patent*, migrants must complete numerous requirements within 30 days of their arrival. These include (1) holding a migration card received at the border upon which the purpose of entry to the Russian Federation must be indicated as "work"; (2) proof of residence registration; (3) a certificate verifying that the individual has passed a Russian-language, law and history exam; (4) a medical certificate clearing them of drug dependency and infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and HIV among others; (5) proof of medical insurance obtained through their employers or purchased from a private insurance company approved by the regional government; (6) a receipt indicating payment of the *patent* fees and the first month's taxes and (7) a translated and notarized copy of a valid passport. *Patents* are typically issued for a period of between 1 and 12 months, after which migrants should exit the Russian territory and reenter on a new migration card. After obtaining a *patent*, migrants are required to pay a monthly fee for the *patent*, the amount of which depends on the region in which the migrant works [e.g., 5000 rubles (US\$80) for Moscow].

While the introduction of a new *patent* system was put forward as a liberalization to the Russian immigration legislation (Romodanovski & Mukomel, 2015), in reality it offered little help to migrants aiming to legalize their status. For newly arrived migrants with little or no money, it is exceptionally difficult to fulfill these requirements within the 30-day period, both from a bureaucratic and a financial standpoint. Given that the

majority of migrants entering Russia are not well-educated, do not speak Russian, have poor knowledge of laws and originate from the rural areas of Central Asia, it is highly unlikely that they can satisfy these cumbersome legalization procedures. Financially, even those migrants who manage to overcome these challenges often subsequently fail to maintain their legal status. For example, many migrants initially obtain an authentic *patent* and work legally. But, after a few months and owing to the costly monthly *patent* fee or delays in salary payments, migrants cannot afford to continue paying the monthly *patent* fee and begin buying fake *patent* payment receipts from intermediaries. When stopped by police officers, migrants typically present these fake receipts. This strategy often works, since police officers do not have the capacity to check the authenticity of various receipts. Such trends are confirmed by the statistics, which reveal that the number of migrants in Russia significantly exceeds the number of officially issued *patents*. For example, in 2019, 1.7 million *patents* were issued (Izvestiya, 2021), while the number of migrant workers in Russia was estimated at between 9 and 18 million depending on the source (Abashin, 2016; Florinskaya & Mkrтчan, 2020). Such examples indicate that Russian migration control policies have resulted in additional undocumented migrants rather than simplifying procedures intended to legalize the foreign labor force.

To maintain the validity of their *patents*, migrants must not only make monthly payments, but also must renew their residence registration every three months. The primary problem with acquiring residence registration (referred to as “*registratsiia*” in migrants’ everyday language) is that migrants cannot typically find an apartment and a landlord willing to register him/her at that specific address. This is especially difficult in larger cities such as Moscow and Saint Petersburg, where the majority of migrants are concentrated. According to the so-called law on rubber apartments adopted in 2013, it is illegal to register a large number of residents at the same address. Furthermore, given that a migrant’s average monthly salary falls between 15,000 and 25,000 rubles (US\$250–400), it is unlikely that migrants can afford to rent an apartment on their own (that is, a modest two- to three-room apartment), which in the suburbs of Moscow typically costs around 30,000–40,000 rubles (US\$450–650) per month. Therefore, migrants normally rent a “*koiko mesto*” (a mattress-sized sleeping space) for 4000–5000 rubles per month (US\$60–80) in an apartment shared by up to 15–20 people. This practice itself puts migrants in an illegal residence situation since they must buy a bogus

residence registration at an address where they do not actually reside (Reeves, 2013). Although migrants do not live at these places, such registration addresses exist somewhere in the city and can be found in the official database when checked by the police. This reality remains an open secret among both migrants and state officials in Russia. Thus, when stopped by the police, migrants are vulnerable to being caught and fined for violating residence laws. Under such circumstances, it is crucial that migrants act street smart and “perform” residence at their fictitious address, by knowing how to get there, which metro stations are situated nearby and general details about the building. Having a “legal” residence largely depends on migrants’ street smarts and their ability to play by the rules of the game. Should they fail to perform residence at the fictitious address, migrants offer bribes to police officers, a strategy widely employed by migrants in Russia (Schenk, 2021; Urinboyev, 2020).

As discussed above, Russian laws and regulations concerning the residence and employment of foreign citizens remain complex, volatile and arbitrarily enforced, creating numerous legal inconsistencies and ambiguities. As a result, most migrants can barely follow and understand the bureaucratic procedures and legislative changes. Furthermore, migrants typically rely on their social networks and intermediaries as sources of information regarding legislative changes, information often based on rumors and false knowledge. Even lawyers from nongovernmental human rights organizations find it difficult to fully understand Russia’s immigration laws and bureaucratic procedures (Malakhov and Simon, 2017). This also rings true for migration service officers, who begin their workday by checking the latest news and amendments to immigration laws (Nikiforova & Brednikova, 2018). Consequently, the ambiguous and arbitrary nature of immigration laws and practices generates an immigration legal regime that pushes masses of migrant workers into domains of undocumentedness, rendering shadow economy employment the only viable option. These processes are particularly visible in the three court cases below, all of which illustrate the legal experiences of Uzbek migrants in Moscow.

Case 1: Maneuvering Around the Legal System and Performing Legality

On October 26, 2018, migration service officers, in collaboration with the police, raided an apartment in the north of Moscow, where Alisher

(male, 42) and his 12 co-tenants, all Uzbek migrants, lived. The decision to raid the apartment followed numerous complaints from Russian neighbors who lived in the same apartment building and were disturbed by the noises and late-night routines of Alisher and his co-tenants. Alisher usually managed to solve such problems by bribing the police and migration service officials, but this time they refused his bribe given the presence of a high-level superior. Since 13 people lived in the apartment, the police asked them to show their residence registrations. Neither Alisher nor the other 12 tenants were registered in the apartment, quite obviously indicating that all of them were in breach of the residency rules. As a result, police took all of them to the police station, telling them that they would go to trial the next day and then be deported to Uzbekistan for violating migration laws. In truth, all 13 migrants possessed a legally valid *patent*, but they were living at an address different from that indicated in their residence registrations.

Before placing them in a holding cell, the police made them sign several documents. Alisher repeatedly asked the police to let them read the documents they must sign, but the police used physical violence and forced them to sign all of the documents. After signing them, the migrant workers were transferred to a cell with no beds. Since the following morning was Saturday, they had to sleep on the floor for two more nights until Monday morning. The police provided no food or water, forcing Alisher and his friends to ask their co-villagers to bring them food and drinks.

On Monday morning, the police took all 13 migrants to court in a car designed for 5 people. However, the judge postponed the trial, explaining that the documents submitted by the police were insufficient to issue a deportation order. Back at the police station, the police again forced Alisher and his friends to sign additional documents, including blank forms, without providing any explanation to them. Since they were all under the impression that they would be deported regardless, the migrant workers signed all of the documents simply to avoid further harassment and violence.

During the next hearing, the judge asked if the migrants needed an interpreter. Because Alisher is fluent in Russian, he declined the interpretation service and stated that he could speak on behalf of all of the migrants, stating: "We don't want to be deported. We are working in Russia, not stealing. We all have a real work permit that we received from the migration service in Sakharovo". Nevertheless, the judge issued

a deportation order referring to the fact that they lived at an address where they were not registered. According to the court decision, they were given ten days to leave Russian territory on their own and to pay a fine of 5000 rubles (US\$80). They were also provided with an additional document in case they wanted to appeal the court decision within the next ten days. After filing some paperwork, the police released all 13 migrants and told them to pay the fine and leave the country as soon as possible.

While all of the migrant workers decided to stay in Russia regardless of the court decision, Alisher took a different route—appealing the court’s decision—a strategy rarely chosen by migrant workers in Russia. Owing to his extensive network, Alisher was able to find a lawyer who had just launched his legal career and was therefore eager to win his first court case. After reviewing the court decision, the lawyer advised Alisher that he should ask for an interpreter and not say a word without an interpreter. Most importantly, the lawyer advised Alisher to change his story and tell the judge that he did not actually live in the apartment where he was caught, but explain that he was visiting his friends as a guest. Alisher was also advised to reveal all of the details regarding how they were badly treated by the police and forced to sign numerous documents during their five-day detention at the police station.

Alisher followed his lawyer’s instructions precisely. As a result, the new evidence and narrative changed the course of events. Since Alisher skillfully played the role of “guest” at the apartment where he was caught, the judge concluded that there was no legal basis for his deportation, thereby reversing the previous court’s decision. These developments allowed Alisher to return to a documented status owing to his network and his ability to perform “legality” during the trial, while the other 12 migrants, living under the exact same set of circumstances, had to resort to “illegality”.

Case 2: Overcoming Legal Barriers Through Informal Channels

On October 25, 2015, Musa (male, 28), a taxi driver in Moscow, returned to an apartment shared by 13 migrants. When entering the apartment building, Musa noticed that two police officers were following him, but he did not know that they were planning to raid the apartment and catch him and his co-tenants for possible deportation. Attempting to avoid them, Musa quickly took the elevator to the eleventh floor and quietly

entered his apartment. Musa warned all of the tenants that he saw two hungry police officers who might come to inspect them. As expected, half an hour later, the doorbell rang and two police officers showed up saying that they came to check their documents. Since Musa and all of the other tenants were registered at a different address, it was obvious that they were in breach of residence registration rules, a sufficient justification to take all of them to the police station. Musa, like all of the other tenants, did not have a *patent* so he took all of his savings with him so that he could later bribe the police.

After Musa and the other tenants reached the police station, the police took all of their documents and belongings including their cell phones and placed the tenants in a holding cell, telling them that they would be deported to Uzbekistan after their trial. Musa and all of the other migrant workers spent two nights in the cell without any food. Since their cell phones were also confiscated by the police, they could not reach out to their friends to seek help. Knowing that all of the police officers take bribes from migrant workers, Musa offered a bribe amounting to 60,000 rubles (~US\$1000) to the police officers. But, because the case had already been officially registered, the police officers were not in a position to accept the bribe.

On the third day, Musa and 12 other migrants were taken to a court in the north of Moscow for a hearing that lasted only ten minutes. Interestingly, although all of the migrants were undocumented and caught at the same apartment, the court's decision was different in the case of Musa and two other migrants. While ten migrants were ordered to leave Russian territory within ten days on their own and to pay a fine of 5000 rubles (US\$80), Musa and two migrants received an administrative expulsion order and a five-year entry ban. Based on this decision, Musa and two migrants were sent to SUVSIG (a special temporary detention facility for foreign citizens) in the Moscow province, where they were held for 12 days until their deportation to Uzbekistan. Musa could not understand why 13 migrants with a similar undocumented status received different decisions: the judge was kind to ten migrants and was tough on Musa and two other migrants. The former could appeal the court's decision or at least stay illegally in Russia, while the latter had no recourse to negotiate their stay. After spending 12 days at SUVSIG, Musa, along with many other Uzbek migrants, were taken to Sheremetyevo airport in handcuffs. As Musa explained, "At the airport, everybody was looking at us like we were criminals and we felt quite badly about it. Our only

mistake was to come to Russia and work *halal* (honestly). We did not kill anyone or steal anything; we simply did not live at the address stated on our registration. Unfortunately, it was enough for them to treat us like criminals”. The deportation took place in mid-November 2015.

Shortly after his arrival in Uzbekistan, Musa began exploring different possibilities for returning to Russia. Since Musa worked as a taxi driver in Moscow, he knew a few intermediaries who were well-connected with influential people at the Main Directorate for Migration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation (GUVM). One such intermediary was Shuhrat, who knew Zarina, a high-ranking official at GUVM with access to a government database. Shuhrat, with the help of Zarina, temporarily changed Musa’s entry ban status to “pending due to appeal” for a fee (i.e., a bribe) of US\$800. Musa also had to quickly renew his passport since it had an “administrative expulsion” stamp, which would reveal his real status upon entry to Russia. Thanks to these informal strategies, Musa was able to reenter Russia within one month of his deportation. The last time we met him in November 2019, he was working at a meat warehouse with a fake Kyrgyz passport, allowing him to avoid frequent document checks.

Case 3: Following the Law Honestly, But Ultimately Losing in the End

On Friday, May 31, 2019, Gulom (male, 38), a taxi driver, was returning to Moscow city from his friend’s birthday party, which took place in Zelenograd. Because Gulom liked vodka, he knew that he would be unable to drive when returning to Moscow. Thus, he took his friend Abror, so that he could drive on the return journey to Moscow. As planned, after the party, Abror was behind the wheel, while Gulom fell asleep after consuming much alcohol. While Abror had a driving license, he was an inexperienced driver and did not know how to navigate a traffic jam. After engaging the clutch too many times, the car stalled. Abror woke Gulom up and asked for help. Gulom noticed that Abror was driving in the wrong direction—not toward Moscow city, but heading toward Moscow province instead. So, they both pushed the car in the opposite direction (toward Moscow). Since the car was not moving, Gulom had to call to his friends for help. But, Gulom’s phone battery died, and he then sat in his car searching for a charger. Suddenly, a traffic police officer showed up and asked for their documents. The traffic police

officer also asked whether Gulom had consumed any alcoholic beverages. Gulom immediately told the police officer that he was not driving, but that his friend Abror was driving the car. They both showed their documents to the police, but the police did not believe them.

Gulom insisted that car was broken down due to problems with the clutch, but the police officer continued accusing him of drunk driving. It was quite obvious that the car was inoperable because the clutch was not working. Nevertheless, the police officer took Gulom to a nearby hospital for a blood alcohol test. There, Gulom was asked to blow into a tube, which showed a blood alcohol content (BAC) of 0.3–0.4%. To cite one for drunk driving, the BAC needs to reach at least 0.5%. So, the police officer forced Gulom to blow into a tube over and over again, but it never registered above 0.4%. In Gulom's retelling, the police officer's zeal was because his salary could increase significantly if he could prove that Gulom was driving under the influence of alcohol. For this reason, the police officer continued to accuse Gulom of drunk driving. Giving up on the alcohol test, the police officer took Gulom to his patrol car and began issuing a ticket. Realizing that the police officer would not let him go easily, Gulom offered him a bribe of 3000 rubles (US\$40). The police officer refused the bribe, even after Gulom raised it to 6000 rubles (US\$80). Despite Gulom's protestations, the police officer filled in the citation for drunk driving and called a tow truck to impound Gulom's car. After completing the ticket, the police officer asked Gulom to sign it without explaining anything to him. When reading the citation, Gulom noticed that he was accused of drunk driving and that the citation was signed by two witnesses who had never appeared at the site. In other words, the police officer himself made up the names and contact details for two witnesses and signed on behalf of them. Despite Gulom's protests, the police officer forced him to sign the citation. After getting his signature, the police officer left Gulom and his friend in the middle of the road at midnight. This incident led to a series of court appearances, during which Gulom challenged the traffic police officer and eventually won the case. Yet, the final outcome led to a three-year entry ban, as Gulom narrates below:

The next morning, I went to the traffic police station. There they said that my driving license was suspended due to drunk driving and I cannot drive anymore. They also gave me a notice for my upcoming trial. Afterwards, I went to Sergiev Posad (Moscow province) in order to get my car back. An

old man who works there asked me which car was mine. When I showed him, he told me that the car was not running. So, I had one witness that the car was inoperable. This was important, because the policeman wrote in the citation that he caught me while I was driving the car. Then, I paid a 7000-ruble fine (~US\$110) in order to get my car back from the impound. I brought a mechanic with me to fix my car. Afterwards, he fixed it and we drove my car home.

Then, the trial took place on the 14th of May. But, the traffic police officer did not come to the hearing. The judge read what was written on the citation and asked if I had any objections. I objected to all of it and told the judge the entire story. Then, she (the judge) told me to bring Abror, my friend who was driving the car on that day, for the next hearing. The judge was a good person and she scheduled the next hearing for the 28th of June.

On that day, I brought Abror, but again the police officer did not show up. I told the whole story again, just like I told it during the previous hearing. I knew that she was verifying if the story remained the same. Abror also explained what happened and how the police officer manipulated everything. Since the police officer was not present, the judge had to schedule another trial date and assured us that he would be present the next time.

On the 10th of July, we arrived at the court. This time, the judge did not ask us to retell the story. The judge also asked us whether there were two witnesses while the police was writing the citation. I told her that except for me, Abror and two traffic police officers, there were no witnesses. But, in order to follow the legal procedures, the police officer faked and wrote in two random persons' names and contact details. Based on our account, the judge called the numbers listed for the two witnesses, but as expected these numbers turned out to be fake. The judge was quite frustrated during the hearing, because the police officer did not come again, which meant that he did not take the judge seriously. The judge again set a new hearing date and stated that she would force the police officer to attend next time, regardless of any circumstances.

The next hearing took place on the 30th of July. The police officer was again not present. The judge asked us to wait outside for an hour. Finally, the police officer showed up. The judge made some sarcastic comments to show her frustration. She read the citation and asked the officer if everything was correct. He answered "yes". Then, the judge asked if he had any real witnesses and how he had found them. The officer said that he found the witnesses in the traffic jam travelling towards the Moscow city center at about 21.00. Since the officer was lying, I interrupted him and explained to the judge that in the evenings traffic jams always flow towards

Moscow province rather than towards Moscow city, because many people are returning home from work. The judge agreed with me and asked the officer if he had the phone numbers of the witnesses. The officer said that he wrote the numbers on the citation. The judge said that the people at those numbers did not confirm that they were witnesses. Thus, the police officer was placed in a bad situation.

Next, the judge asked the officer why he had to call a tow truck to take the car if he caught us while driving. The officer could say nothing in response. I said that I wanted to charge my phone and that's why I was sitting on the driver's side when the police officer arrived. The judge was quite tough on the officer and told him to do his job properly and not blame innocent people. She was furious that he did not come to all of the previous hearings. After ten minutes, the judge read her decision, according to which the citation was dismissed and my driving license was reinstated. I don't think I would have won the case if the police officer had come to the previous trial dates. The judge was offended and wanted to show her power over the police officer. Otherwise, I would probably have lost the case. After all, I am not a Russian citizen and, therefore, I am nobody here.

Gulom's case is illustrative of the "unrule of law" culture characterizing the Russian legal system. Despite the fact that the police officer's action caused material and psychological damage, Gulom made no further claims seeking compensation and was happy he was able to retain his driving license. This case is noteworthy not due to the fact that Gulom as a migrant won the case, but because it shows how non-legal factors affect the outcomes of legal procedures. Gulom is right in saying that the judge ruled the case in his favor not because she wanted to protect his rights, but because of her anger and frustration toward the police officer, who ignored and humiliated her several times. However, this case was not the end of Gulom's story. Six months later, when Gulom returned to Uzbekistan to visit his family, he learned that he had received an entry ban, issued due to his administrative law violation associated with drunk driving. Simply, even though the court annulled the police officer's citation, the court's final decision was not enforced and the alleged violation had already been registered in the police database, an arbitrary action which led to a three-year entry ban.

The three court cases presented above would fit well Alice in Wonderland: when maneuvering around the law (case 1: Alisher) or resorting to informal and illegal practices (case 2: Musa) keep clear of troubles,

then enthusiastically following the law and claiming your rights through legal channels will land you in trouble. This situation is not uncommon among migrant workers in Russia, reminding us of classic debates in legal consciousness where different types of legal behaviors are conceptualized under “before the law”, “with the law” and “against the law” (Ewick & Silbey, 1998), “under the law” (Fritsvold, 2009) and “around the law” (Augustine, 2019). Accordingly, arbitrary police actions, poorly enforced and contradictory court decisions and unpredictable bureaucratic practices leave migrants skeptical of the law and more accepting of informal and illegal practices.

In order to provide some empirical substance to our argument, we also provide several relevant observations. On October 27, 2019, during our fieldwork we met our old contact Bakhtiyor, an Uzbek migrant who works as an intermediary. During our chat, he told us about his friend who was caught during a raid and was awaiting an administrative expulsion from Russia to Uzbekistan. He asked us if we could help in any way to stop his friend’s deportation to Uzbekistan. We suggested that he should appeal the court decision through migration lawyers, such as Botirjon Shermuhammad or Valentina Chupik, individuals with extensive experience handling similar cases. However, Bakhtiyor laughed sarcastically and said that we were too naive to believe that the Russian legal system treats migrants fairly. Bakhtiyor added that even his powerful contact at the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) could not help his friend.

This example and many similar observations in Moscow illustrate that migrants rely on informal and illegal channels and have an exceptionally low level of trust in the legal system. As a result, unverified information circulating among migrants is more appealing to migrants than any information provided through formal channels. On August 5, 2018, we visited Tolib’s “rubber apartment” in the north of Moscow, shared by 15 migrants. While observing migrants’ conversations, we noticed that the main topic of the discussion was on the entry ban and how to navigate it through the assistance of intermediaries closely linked to migration service officials. One of the tenants in this apartment was Homid, a *registratsiy-achi* (a residence registration intermediary) who claimed that he had his entry ban removed thanks to his close contacts at the migration service. Since then, he claimed that he had helped many migrants erase their entry bans from the government database. To do so, migrants would give him US\$800 along with copies of their passport, which he then forwards to

his contact at the migration service. As an example of how powerful his connection was, he talked about the case of two migrants who tried to cheat him. Homid, through his contact, removed the entry ban of two migrants from Uzbekistan's Andijan region, who were supposed to pay US\$800 each. However, they paid only half of the agreed amount and departed to Russia by bus the next day. Following this, Homid immediately contacted his acquaintance at the migration service, asking her to reinstate their entry bans. As a result, these two migrants were denied entry to Russia when they reached the Russia–Kazakhstan border.

Homid's stories, true or not, sparked intense interest among the tenants who were looking for different ways to legalize their status in Russia, which would allow them to visit home once a year and then reenter Russia without any problems. Despite repeated calls from prominent migration lawyers in Russia, such as Botirjon Shermuhammad and Zarnigor Omonillayeva, who suggests that it is impossible to erase an entry ban from the database, many migrants we encountered continue to believe that the entry ban can be removed if the right amount of money is paid to the right person. According to Nasiba, another *registratsiyachi* operating at Moscow's Otradnoe metro station, the idea of removing an entry ban from the database is a scam. This is how she explains it:

Do you know how they are doing it? You give 50,000 rubles (US\$800) to a person and he asks his acquaintance in the migration service to suspend the entry ban for some time. During that period, the system will not show your entry ban for a period of about one and a half months. A made-up reason allows an entry ban to be suspended, a reason for which you hired a lawyer to take this case to trial. Following this, your acquaintance tells you to go to the border to leave and reenter Russia and you get a stamp from the border crossing. Then, you believe that the entry ban is removed entirely. You immediately apply for new documents like a *patent*. Some migrants manage to secure new documents during that period, some do not. Next, they reinstate your entry ban in the database. So, the ban is never entirely removed; it can be temporarily invisible when your entry ban is suspended. Thus, based on such circumstances, many migrants tend to believe that it is possible to remove an entry ban. (Nasiba, female migrant, 45)

Given various uncertainties and arbitrary law enforcement, intermediaries appear more credible in the eyes of migrants than the formal avenues to legalization. Rather than trying to become “legal”, an unrealistic and

unattainable migration status in Russia, many migrants rely on various illegal and extralegal documentation schemes run by intermediaries who operate under some sort of “protective roof” (*krysha*) provided by the police, the immigration service and border control officials (Urinboevyev, 2020). Intermediaries may consist of a broad range of individuals, such as migrants, lawyers, migrants’ associations, diaspora activists and legal and commercial firms offering documentation and legalization services which provide various fake (*fal’shivka*) and “clean fake” (*chistaya fal’shivka*) residence registrations, *patents*, temporary and permanent residence permits as well as fake Russian and Kyrgyz passports (Dave, 2014; Reeves, 2013; Ruget, 2018). This trend is substantiated by Russian government statistics, which show that the most common crimes committed by migrants are associated with document counterfeiting (Golunov, 2014).

One can easily spot numerous intermediaries (with a migrant background) in Moscow’s Kazansky railway station. This is due to the fact that *Kazansky vokzal*, situated at Komsomolskaya square, is one of nine railway stations in Moscow serving the Trans-Aral railway line (among others) departing to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Therefore, many migrants arrive from and depart to Central Asia from this specific railway station. Given the high concentration of migrant workers at *Kazansky vokzal*, many cafés serve Uzbek food and many underground printing houses produce fake immigration documents. Our informant, Nozim, who works as a *registratsiyachi* (an intermediary in residence registration) explains how migrants “legalize” their status at *Kazansky vokzal* (Fig. 4.1):

You can become “legal” if you go to *Kazansky vokzal*. If you pay, you can get a Kyrgyz passport easily. If you pay more, you can even get a much-desired Russian passport. Sometimes, it is even possible to buy a clean Uzbek passport for 7000 rubles (US\$100). It is quite easy to fake an old Uzbek passport (non-biometric). You just need to replace the photo. All of the other details remain the same and you can carry someone’s lost passport. (Nozim, male Uzbek migrant, 34)

This account was confirmed by our personal observations during our fieldwork. On August 3, 2018, Bekzod (an Uzbek migrant) invited one of the authors to accompany him to a birthday party in Moscow’s Bibirevo metro station. After the party on the way home, Bekzod accidentally lost his passport (non-biometric). Since he was drunk, he did not notice



Fig. 4.1 Document intermediaries in Moscow's Kazansky railway station

the loss immediately. However, the next morning after realizing that he had lost his passport, he immediately informed his friend Juma who was well-connected with various intermediaries at Moscow's *Kazansky vokzal*. Juma knew that all lost passports would go to Kazansky and, therefore, he contacted his acquaintance there to check whether they had received a non-biometric Uzbek passport. After checking their "database", Juma's contact confirmed that they had indeed received Bekzod's lost passport, but it was too late because the passport had already been forged and sold to someone for 7000 rubles (US\$100). Of course, Bekzod could have reported the incident to the Russian police, asking them to register his lost passport. But, given that he himself was undocumented, he decided not to approach the police, fearing that this might lead to additional troubles. Thus, Bekzod sought Juma's help to find alternative ways of becoming "legal". This time, Juma suggested that he pay 15,000 rubles (~US\$200) and obtain a fake Russian passport from his contacts at *Kazansky vokzal*, a "high-risk/high-gain legalization strategy" that would either land him in prison or in a well-paid job. Armed with a new Russian passport, Bekzod secured a job at a construction site located inside the territory of a local municipality in Moscow province. Since it was a government building, it was guarded by police and only Russian citizens were allowed to work there. Bekzod knew that this job required a daily check by police when entering the premises. But, given his ability to remain calm and confident, he managed to enter the building and later obtain a daily pass (employee ID) from the construction firm. This new employee ID not only allowed him to enter the municipality building, but also enabled him to move freely in the city since his employee ID identified him as an individual working for the municipality in Moscow province.

Given the realities described in this section, migrants understand the near impossibility of being "fully legal". Even those migrants who manage to obtain all of the required paperwork cannot be certain that they are fully "legal" and that they will not experience problems when stopped by Russian police officers and migration officials (Reeves, 2015; Round & Kuznetsova, 2016). Thus, becoming "legal" or "illegal" greatly depends on contextual factors (the time, space and circumstances of encounters with the law) and migrants' individual skills such as street smarts, knowledge of informal rules, connections and their ability to adapt to the rules of the game. Hence, the only path to becoming "legal" requires the use of various semi-legal and outright illegal practices (Dave, 2014). As such, the Russian migration regime is characterized by a punitive legal environment

and a draconian immigration control infrastructure. However, in practice, rather than regulating undocumented migration, these immigration control measures further pushed migrants into the realm of undocumentedness. This is due to the fact that Russian legal system is plagued by corruption, a weak rule of law and arbitrary enforcement (Hendley, 2009; Ledeneva, 2013; McAulley et al., 2006). In this respect, the functioning of the Russian migration regime is simply emblematic of the “unrule of law” culture in Russia (Gel’man, 2004), which is characterized by the prevalence of informal rules and norms over formal institutions. Under these circumstances, the more restrictive are the immigration laws, the broader the scale of undocumented migration in Russia.

MIGRANTS’ DOCUMENTATION AND LEGALIZATION STRATEGIES IN TURKEY

As discussed in Chapter 2, there are two primary legal instruments to consider when discussing the entry, residence and employment of foreign nationals in Turkey. First, the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (adopted on April 4, 2013, LFIP, No. 6458) is the main legal instrument regulating Turkey’s migration policy and migration processes, specifying the rules for entry to and exit from Turkey as well as clarifying the rules and conditions foreigners must observe in order to stay and obtain a residence permit (*ikamet / oturma izni*). The General Directorate of Migration Management (GDMM), established under the Ministry of Interior, is the main government body responsible for (1) implementing policies and strategies related to migration, (2) ensuring coordination between the related agencies and organizations in these matters and (3) carrying out the tasks and procedures related to foreigners’ entry into, stay in, exit and deportation from Turkey, including international protection, temporary protection and the protection of victims of human trafficking. In this respect, one of the key tasks of GDMM is to establish coordination between law enforcement units and relevant public institutions and organizations to combat irregular migration and to develop measures and monitor the implementation of measures taken to that effect (Article 104, the Law on Foreigners and International Protection). While the law emphasizes the need to combat irregular migration, it does not specify the rights of irregular migrants aside from describing detention and deportation procedures. In terms of illegal employment, there are two provisions in Article 54 stating that a deportation decision may

be issued against foreigners (1) who make a living through illegitimate means during their stay in Turkey and (2) who are identified as having worked without a work permit. This implies that a foreigner who enters or leaves Turkey or is present in Turkey while not complying with the aforementioned immigration rules (i.e., via passport, visa, residence permit and work permit legislation) is considered undocumented or irregular.

The second key legal instrument pertaining to the employment of foreigners in Turkey is the “Law on Work Permits for Foreigners” (No. 4817, 2003) and its accompanying laws and regulations. This law aims to regulate labor migration and prevent illegal employment and exploitation by outlining the legal basis for hiring foreign nationals. According to the law, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security is the sole authority responsible for issuing work permits. Work permits (*çalışma izni*) are granted for one year, then for three years and only subsequently for six years provided the individual continues working in the same industry. Although the law provides the legal grounds for employing foreign nationals in Turkey, hiring foreigners remains a complicated and expensive process. This is because foreign citizens wishing to work in Turkey cannot independently apply for a work permit. Instead, the Turkish employer must initiate the work permit application in order to hire a foreign citizen. To do so, the Turkish employer must pay an employment tax and make social security contributions, requirements that increase employment costs and, thus, discouraging the legal employment of foreigners. This situation is further exacerbated by the complicated bureaucratic procedures prompting employers to hire foreign workers informally with no formal employment contract.

Notwithstanding these legal restrictions, the Turkish migration regime remains relatively liberal, largely because Turkish authorities tacitly accept irregular migration and loosely enforce immigration laws. For example, immigration raids at workplaces and public places are infrequent and rather unsystematic. Many migrants we encountered during our fieldwork in Istanbul worked without documents, did not experience police corruption and enjoyed relatively unimpeded mobility in the city. Turkey’s liberal stance can also be explained by the commercial approach to irregular migration. Unlike Russia, where foreigners who overstay and violate immigration laws face severe penalties and receive an entry ban for up to ten years, migrants in Turkey who overstay have two options when leaving Turkey: they can either choose to receive an entry ban for a long period of time or pay a fine (the amount of which depends on the length of the

overstay) at the border allowing them to return to Turkey several months later.

Accordingly, informality is a part and parcel of migrants' daily lives in Turkey. Many migrants we encountered in Istanbul possessed neither a residence permit (*oturma izni*) nor a work permit (*çalışma izni*). This in part reflected Turkish police and immigration authorities' leniency toward undocumented migrants, who allow migrants to go free even when they are clearly working and living without documents, as shown in the following extracts:

It has been more than five years since I started working in Istanbul. During these five years I have never had a serious problem with the police or immigration authorities. Sometimes, the police stop me to check my documents, but I usually tell them that I left my documents at home and they let me go. (Zilola, female, migrant from Uzbekistan, 35)

I can't remember the police stopping and giving me trouble since I came here. They may have stopped me once or twice, but it didn't take more than two minutes. (Husniddin, male migrant from Uzbekistan, 25)

The police never stopped me, although there are now raids on the streets. But, the situation is not like in Russia. Here, there is much more freedom. (Ali, male migrant from Uzbekistan, 29)

Almost every migrant I met in Istanbul worked without documents. No documents are needed. You get the same job and salary even if you have documents. If you do have documents, you will receive US\$300 to 400. It is also possible to be deceived by the fraudsters who say they will get the documents [for you]. Here, in Istanbul, what's the point of spending money on documents if the police do not come across you and cause a headache? Here, the system itself is built in such a way that encourages you to work without documents. This method of punishing through "*ceza para*" (*fine*) is good for all migrants. We earn the money in the end if we want, we can choose either to get deported or just pay the fine and return to Turkey after a few months. (Ozoda, female migrant from Uzbekistan, 42)

Some interviewees thought that a shared religious or ethnic identity also played an important role in their interactions with Turkish police officers:

I sell watches and often walk in public places. I always say I'm Senegalese when the police stop me, and they say no problem. Because we are Muslims, we are not treated bad by the police. He knows that the situation in our country is difficult. They stopped me several times, but let me go because I am Muslim. (Mohamed, male migrant from Senegal, 45)

Even if the police stop us, they only ask who you are. If you say, "I am Uzbek. I came to work", they do not speak rudely [to you]. Here, many police officers say that both Turks and Uzbeks have the same roots and that Uzbekistan is the historic homeland of the Turks. My acquaintances say that in Russia it is difficult to walk freely on the streets there. It is not possible to breathe freely. The police in Turkey respect Uzbeks. (Bakhrom, male migrant from Uzbekistan, 40)

Many of our interviewees noted that even if the police take them to the police station for a further document check, migrants are often released despite their undocumented status without facing any legal consequences:

The raid is carried out mainly by the police, who stand in the subways or in crowded places and check anyone who seems suspicious. Even if the police catch us during such raids and take us to the police station, they keep us there for five or six hours, check our passports and then release us. (Nazira, female migrant from Kyrgyzstan, 31)

Sometimes the police conduct a raid to catch illegal migrants. Even that is not scary. They let you go eventually. Recently, my four Turkmen acquaintances got into an argument with the police. The police took them to Karakol (the police station) and said they would be deported. But, they were not deported. The probability of deportation here is very low. (Berdy, male migrant from Turkmenistan, 32)

I don't have any documents here. Police have arrested me many times, but they have never caused a problem. Here, I look after myself and dress well, so they don't think I don't have documents or that I'm a refugee. They stop and cause headaches for people who look dirty and don't look after themselves. One day a woman was walking alongside me. They didn't stop me, but they stopped her. She was a Turkmen woman, wearing her national costume, so she might have appeared as a *yabancı* (foreigner). I was dressed like a Turk. (Amirahon, female migrant from Uzbekistan, 34)

When we asked whether the police in Turkey accept bribes from migrants, many interviewees, particularly those who previously worked in Russia, often compared their encounters with the police in Moscow and in Istanbul.

I did my best to look legal and carried my documents with me every day when I worked in Moscow because in Russia the police check migrants everywhere and try to find any reason to “milk migrants” (extort bribes). In Turkey, I do not have any documents. Women in particular here are not checked by the police. Even if the police catch you, they will let you go if you speak without fear. At one point, the police caught me and asked for my passport. I told them that I had left my passport at home. Then, he let me go. I do not think anyone would carry their passport with them here. (Rukhshona, female migrant from Tajikistan, 28)

The police have not stopped me here yet. I worked in Russia before coming to Turkey and I am surprised that the police in Istanbul do not demand bribes from us. When I worked in Russia, I was stopped by the police so many times. No problems with the police here. Turkey is paradise for those who previously worked in Russia. (Boymurod, male migrant from Uzbekistan, 25)

There also other factors that incite migrants to reside and work illegally (*kaçak iş*) in Turkey. First, many migrants do not have the money to pay for legalization services when they arrive in Turkey. Second, it is easy to find jobs without documents since many Turkish employers do not ask for any documents when hiring migrant laborers. Third, when deciding whether to legalize their status or not, migrants perform a cost–benefit analysis. Fourth, it is quite difficult for migrants to understand the bureaucratic procedures associated with residence and work permits in Turkey. The interview extracts presented below exemplify why migrants adopt an undocumented lifestyle.

Most migrants do not have the money to prepare the documents when they come to Istanbul, so 90% of migrants work without documents. (Bakhar, female migrant from Turkmenistan, 45)

The reason why so many people don't get documents is that not everyone comes from Uzbekistan with their own wish or money in their pocket. Someone comes [to Turkey through] a loan, and before they make that

amount of money, the month ends. With a 10- to 15-day delay, it takes a while to get a salary and start moving. When we arrived, nobody told us about who to meet, what to do. (Farida, female migrant from Uzbekistan, 28)

I do not have any documents. I tried to do get them in the beginning, but many people said that it is very difficult to get clean documents. It would be better to receive a deportation order when leaving, or to pay “*ceza parasi*” (fine), which would be the same amount, if you want to come back to Turkey. Besides, having a document or not has little effect on finding a job. I have no interest in securing documents if the Turks themselves hire people without documents. (Qurbonali, male migrant from Uzbekistan, 45)

I have heard that it is not easy to secure documents in Turkey. So many things need to be submitted. For this reason, I was in no hurry to get my documents. There is another element to it. If you do not have a work permit, it is actually easier to get hired in some places. No employer would be willing to hire you legally because they have to pay taxes and insurance to the state. It is good both for the employer and employee and you do not need to deal with the document headache. (Abobakir, male migrant from Tajikistan, 34)

While police and immigration checks are not systematic and remain infrequent in Turkey, some migrants preferred to be “legal”, as illustrated below.

I do not have documents yet. I am now saving money for documents. It is good to have documents, because you don’t walk in fear in the streets. No fear and stress. Inshallah, when my documents are ready, I will walk on the street like a lion. (Sohila, female migrant from Uzbekistan, 48)

The benefits of working with the proper documents are enormous. You walk on the street without fear. If you have documents, you will not have to pay a *ceza parasi* (fine) when you return home. That is why I paid 2100 liras (US\$300) and secured documents through my acquaintance who works at *shirkat*. (Nargiz, female migrant from Uzbekistan, 38)

During our fieldwork, we noted that migrants who had an *oturma izni* (residence permit) believed that they were working and living legally in Turkey, while, in fact, it only allowed them to reside legally in Turkey.

Based on this understanding, migrants approached document intermediaries (*shirkats*) who offered both authentic and fake *oturma izni*. It is, therefore, not surprising that, while walking the streets of Istanbul, one may spot numerous *shirkats* (intermediaries), who offer legalization services to migrants. According to estimates from one of the intermediaries we interviewed, there are at least 100 document *shirkats* operating in Kumkapi, Aksaray and Yenikapi, three neighborhoods known for their high concentrations of Central Asian migrants. The average price of an *oturma izni* is around 1800–2100 liras (US\$230–270). Many document *shirkats* are operated by Turkish citizens. Central Asian migrants usually work for Turkish *shirkats* for a salary 2500–3000 liras (US\$310–380). Their primary job is to find customers or migrants for *shirkats*. But, it is also possible to spot *shirkats* run by Central Asian migrants themselves. On February 2, 2019, we visited Alisher (male migrant from Uzbekistan, 42) who presented himself as the head of a *shirkat*, who helps migrants obtain residence permits. During our visit, we met Hakim, an Uzbek migrant who wanted to obtain a residence permit despite having overstayed in Turkey. Seeing that Hakim had overstayed his visit, Alisher explained that making him legal would be easy if he paid the required fees:

It's been more than four months since you arrived. Citizens of Uzbekistan can stay in Turkey for a maximum 90 days without a visa. This means that now you have to leave Turkey and come back in starting a new period. Since you overstayed your visit by one month, you have to pay *ceza parasi* (fine) when leaving Turkey. If you don't exit the country, it won't be possible to secure documents for you. Here, I have calculated the *ceza parasi* for you. From the day you mentioned, the fine is around 1000 Turkish liras (US\$120). On top of that, you also need to buy an airline ticket. The cheapest ticket is to Odessa, so you fly to Ukraine. Tickets are about 600 liras (US\$70). So, the *ceza parasi* and ticket will cost you a total of 1600 liras (US\$190) and you will reenter Turkey pure and innocent, like a newborn child. After that, we will meet with you again and prepare a document for *oturma izni*. When you land in Odessa, you only need to be there for one day. If you want, you can sleep at the airport or you can call the numbers for some Russian ladies. They will collect you themselves, for US\$10 a night. They have all conditions there. If you go to and return from Odessa this week, your *oturma izni* document will be available in two to two-and-a-half months. You give us 1800 liras (US\$215) and we will prepare your *oturma izni*, which will be valid for one year. This is

the average cost. Altogether, this will cost you approximately 3500 liras (US\$410) if you want to get a clean *oturma izni*.

At the same time, Alisher also offered a fake *oturma izni*, which would be ready in three days. The fake *oturma* with a one-year validity period cost US\$200. If a migrant is stopped by the police on the street, the police will likely not notice anything and let him/her go. But, if the migrant is stopped and checked by immigration officials (*Göç İdaresi*), a process that usually involves a check of the government database, then they would easily discover that document is fake.

As shown above, the majority of migrants work and reside in Turkey without documents. As one of the document intermediaries (*shirkat*) we interviewed noted, “Turkey’s migration system is commercialized to such an extent that it is possible to render legal even those migrants who work and reside illegally for several years”.

I recently helped one Uzbek migrant who came to Istanbul in 2016 and since then has worked and lived here without any documents. He paid US\$3000 for our legalization service. We checked his file and paid his fines and fees for the past four years, during which time he lived illegally in Turkey. Now, he is fully legal and can walk on the street without any problems.

Our observations and interviews indicate that the political economy of the Turkish migration regime is largely based on commercial logic, leveraging migrants’ decisions to remain “legal” or not. The Russian migration regime, however, is largely based on a punitive logic leaving little or no option for migrants to return to “legality”, while allowing Russian state officials in charge of immigration control to generate payments from undocumented migration. This is particularly visible in the words of Mukhtor, who, at the time of our interview, worked in Istanbul (Fig. 4.2):

Soon, I want to go home, but I do not have the documents. I will pay *ceza parasi* when leaving. That is the good thing here. I know many people who worked in Russia and received an entry ban. If you break laws in Russia, there is no *ceza parasi* there. Russians do not even ask you, and simply put “deport” or “entry ban”. It is not like that here in Turkey. Here, the state tries to get money from you. Deportation is quite rare here. Probably, it almost does not exist. Because, I heard that if they deport you, the government covers all of the costs. Maybe that is why they don’t deport



Fig. 4.2 Uzbek migrants are waiting in line to pay visa violation fines at Istanbul Airport

you. But if you pay *ceza parasi*, you can come back in 15 days. (Mukhtor, male migrant from Uzbekistan, 33)

Accordingly, any visitor to Istanbul airport may note the large crowd of Central Asian migrants queuing to pay *ceza parasi*. Given the large queues, migrants sometimes miss their flights since it can take for one

to six hours to pay the deportation fee or *ceza parası*. The case of Holdor (male migrant from Uzbekistan, 25) is illustrative here. Holdor was booked on a flight to Uzbekistan on January 15, 2020. Since he had worked and lived in Turkey for two years without any documents, he had to pay an overstay fine (*ceza parası*), a penalty each foreigner who overstays must pay before leaving Turkey. He arrived at the airport five hours before his flight, assuming that he needed a maximum of two hours to sort this out. However, much to his surprise, there were more than 200 migrants queuing, waiting to pay their own *ceza parası*. In Holdor's estimate, at least 80% of those queuing foreigners were citizens of Uzbekistan. Given the large number of people queuing, Holdor was unable to pay his *ceza parası* and, as a result, he missed his flight to Uzbekistan without being able to rebook his flight. This meant that he lost the cost of his original airline ticket and was forced to buy a new ticket, an unfortunate incident which also forced him to stay an additional two months in Istanbul in order to earn enough money to purchase a new ticket.

REFLECTIONS ON MIGRANTS' DOCUMENTATION AND LEGALIZATION STRATEGIES IN RUSSIA AND TURKEY

As shown in this chapter, Russia and Turkey represents two extremes of migration governance: the former heavily relies on punitive and restrictive measures making it nearly impossible for migrants to be "legal", while the latter takes a relatively liberal approach to undocumented migration, tacitly allowing migrants to reside and work without any documents. If we compare these two different migration regimes from a legal centralistic/positivistic perspective, one possible inference could be that Russia has more "legal" migrants due to its draconian immigration control measures. However, as we demonstrated empirically in previous sections, this is not the case in Russia, where the large majority of migrants reside and work without immigration papers. Our empirical data illustrate that both the Russian and Turkish migration regimes, despite their divergent approaches to immigration control, have arrived at similar migration outcomes, an observation visible in the analysis of migrants' documentation and legalization strategies. This suggests that the sole focus on migration outputs is insufficient when comparing different migration regimes. Instead, we should also examine how migration policies and laws work on the ground where street-level bureaucrats, employers,

intermediaries, migrant workers and various non-state actors shape migration outcomes.

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Migrant Labor Markets in Russia and Turkey

INTRODUCTION

During our ethnographic fieldwork in Istanbul, we spent most of our time wandering the streets of the Kumkapi neighborhood, where it is possible to spot hundreds of Uzbek migrants who reside and/or work there. For us, two legal ethnographers who have conducted fieldwork among Uzbek labor migrants in Russia since 2014, these ever-increasing Uzbek migratory flows to Turkey and the emergence of an “Uzbek ethnic enclave” in the middle of Istanbul came as no surprise. Our daily observations and conversations in Moscow and Fergana already provided us with clues that Russia’s draconian “entry-ban” law (introduced in 2013–2014) would force many entry-banned Uzbek migrants to reroute their migration destination from Russia to Turkey or to Kazakhstan. These assumptions were confirmed during our daily chats and observations in Kumkapi: many Uzbek migrants we encountered were *Rossiyskiy migrantlar* (Russia’s migrants, i.e., migrants who previously worked in Russia) compelled to reorient to the Turkish labor market due to their Russian entry ban. Given these tendencies, the comparison between Russian and Turkish migration regimes arose spontaneously and frequently during many interviews with Uzbek migrants. When comparing their migrant adventures in Russia and Turkey, our informants drew a striking comparison between the two migration situations: one that goes a long way in explaining Uzbeks’ often-stated preference for

Russia: “*Turkda iymon bor, lekin insof yoq. Orisda iymon yoq, lekin insof bor*”, which, roughly translates as, “Turks have faith [in Islam] but no sense of justice; Russians have no faith [in Islam] but a sense of justice”.

These remarks led us to rethink our pre-fieldwork assumptions that Uzbeks would feel “closer” to Turkey for a host of linguistic, cultural, religious, economic and legal reasons (cf. Bashirov, 2018). Unlike in Russia, where migrants endure a punitive legal environment and police corruption, Uzbek migrants in Istanbul need not pay bribes to Turkish police officers and can find work without any residence or work permit owing to the relatively liberal immigration legal regime. However, despite these challenges, many of the Uzbek migrants we encountered in Istanbul, especially those who had previously worked in Russia, were unhappy with their migration experience in Turkey, and planned to return to Russia as soon as their entry bans expired. The reasons for such negative comparisons often stemmed from the informality, the modes of incorporation into the labor market, the role of social networks and the importance of having a shared sense of “the rules of the game” under the conditions of informal employment.

Accordingly, the primary question driving our analysis in this chapter relates to an attempt to understand how and why, despite all of the challenges associated with navigating the repressive legal landscape in Russia, many of the Uzbek migrants we met in Istanbul felt that Moscow offered greater agency and opportunity than life in Istanbul. Our informants’ intriguing comments about *iymon* and *insof* and how they relate to Russians and Turks represent the “itch” this chapter attempts to scratch. Our key argument is that, no matter how liberal or restrictive the immigration legal regime is, migrants’ life trajectories, labor market incorporation and economic success in non-Western, nondemocratic migration contexts such as Russia and Turkey hinge upon informal regulatory practices, power geometries, extralegal negotiations, struggles and alliances. Thus, we suggest that the investigation of migrants’ experiences of the labor market and working conditions in non-Western migration locales should extend beyond “formal–informal” work (Schneider, 2014; Williams & Lansky, 2013) or “legal–illegal” status (Coutin, 2003; De Genova, 2002) binaries. Instead, such investigations should also examine the role of informal practices, struggles, alliances and extralegal negotiations among various actors involved in the migration industry. Such an approach may provide a more nuanced understanding of how things work within a migrant labor market.

Based on these considerations, in this chapter, we comparatively explore the Russian and Turkish migration regimes in terms of Uzbek migrants' position in these migrant labor markets, patterns of incorporation into the labor market, gendered employment relations and experiences of agency and the capacity to navigate various risks and uncertainties under the conditions of informal employment. In doing so, we explore the Russian and Turkish migrant labor markets as two specific migration arenas with their own inner orders and regulatory structures, focusing on the daily interactions, struggles and alliances among employers, intermediaries, migrant workers and other relevant actors. In the sections that follow, we also provide a "thick description" to illustrate these processes.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF MIGRANT LABOR MARKETS IN RUSSIA AND TURKEY

Russia has become one of the key immigration hubs internationally in the last two decades. The exact number of labor migrants in contemporary Russia has been the topic of speculation given that different state bodies as well as experts provide varying figures.¹ According to the *World Migration Report 2020*, the foreign-born population in Russia exceeds 11 million people, rendering the country one of the top five recipients of migrants in the world (IOM, 2019). More than half of migrant workers in Russia originate from the three Central Asian countries of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. These migratory processes were driven largely by the rapidly growing Russian economy and the declining working-age population, on the one hand, and economic stagnation, poverty, high unemployment rates and extremely low salaries in the Central Asian republics, on the other (Denisenko & Chernina, 2017). Another contributing factor was the visa-free border regime under a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) agreement allowing citizens from most post-Soviet republics to enter Russia without restrictions (Abashin, 2014). However, despite their visa-free regime, many Central Asian migrants become undocumented once they fail to comply with

¹ No consensus exists among migration scholars and experts regarding the exact number of migrants in Russia. That is, the figures vary, placing the number of migrants living in Russia at 9 to 18 million individuals depending on the source used (cf. Abashin, 2016; Reeves, 2015; Schenk, 2018).

Russian immigration rules: that is, failing to obtain a work permit and residence registration. The costly and complicated legalization system discussed in detail in the previous chapter has pushed hundreds of thousands of migrants from Central Asia into becoming undocumented.

Mostly known as a country of emigration in the last century, Turkey has also become one of the key destinations for migrants in the last three decades, hosting 3.7 million refugees, primarily Syrians, in its territory (IOM, 2019). Neoliberal economic policies adopted in Turkey since the 1980s (Boratav, 2006) and economic growth in recent decades, on the one hand, and several geopolitical events surrounding Turkey, including but not limited to the collapse of the Soviet Union and military conflicts in the Middle East, on the other, gradually transformed Turkey into a destination for several millions of foreigners primarily as migrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers. While Syrians constitute the largest foreign population group in Turkey, there are also several hundred thousand migrant workers from the Caucasus, East Europe, Central Asia, South Asia, Middle East and Africa. To boost its tourism and trade sectors, Turkey maintains visa-free regimes with most of these countries. Foreigners enter Turkey for work, transit and asylum-seeking purposes; however, most remain undocumented due to the complicated work permit procedures and Turkey's refusal to grant refugee status to asylum seekers.² Given the large number of irregular migrants, it is difficult to estimate the precise number of immigrants in Turkey. However, the number of Turkish residence permit holders has increased from more than 182,000 in 2010 to more than 1.2 million by September 2021 (DGMM, 2021), indicating that Turkey has become a dynamically growing immigration destination.

Most Central Asians working in Russia are seasonal or circular migrants, although the number of those seeking Russian citizenship has recently grown (especially among Kyrgyz nationals). Central Asian migrants are dispersed across various regions of Russia, from Kaliningrad and Moscow to Vladivostok and Kamchatka. They may remain in Russia from several months to several years. The majority of Central Asian

² Although Turkey is a signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention governing the conditions of asylum seekers, the government applies a geographic limitation to non-European applicants. As such, those who arrive from outside European countries receive only "temporary protection" status, making it almost impossible to obtain work permits, thus leading to an irregular status.

migrants are young—the median age of those who obtained *patents* in 2015 was 31, 31 and 32 years old, respectively (OECD, 2016). At the same time, Russian government sources indicate that among those who held work permits (*patents*), almost half (45.3%) fall within the 18–29 age group, while another 45% are 30 to 59 years old (FMS, 2016). Laruelle (2007) distinguishes between two age groups of migrants from Central Asia: young people in their 20s who must pay for a wedding or seek to build a house; and older men in their 40s or 50s who need more sporadic financing for family celebrations such as their children’s weddings, circumcision ceremonies or the expansion of the family property. The older generation is statistically more educated and generally has a good command of Russian. As a result, they typically find better and more skilled jobs. The youngest migrant laborers constitute the largest proportion of migrants, are less skilled, have a poor command of Russian and, consequently, secure low-paying jobs.

In terms of gender composition, Central Asian labor migration to Russia, with the notable exception of Kyrgyz migrants, is mostly male-dominated. Women constitute at least 38% of migrants from Kyrgyzstan; this figure stands at 15–20% among migrants from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, whereby that 85% of Tajik and Uzbek migrants are male (OECD, 2016; Rocheva & Varshaver, 2017). This gender composition is also reflected in the migrant labor market structure: male migrants are employed in areas where physical strength is required, such as on construction sites, in housing and communal services, and the agricultural, transportation, retail and manufacturing industries, while female migrants find jobs predominantly in trade (supermarkets and shops), catering (restaurants, hotels and food factories), domestic care and cleaning services (Marat, 2013; Tyuryukanova, 2011). While no comprehensive statistical information exists detailing the representation of Central Asian migrants in Russia’s labor market, relatively recent data indicate that labor migrants are mainly employed in the construction (34%), services (13%), manufacturing (10%), retail (7%) and agricultural (7%) sectors of the Russian economy (Demintseva et al., 2018). Such figures indicate that the construction sector is the largest employer of migrant labor.

In Turkey, although the great majority of foreigners are refugees from Syria (as well as from Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan among others), Central Asian migrants also constitute a significant share of Turkey’s migrant population. Most Central Asian migrant workers find jobs in

Istanbul, the country's largest city and the largest transit hub in the region. Central Asians also work in other cities such as Ankara, Antalya, Bursa and Izmir. Turkmens and Uzbeks comprise the largest Central Asian migrant groups, while the number of Kyrgyz and Tajik migrants remains insignificant. This ethnic composition is clearly visible when one walks through the streets of Kumkapi, Aksaray, Yenikapi and Laleli—Central Asian migrant hotspots in Istanbul's Fatih district, where it is possible to spot thousands of Central Asian migrants. As the only country with the possibility of visa-free travel, Turkey has emerged as an obvious choice for migrants from Turkmenistan for many years. Turkey has also attracted large numbers of migrants from Uzbekistan, Central Asia's most populous country with an abundant labor force, as the second-best choice after Russia. According to the Turkish Directorate General of Migration Management, there are close to 250,000 Turkmen and 130,000 Uzbek citizens, respectively, who hold short- or long-term student and family visas (DGMM, 2021). However, the actual number of Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turkmen and Uzbek migrants far exceeds official statistics given that the large number of Central Asians are undocumented. In addition, many Central Asians are also involved in a so-called hybrid form of income-earning that combines shuttle trade with short-term jobs in Turkey.

In Turkey, since many Central Asian migrants are employed in the informal economy, it is difficult to find accurate statistics on the age and gender composition of migrants. However, our daily observations from Central Asian migrant hotspots and the “throw away” comments from our interviewees suggest that female migrants constitute the majority of Central Asian migrants in Turkey (in contrast to Russia's context described above). This reflects the demand for female labor in the structure of the Turkish migrant labor market. However, the gender composition in Turkey is shifting due to the restrictive immigration rules in Russia (entry bans) compelling many Central Asian male migrants to choose Turkey as an alternative and/or temporary migration destination. In terms of their labor market participation, Central Asian migrants work in labor-intensive sectors such as domestic work and manufacturing. There is a high demand for domestic work and domestic care (of children, the sick and elderly people). Formerly performed by Turkey's internal female migrants from poorer rural areas, these jobs have gradually been transferred to foreign-born migrant workers. This transfer stemmed not only from economic concerns (e.g., the live-in characteristic of such

jobs lowers foreign workers' accommodation expenses), but also cultural factors (Akalin, 2007). Since domestic care work is one of the largest sectors in which the foreign-born workforce is employed and is performed by women, many female migrants from Central Asia find jobs in domestic care (Nurdinova, 2018). Female migrants are also employed in the retail, tourism, entertainment and sex industries. Other Central Asian migrant workers, both men and women, find jobs in manufacturing, specifically in the textile and garment industries and in the agricultural sector.

Despite the abovementioned differences, one pattern is common to the lives of Central Asian migrants in these two migration regimes. Both in Russia and Turkey, the legal routes to formal employment for foreigners remain complicated and restricted. This implies that it is nearly impossible for many Central Asian migrants in Russia and Turkey to work legally, a process we empirically demonstrate in the sections that follow.

In Russia, foreigners from visa-free countries need to obtain *patents* (work permits) to legally work. To do so, migrants must secure a whole list of documents including language tests and medical certificates (more detailed information about the list of required documents is provided in Chapter Three). All of the documents must be collected, and the *patent* must be in hand within 30 days of arriving in Russia. *Patents* are valid for a maximum of one year and include an obligatory monthly fee payment. For newly arrived migrants from Central Asia in search of jobs, it is quite difficult to satisfy all of these requirements within the stated period of time and, thus, many fail to secure valid *patents* during their stay in Russia. Moreover, in addition to monthly fee payments, migrants must renew their residence registration (*registratsiia*) every three months. As mentioned previously, migrants cannot typically find an apartment and a landlord willing to register them at that specific address, especially in large cities like Moscow or St. Petersburg. Even if they manage to do so with the help of intermediaries (*posredniki*), migrants do not typically reside at that specific address, a practice considered illegal by Russia's immigration rules. Yet, given the large share of informality in the Russian economy, especially in the construction sector—the largest labor market for migrant workers—many employers prefer informal employment for tax evasion purposes (Round & Kuznetsova, 2021). Essentially, these complex, volatile and arbitrarily enforced laws and regulations on foreigners' residence and employment status push large numbers of migrants into the domains of undocumentedness, rendering informal employment the only viable option (Urinboyev, 2020).

Migrant workers face a similarly restrictive legalization environment in Turkey. The “Law on Work Permits for Foreigners” (No. 4817, 2003) and its accompanying laws and regulations create an excessively complicated process for obtaining work permits. Both employer and employee simultaneously apply for a work permit and the permit is granted to the employer for job specified, provided that the application meets several difficult-to-satisfy criteria. Moreover, for those employers whose only goal in hiring a foreign workforce is cheap and submissive labor, formal employment through a work permit is financially and bureaucratically twice as burdensome as hiring a local employee. In other words, even if a migrant worker wishes to formalize their employment relationships with an employer, the latter has little to no incentive to do so. This leads to the situation whereby work permits are granted mostly to a limited number of white-collar specialists, while the vast majority of migrant workers find employment in the informal economy (İçduygu & Aksel, 2015; Özcürmez & Yetkin, 2014; Toksoz et al., 2012). At best, migrant workers can secure residence permits (*oturma izni*), granting them the right to reside in Turkey, but not the right to work. Obtaining a residence permit is not as difficult as obtaining a work permit. There are many intermediaries (*shirkats*) who help individuals obtain residence permits for a certain fee. However, as described in Chapter Three, more than half of the migrant workers we met in Turkey during our fieldwork did not even hold residence permits. Those who overstay their visa-free period (up to three months depending on citizenship) and work illegally in Turkey have two options when leaving the country: they can either choose to accept an entry ban for up to five years or choose to pay a fine (the amount depends on the length of the overstay) at the border and may return after several months. Owing to this relatively liberal immigration regime, Central Asian migrants opt to bypass the legalization route and instead find informal employment.

Notwithstanding the aforesaid similarities, considerable differences exist with regards to Central Asian migrants’ experiences in the labor markets in Russia and Turkey, as reflected in our informants’ fascinating comments about *iymon* and *insof*. In other words, undocumentedness and informal employment do not necessarily translate into similar outcomes in terms of migrant precarity and exploitation. Instead, migrants’ agency and labor market experiences depend on the myriad informal practices, struggles, alliances and extralegal negotiations among various actors involved in the migrant labor markets. In the sections that

follow, these processes are described using empirical examples from Uzbek migrants' experiences in the Russian and Turkish labor markets.

CENTRAL ASIAN MIGRANTS' DAILY EXPERIENCES FROM THE RUSSIAN AND TURKISH (INFORMAL) LABOR MARKETS

The migrant labor markets in Russia and Turkey can be viewed as a “small state within state”, with their own gatekeepers, informal norms, power structures, hierarchies, divisions of labor and rule enforcement mechanisms. Informal actors like intermediaries or middlemen enter into alliances with employers and various labor market actors to establish their own order and monopolies within the labor markets. Migrant workers, as newcomers to the labor markets, either accept or challenge the established order and norms. Viewed from this perspective, a migrant labor market represents a social arena, where it is possible to observe multiple struggles, alliances and extralegal negotiations in order to establish the rules of the game. As we empirically show in this chapter, these struggles and negotiations take different forms and may lead to varying outcomes in the Russian and Turkish labor markets. Given that Central Asian labor migration to Russia is well-established and features a chain migration characteristic whereby migrant workers are organized around social networks linked to their village or town origin (Isabaeva, 2011; Reeves, 2013; Urinboev, 2020), diverse actors and power structures exist within Russia's migrant labor market. In other words, no actor in the Russian migrant labor market enjoys a full monopoly over determining the rules of the game. However, this is not the case in the Turkish migrant labor market, where Central Asian migrants are relative newcomers and do not possess their own networks nor informal channels that can compete with existing power structures. As a result, labor market intermediaries and Turkish employers wield considerable leverage in determining the rules of the game, leaving little or no agency for Central Asian migrants to cope with the risks and uncertainties of informal employment.

Posredniks in the Russian Migrant Labor Market

In the Russian migrant labor market, the term “*posrednik*” refers to intermediaries or middlemen whose main role is brokering and enforcing

a deal between migrants and clients or employers. Some *posredniks* are multifunctional and operate within the labor market, as part of the migrant documentation, legalization and accommodation markets, offering a variety of services such as finding a job for migrants for a specific fee, assisting with buying fake documents or helping migrants with housing issues (Reeves, 2016; Urinboyev & Polese, 2016). These individuals are often experienced migrants, some of whom have already secured Russian citizenship or permanent residence and who have a network of connections in their area of specialization. Some migrants who worked in one place for years and earned their employer's trust can also easily become a *posrednik*. When there is a need for another migrant worker, *posredniks* can bring people from their village or people they know in search of jobs to the workplace. In return, *posredniks* receive a specific proportion of the new workers' salaries on a monthly basis as payment for their services. Some nimble *posredniks* go further and try to find jobs for other people among their connections. While this is not a regular income for a *posrednik*, they may occasionally expect additional earnings. Predatory *posredniks* also operate in the documentation business, individuals whose only income comes from their services (Fig. 5.1).



Fig. 5.1 A *posrednik* is showing around a newly arrived Uzbek migrant his new workplace in a construction site outside Moscow

Another type of *posrednik* can be found mostly in the construction sector and in private apartment/house renovations. An experienced foreman (known in Russian as a “*prorab*” or “*brigadir*”) strikes a deal with a client to, for example, renovate or paint a building and invites migrant workers to complete the job. This *posrednik* pockets the difference as their fee between what the client offered and how much they agree to pay the workers. In some cases, the *posrednik* may charge a *dolya* (share) for their service, whereby each migrant gives 10–15% of their monthly salary to the *posrednik*. In return, *posredniks* are expected to secure migrants’ salaries and help them when they experience problems with the law. Since most migrants work without *patents*, *posredniks* assume responsibility for (corrupt) police officers by giving them a *dolya* (share/fee) on a regular basis so that they do not harass and check the documents of the migrants “working under their protection”.

While *posredniks* are often condemned by migrant workers as con artists or thieves (cf. Reeves, 2016), their services remain in high demand given the structure of the migrant labor market in Russia. It is often those inexperienced migrants with limited knowledge of the local language and the *modus operandi* of the labor market who depend on a *posrednik’s* services. Experienced migrants remain rather independent and rarely approach *posredniks*.

Many of those who studied after [the collapse of] the Soviet Union did not learn Russian well at schools, so they need *posredniks*. Let’s take this guy from Andijan as an example. He does not know Russian at all, and he has worked here for two months. Now, if he knew Russian, he himself could directly negotiate with the Russian employer. But he doesn’t know how to come to an agreement, so he needs a *posrednik* for that. If he knew Russian, he could get 40,000 rubles for the work. But, since he is negotiating through the *posrednik*, the latter puts 15,000 in his pocket and says the salary is 25,000. So, our guy is losing 15,000 rubles. Although he understands his loss, he doesn’t have another choice. (Abduvali, male migrant from Uzbekistan, 58)

In some situations, a *posrednik* may also be viewed by employers or clients as some kind of insurance policy, as shown in the extract below:

Locals don’t trust migrants, even skillful people. But, they trust *posredniks* who hold a Russian passport. If you don’t have connections, if you don’t know certain people, then you don’t have another choice other than

turning to a *posrednik* for help. It's like insurance for them [locals]. For example, a local Russian hires a migrant to repair his apartment and brings all the construction materials. There are such migrants who can sell all of the construction materials to someone and then disappear. If a local person hires through a *posrednik* who has a Russian passport, he can make that *posrednik* responsible for any damage or loss. This is one way for Russian individual employers to insure themselves. (Mirsaid, male migrant from Uzbekistan, 45)

Takhir, a former migrant who also acted as a *posrednik*, justifies the demand for intermediary services as follows:

The role of *posredniks* is quite important. Since laws in Russia don't work, such individuals solve various problems. Thanks to *posredniks*, they find jobs and get their salaries. For many workers, *posredniks* play an important role: they are confident that the middleman will be responsible for the timely payment of salaries. *Posredniks* are responsible if an employer refuses to pay. *Posredniks* perform many functions: documents, accommodation, jobs and salaries. They do what the state does not finish up. If the state did so, then it would be great in general. But, since the state does not do this [perform all of the functions], there is therefore a great demand for the services of *posredniks*. (Takhir, Uzbek migrant with Russian citizenship, 52)

That said, situations are not rare in which a *posrednik* fails to secure the timely payment of agreed upon salaries or migrant workers are deceived in other ways. As our informants Nigora's and Nishon's experiences illustrate, every migrant adventure is fraught with deceit, and *posredniks* represent the usual suspects in this regard. In cases of fraud and deceit, migrants are usually left with a limited opportunity to recover their salaries or the money they have spent.

Do women also need *posredniks*? It depends on the woman herself. If she knows the Russian language well, she goes straight [to the employers]. For example, I don't like *posredniks* at all. Well, I used to seek jobs through them too, but life teaches you everything. You must just go directly to the personnel department or the manager. But, when she does not know the language, she will have to turn to *posredniks*. I think in the beginning we all get deceived by *posredniks*. (Nigora, female migrant from Uzbekistan, 40)

Posredniks find workplaces and they hire people, and they take 5% from everyone's salary. They find a job for you and earn money by doing so.

They take the responsibility of securing your salary. If they cannot, they should pay with their own money. But, in fact, they don't. For example, I worked in construction and the middleman told me that he would secure my salary, but he couldn't. I didn't get my salary, and he said that he didn't have money. (Nishon, Uzbek male migrant from southern Kyrgyzstan, 34)

We note, however, that these experiences are not common to all migrants. Some resourceful and street-smart migrants may use various informal channels and strategies to recover their salary. When a *posrednik* fails to secure their salary, migrants have various tools at their disposal for recovering their salary. First, they may seek redress from street-level protection institutions and actors, such as racketeers and prison-based criminal authorities who provide alternative (to state law) contract enforcement, debt recovery and dispute resolution (see, e.g., Urinboev, 2020). Second, and alternatively, transnational village-level social norms and sanctions can be applied to a *posrednik* if they share a common village origin with other migrants. The ties of kinship and a shared village origin among migrants and a *posrednik* often forces the *posrednik* to keep their promise and secure migrants' salaries regardless of the circumstances, as described below.

On May 12, 2017, it was the birthday of Botir (male migrant from Uzbekistan, 35), who worked as a *posrednik* in Moscow's construction sector. Among others, he invited one of the authors to celebrate his birthday at a park near the Otradnoe metro station in the north of Moscow. When the author arrived, much to his surprise, he was the only Uzbek invited to the birthday party and all of the other guests were non-Uzbeks (mainly, Azeris, Kyrgyz and Tajiks). Because Botir originated from rural Fergana and many of his fellow villagers worked in Moscow, the author took it for granted that there would be many Uzbeks at the party. A few days after the party, when the author met Botir privately at an Uzbek café, he politely asked Botir why he had not invited his fellow villagers to his birthday party. In response, Botir provided the following explanation:

I came to Russia right after finishing school, about 15 years ago. I live in Russia without documents and when the police catch me, I get away by bribing them. I protected my fellow villagers (Uzbeks) from Dagestanis many times. When I was a *brigadir/provab* (foreman), I did everything for my workers. Three years ago, I had a serious dispute with some guys from Dagestan who employed us for one construction project in Orsk (the

second largest city in Orenburg oblast, Russia). Those Dagestani guys did not want to give us our salaries and as a *prorab*, I took on the responsibility of securing our salary from them by any means. I fought for their salaries, even risking my own life. I argued with our Dagestani employer and demanded our salaries, but they refused to pay. I felt dishonored, so I stole the Dagestanis' expensive car and drove it to Moscow. I drove the car in Moscow for five or six days, and the Dagestanis ultimately found me. After some chase and when I ran out of petrol, I left the car and ran for my life. I thought I had escaped them.

After spending a few days in Moscow, when I got off an electric train and wanted to get in my car, someone hit me on the head and I lost consciousness. While I was unconscious, they threw me on the rails of an electric train. So, the train hit me and my neck, shoulders and hands were broken. When I opened my eyes, I was in a hospital. The police came every day to ask what had happened to me. However, I did not tell them anything because it would have brought me more troubles and the Dagestanis would likely kill me. Therefore, I just told the police that a train hit me so hard that I cannot remember anything. In this way, the case was closed. I stayed in the hospital for three to four days and then, I decided to escape from the hospital because I knew that the Dagestanis would come to the hospital and find me there easily. There was one cleaning woman who worked in the hospital. I noticed that she was Uzbek since she was talking on the phone in Uzbek. So, I asked her to help me escape from the hospital. Thanks to her help, I managed to leave the hospital and took a taxi. At first, I borrowed 10,000 rubles from my former Russian employer. Then, I stayed at the house of an acquaintance for a month until I recovered.

My entire *brigada* knew that I risked my life in order to recover their salary. But, they didn't appreciate my efforts. Instead of supporting me during the *razborka* (showdown) with the Dagestani guys, they chose not to support me. On top of this, my cowardly co-villagers spread rumors about me in our village in Fergana, saying that I cheated them and ate their salary. Because of my bitter experience, I have become *dikiy* (wild) and don't trust any Uzbeks in Russia. I always work with people from nationalities other than Uzbek. (Botir, male migrant from Uzbekistan, 35)

Religion can also be invoked by migrants as a pressure mechanism when *posredniks* fail to pay the promised salary. The salary dispute between Uzbek construction workers and Anvar, a *posrednik* from Tatarstan, serves as a relevant example here. Uzbek migrants, led by Bek, worked for Anvar for nearly three months on a construction site in the Moscow province, but were unable to receive their salary from the Tatar

posrednik Anvar, who used various excuses to not pay their salaries. Frustrated with the *posrednik's* endless tricks and stories, Bek, the leader of the Uzbek construction brigade, warned Anvar that he would report the incident to Moscow's chief imam, an ethnic Tatar, who leads prayers at Moscow's Cathedral Mosque at the Prospekt Mira metro station. Bek said, "Anvar, as you know Moscow's chief imam is Tatar and you are also Tatar. So, if you don't pay us our salaries, I will go to the mosque during Friday prayers and in front of everyone I will tell the imam that Anvar, who is Tatar, is refusing our *halal* salary and eating our money. I will take all of the brigade members as witnesses. If necessary, I will bring the imam to the construction site and show him our work, our poor living conditions and what we eat. Afterwards, the imam will deal with this issue and help us get our salary". This strategy worked well and Anvar, not wanting to become entangled with religious authorities, paid the brigade's salary the next day.

Shirkats in the Turkish Migrant Labor Market

In the Turkish migrant labor market, the term "*shirkat*" refers to intermediaries who serve as middlemen or a bridge between migrant workers and Turkish employers. While the term "*shirkat*" literally means a firm or company in both the Turkish and Uzbek languages, colloquially in migrants' daily conversations it is used to refer to intermediaries in the migrant labor market who offer various services to migrants, such as employment, documentation and legalization assistance and help sort out housing issues. The profile of *shirkats* is diverse: (1) a *shirkat* can be a local Turk or Kurd who is well-connected to employers in various sectors of the Turkish economy or (2) an experienced migrant from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan who is well-established in the labor market and who has an extensive network of connections. Some nimble and street-smart migrants who enjoy a good relationship with their employer may also act as a *shirkat* by bringing migrants they know when a vacant position becomes available at their workplace. In this sense, *posredniks* in the Russian and *shirkats* in the Turkish migrant labor markets are comparable in both their forms and functions.

However, despite these similarities, considerable differences exist between *posredniks* and *shirkats* when it comes to their position and power relations vis-à-vis migrant workers. As described in the previous section, in the Russian migrant labor market, *posredniks* take a *dolya*

(share) from migrants on a monthly basis (especially in the construction sector) in return for their service related to finding a job for migrants and protecting them when they face legal problems (e.g., police), a mutually beneficial relationship which motivates both *posredniks* and migrant workers to maintain a long-lasting relationship. However, in the Turkish migrant labor market, the relationship between *shirkats* and migrant workers are based on a one-time transaction, whereby a *shirkat* charges a migrant only once for their service—a fee which equals half a month’s salary for a migrant. This temporary nature of the transaction leads to situations where *shirkats* do not take any further responsibility for a migrant’s working conditions or salary payment.

We are dependent upon *shirkats* to find a job in Istanbul. But many *shirkats* are *insofsiz* (have no sense of justice, are unfair). They take half of your first month’s salary. After you have worked for your employer for 15 days, the *shirkat* contacts your *patron* (boss) and collects your salary without even informing you. You take no part in this process. After getting their share, a *shirkat* never contacts you and leaves you on your own with your *patron*, who will make you work like a slave. If you don’t obey your *patron*, you will be fired. (Muzaffar, male migrant from Uzbekistan, 32)

There are many *shirkats* here. After getting a person a job, they receive half a month’s and sometimes a full month’s salary. Once they get you hired, they do not care. Will he be fired in three months or no? The *shirkat* does not take responsibility. (Husnullo, male migrant from Uzbekistan, 38)

This situation provides leverage not only for employers, but also for *shirkats*, whose financial sustainability depends on the availability of job-seeking migrants. In other words, the more frequently migrants lose their job, the more often they must seek the services of *shirkats*. After losing their job, migrants have no option but to again approach *shirkats* asking them to find a new job for them. These unequal power relations were described by many informants who lost their jobs due to *insofsiz* (unjust) *shirkats*:

I have changed jobs two or three times since I arrived, always because of the injustice (lack of *insof*) of *shirkats*. When I just started learning one job, they called the boss and said that there was another good employee. I waited a month to get my paycheck. Then, they [*shirkat*] got me fired, after taking half of my salary, they don’t have “*insof*”! Most employers are

bad, too. You get a job, and then they [*shirkats*] call the employer and say that they have a better, younger, stronger worker. (Qurbonali, male migrant from Uzbekistan, 45)

There are many *shirkats* here, they find jobs. They fancy calling themselves *shirkats* even if they are not legal and have no office space. Only a few rich *shirkats* have their own office space. For example, they find a job for you and your salary is US\$500. There is a rule here that when you get a job, you pay half of your first salary to *shirkats*. Many *insofsiz shirkats*, after taking half of your salary, they call your *patron* (boss) who gave you the job and say that if you don't like the employee, fire them and I will give you another employee instead. So, they make money like that. They get money again from a new employee for the same job. (Nodira, female migrant from Tajikistan, 34)

There are also many Uzbeks who serve as *shirkats* in the Turkish migrant labor market. But, the ties stemming from a shared ethnic identity do not create any sense of solidarity among *shirkats* and migrant workers. Unlike in Russia where *posredniks* hold limited power and can be held accountable through street-level or transnational social pressure, Uzbek *shirkats* enjoy greater autonomy and power and can freely engage in predatory practices due to the absence of informal control mechanisms. This is largely due to the fact that Uzbeks are relative newcomers to the Turkish labor market and have not yet established their transnational networks and communities that can influence the abusive practices of *shirkats*. The absence of such informal accountability mechanisms were described by many of the informants we interviewed:

Here, Uzbeks screw each other. It is better to work with Turks. There are many Uzbeks *shirkats*, that is, *posredniks*. For example, if an Uzbek has worked here for two or three years, he has experience. He has worked in many places and has connections with those people. He knows the highs and lows. Such experienced Uzbeks usually cheat newly arrived, inexperienced Uzbeks. They say, if you give me US\$250 a month from your US\$500 salary, I will find you a job. Uzbek *shirkats* do what they want and no one controls them here. (Lola, female migrant from Uzbekistan, 28)

Uzbeks deceive one another here. I know many Uzbeks who call themselves *shirkats*. They help people find a job, but then they take 50% or sometimes 70% of your first month's salary. Some dishonest *shirkats* take the whole month's salary. If you refuse to pay half of your salary, the

shirkat will go to your *patron* (boss) and take your money from them and ask the *patron* to fire you from that job. In most cases, the Turkish *patron* is the acquaintance of the Uzbek *shirkat* who found the job for you. Russians are not like Turks. If a *posrednik* tries to cheat migrants, the Russian employer doesn't ally with the *posrednik*. Russians have *insof*. But, Uzbek *shirkats* and Turkish *patrons* are allies and pee in the same pot (Muhridin, male migrant from Uzbekistan, 27)

Recently, I found a job through one Uzbek *shirkat*. I looked after a sick old woman. But, she also had her old husband. Her husband harassed me and wanted to have sex with me. First, I scolded him, and told him I would tell his wife. I said I would kill myself — jump off the balcony, and he said, “I don't care, jump if you want.” Here, old Turkish men are really bad. I worked for a week, and left without being able to get my salary. But, the Uzbek *shirkat*, a man, didn't care when I told him about this problem. If you can't get your money, they won't fight for you and get your money for you. They say, “It is your fault. Why did you leave the job?” No Russian man behaved like this when I worked in Moscow. Both Uzbek *shirkats* and Turkish *patrons* are Muslims, but they do dirty things and have no *insof* [sense of justice]. Russians have no *iymon* [faith in Islam], but they have *insof* [sense of justice or mercy] (Dilbar, female migrant from Uzbekistan, 35)

The above empirical examples from the Russian and Turkish migrant labor markets allow us to make two general observations regarding the relationship between *posredniks*, employers and migrant workers. First, power relations are more horizontally organized in the Russian migrant labor market given the existence of a variety of informal power structures and social control mechanisms that prevent *posredniks* from yielding absolute power. By contrast, *shirkats* in the Turkish labor market are less constrained and can freely engage in predatory practices given the absence of informal control mechanisms. Second, and connected to the first point, a comparison of intermediary–migrant relations in the Russian and Turkish contexts shows that migrants' agency and labor market incorporation outcomes in terms of precarity and exploitation do not merely depend on the formal opportunity structures. Instead, we also need to consider the role of the myriad informal practices, struggles, alliances and extralegal negotiations among various actors operating within migrant labor markets.

WORKING LIFE AND CONDITIONS IN MOSCOW AND ISTANBUL

Another social field in the Russian and Turkish labor markets we explored focused on employer–migrant relations. Most of the migrants we interviewed in Turkey complained of difficult working conditions: long working hours, a hazardous environment (working without protective equipment, exposure to hazardous substances and unventilated and damp workplaces) and employers’ abusive attitudes. In some cases, migrant laborers compared conditions in Turkey with their previous experiences in Russia. The following interview excerpts illustrate the working conditions Central Asian migrant workers experienced in Turkey:

I work as a cleaner at a hotel. The work is not easy, they make us work ten times what they pay us. When I started my new job, my whole body hurt at night from the hard work. They make us work really hard. You can’t relax at all. They threaten that they will deduct from your salary. Even a robot can’t stand this pressure. I clean 12 rooms every day. I am used to it now, but when I started, I said to myself how unmerciful these people are. They really view you as a servant, not a person. They use us like a dog. They have *iyman* [faith in Islam], not *insof* [sense of justice or mercy]. In this respect, Russia was much better. Breaks are granted in every job. When I first came to Turkey, I quit several jobs without agreeing to the treatment I received. But, I finally understood why I came here, why I am here. As a slave, I have no rights or entitlements. I am an ordinary migrant who does all the work to get paid. Once I comprehended that idea, it became easier to work. (Shabnam, female migrant from Tajikistan, 32)

I have only had bad experiences here since I came to Turkey. Recently, I worked feeding cattle not far from Istanbul. I went and started working. They said my salary would be US\$300 a month. But, after working for 15 days, they started demanding extra work — milking the cattle with a machine. I said I thought I was just supposed to feed the cattle and clean their pens. This is not the only example. Wherever I worked, the Turks would give me extra work depending on the situation after I began working. I didn’t like this side to Turkey. They don’t have *insof* [sense of justice or mercy]; they pretend to be so religious, they have a mosque every two steps, but they have eaten up their *insof* [sense of justice or mercy]. They try to increase the work without increasing the salary. Russia was a good place for me. Anyway, we Uzbeks are better off in Russia. They say that Uzbeks are also Turks, one nation and one culture. But, Russia

is much better for us even if they are *kofir* (non-Muslims), they are fairer to us. If I had no entry ban to Russia, I wouldn't have come here at all. (Shavkat, male migrant from Uzbekistan, 44)

It has been two years since I arrived here. My current job with a Turkish family is very difficult. They make me wake up at six o'clock in the morning and keep me busy until late in the evening. When they invite guests, I even work until midnight. I have to clean the house, cook in the kitchen and take the kids for a walk and to play — this is when I relax a little bit, since this is the easiest part of my job. These kids are sweet, but they are capricious and careless; they litter a lot and leave their clothes and other belongings everywhere. But, the most difficult part is my relationship with the “*abla*”, the wife of the household, more precisely her attitude towards me. She checks after I clean to see if the sink is clean enough, if I wiped the dust off the wardrobe with her regular remarks. Moreover, she is jealous of her husband. I have nothing to do with her husband, he is an old and ugly person, but I feel her jealousy from her comments, from her suspicious looks. I just have to swallow my pride and keep a bearable smile on my face. I thought about changing my employers many times, but what I hear from my other friends doing similar jobs is that it is more or less the same everywhere. Some are even worse. And, it is not easy to find another job. They don't just offer you jobs, they will want referrals and recommendations from your previous employers. The only thing that holds me to this job is that they pay relatively well and I don't spend on accommodation since it is a *yatilik* [live-in] job. I have one day off on Saturdays and I spend the day meeting with friends and/or shopping in Kumkapi and Laleli and stay overnight at my friends' shared apartment. (Feruza, female migrant from Uzbekistan, 35)

I worked as a nurse in Uzbekistan. When I first came to Istanbul, I worked in housekeeping for a year and eight months. It was a good job and I liked the Turkish family. I looked after one old woman. But, after she died, I had to look for another job. Since then, nothing good has come up. I go to one *shirkat* and find a job, I work for a month and give half of my salary, then I leave the job because I don't like it. I go to another *shirkat* and only work for a month and leave the job. I got tired of only working for the *shirkat*. At my last job, the Turkish *patron* had no *insof* [sense of justice or mercy]. He didn't even give me proper food. He had hired me to serve as a nurse to an old woman, but he also made me work as a maid alongside nursing. I didn't get a minute's rest. People here in Istanbul don't have *insof* [sense of justice or mercy]. I worked in Russia before. While Russians don't have *ymon* [faith in Islam], they have *insof* [sense of justice or mercy] and treat you better [than Turks]. Here,

in Turkey, they use us like donkeys saying that they are paying the money. (Soliha, female migrant from Uzbekistan, 35)

Here, in Turkey, the working conditions are quite difficult. I have also worked in Russia and I compare a lot of things. Russia is far superior in many ways. In Russia, everything is well-organized, people are good. People here in Turkey have *iyman* [faith in Islam], but not *insof* [sense of justice or mercy]. Turks are rather greedy, and Turkey is a mean nation, just like our Uzbeks. They pick on everything you do. Even if you do your job, they will still look for flaws. Russia is different, if you do what you were told to do, you won't have any complaints. Here, too, not everything is bad, there are good people too, but 70% of them as I mentioned are mean. Turks try to exploit you and pay you less. For example, sometimes you finish your work and sometimes rest for five to ten minutes before you start another job, you just get tired. Even then, they say "don't rest, just work". In Russia, Russians used to tell us to take a break. These Turks order tasks on top of tasks. Russians respected us. They treated us like humans. *Patents* and police are not an issue here in Turkey, but the employers are not good people. In Russia, police are quite annoying, and there is the "monster" called the *patent*. There are good and bad sides everywhere. I don't have a document in Turkey. I even joke with the Turkish police. I tickle his hand when greeting. But, slowly, if more Uzbeks come to Turkey, they will teach Turkish police how to take bribes. (Holida, female migrant from Uzbekistan, 39)

But, a preference for Russia over Turkey was not always unanimous among the Uzbek migrants we met in Istanbul. There were some migrants who preferred Turkey to Russia for a variety of reasons, particularly for religious reasons:

There are a lot of advantages [to Turkey] compared to Russia. I worked in Russia between 2012 and 2016. I worked for four years until I was deported. Here, in Turkey, there are very good opportunities to pray for Muslims. There are mosques everywhere [in Istanbul]. In Russia, we even had to eat pork when a situation was really difficult. Unlike Turkey, alcohol is sold on every corner in Russia. Sometimes, we had to run from construction sites right into the forests or neighborhood areas to escape FMS [Federal Migration Service] raids. Walking along streets in Russia fills us with stress, since you have to be alert for police checks. Russians don't like Muslims and some of them think that Muslims are terrorists. But, here in Istanbul, I can easily walk without any documents and the police don't care much about us. I can openly and proudly display my Muslim identity. I remember I had a lot of stress working in Russia, but here it is a lot

easier. Work is equally difficult everywhere, maybe because I have more faith in me now, it feels much easier for me here. For me, Turkey is much more comfortable and easier. But one negative thing is that the [US] dollar rate is increasing and the Turkish lira is losing its value. I don't want to stay in Turkey for a very long time. My plan is to build my own house and have a small cattle farm of my own with 15 to 20 bulls in Uzbekistan. I know I can't find a decent job. So, my farm would feed me. My father is now buying a bull every two to three months from the money I send from here. I want to work hard now so that I will be relaxed and look after my children when I am 35. My next dream is to send my parents on *Hajj* [Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca]. When I do these things, I will return to Uzbekistan. (Husniddin, male migrant from Uzbekistan, 25)

This is my first time in Turkey. Previously, I worked in Russia, but because of my *zapret* (entry ban) I had to come to Turkey. When I worked in Russia, I had a limited possibility to pray. The good thing about Turkey is that there are many beautiful mosques here and you can live like a Muslim and pray five times a day. If I want to go to Friday prayers, my Turkish *patron* (boss) never objects, but always encourages me to pray. The only problem here is that salaries are low [compared with Russia] and Turkish *patrons* try to use you as much as possible. (Shuhrat, male migrant from Uzbekistan, 41) (Fig. 5.2)

It is not rare that difficult working conditions lead to occupational diseases and even accidents. Interviewees in both Russia and Turkey



Fig. 5.2 Uzbek migrants in a sweatshop in Istanbul's Bayrampaşa district

described accidents at work as not uncommon: working on construction sites or on machines without proper protective equipment may lead to serious accidents, falls from high rises and crushed, burned or punctured hands or legs all served as typical examples. While these accidents do not happen every day, they are also not rare. In the case of work-related accidents, several of our informants preferred Turkey to Russia. Since workers are employed unofficially, in such circumstances they cannot count on healthcare services provided through medical insurance. When such accidents happen, Turkish employers, however, seemed more willing to offer assistance to at least provide emergency care. To recall one example from Turkey, retold by another migrant, an undocumented migrant from Pakistan had his hand crushed while working with equipment that makes zippers. Since the migrant had neither an official employment contract nor medical insurance, the only thing his employer did was take him to a private clinic for emergency medical care and reimburse the employee for a one-way ticket to Pakistan from his own pocket. In such circumstances, migrants can rely on the benevolence and kindness of their employers and the help of fellow migrants.

Unlike Turkey, there were many cases when migrant workers were injured on construction sites in Russia. Yet, Russian employers made the injured workers wait for an ambulance outside the worksite to avoid possible sanctions for unofficially employing undocumented migrants and failing to provide them with protective equipment, thereby precluding any claims for compensation. During such circumstances, migrant networks organize themselves to assist the injured person (see, e.g., Urinboyev, 2017, 2021). When a considerable amount of money is needed, whether to cover expensive medical care or to transport the deceased's body to their home country, migrant groups using their networks and social media platforms quickly spread word about an incident, the amount of money required and provide the details of the person collecting money. Everyone, regardless of the personal connection with the person in need, contributes some amount of money in cash or through local money transfer platforms. Typically, this practice serves as informal insurance policies for migrants, which provides an assurance that when something happens, they can also count on contributions from other migrants.

Other than accidents, difficult and hazardous working conditions lead to occupational hazards. As Babahan, a 55-year-old male migrant from Turkmenistan, confesses:

You shouldn't get sick here. Because of my work, I got hemorrhoids. I went to the doctor and had surgery, for which I paid 4000 Turkish liras (~US\$600 at the time of the interview). When I went there, they immediately operated on me within two to three hours since my condition was quite bad. Doctors here think only about money. Within two hours after the surgery, when even the anesthesia had not yet worn off, they said I could leave. They let me go, and I hadn't even fully regained consciousness. You don't have any values, and you can die if you get sick. It's good that my Turkish *patron* is a nice person. He said I could come to work after I rested and that he would compensate me for a part of my medical expenses. (Babahan, male migrant from Turkmenistan, 55)

GENDER-BASED EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS

The element of gender-based employment relations is probably one of the important avenues providing a striking difference between the experiences of Central Asian migrant workers in Russia and in Turkey. Well-established from previous research (Coşkun, 2014; Erder & Kaska, 2003; Gülçür & İlkaracan, 2002; Unal, 2016), since the 1990s migrant women from the former Soviet countries of Moldova, Russia and Ukraine are viewed as “*Natashas*” within Turkish society, a sexist term for a collective image of Russian or East European women coming to Turkey for sex work. With increasing numbers of women arriving from different parts of the world joining the cheap, informal labor market in Turkey, migrant women are viewed as sexually available. Yet, the term “*Natasha*” is still restricted to women from Russia and Eastern Europe. These women's undocumented status transforms their “legal vulnerability to sexual availability” (Parla, 2019).

As our interviewees from Turkey confirmed, migrant women's work is often fraught with sexual advances and obscene proposals from their male employers or colleagues. Employers' dominant positions as a result of migrant women's undocumented status and unequal employment relations often force women to either continue tolerating harassment from their male employers or to terminate their employment possibly risking remaining unemployed. The story of Mamura illustrates this quandary:

I have now been unemployed for several months and am doing one-off temporary jobs until I find a decent one. I have worked as a shop assistant and *manken* [live mannequin] in many places. It is difficult to find a decent *patron* [boss]. I try to find shops where the employer works with his wife

there. This is safer. Otherwise, they [male employers] often want you to work both as a *manken* and their mistress. Because the shop I was working in went bankrupt, I had to look for another job. A couple of weeks ago, I found one place looking for a mannequin of my body size. The *patron* was almost ready to offer me the job, we had almost agreed on the schedule and salary. When I said I had a fiancé who also works in Istanbul, he started to deviate from our agreement. And, then, he said right to my face, “I want to hire you because I want you to also become my *sevgili* [lover]. I am even ready to raise your salary, but since you have a boyfriend, I don’t think we have an agreement here.” This is a common thing in Turkey. That’s why I say I have a fiancé to potential employers. Last week, I went to a shop after seeing a mannequin job ad. I saw two Uzbek women working in the shop and, while waiting for the boss, I asked them if the boss was a decent person. They said no and told me that he just posts a mannequin job ad and keeps the vacancy open until he chooses a girl with a nice body willing to have a romantic relationship with him. I had to leave the place without even talking to the boss. (Mamura, female migrant from Uzbekistan, 29)

“Routinized sexual violence against undocumented migrant women” (Parla, 2019) is prevalent, not only in the retail sector, but also in the garment industry, as well as the food, tourism, entertainment and domestic and care services sectors, as the following interview excerpts show:

I quite recently arrived in Turkey just a month before the Covid-19 pandemic began. I was originally planning to go to Antalya, but the person who had promised me a job changed her mind just after I arrived in Istanbul. So, I decided to stay at some distant friends’ places and find a job here. They recommended a small textile sweatshop to me, where I worked for just a week. My job was to put brand tags on ready-made sweaters and prepare them for packaging. Every time the boss passed by, he would touch me here and there. His molestation intensified even if I said no. Then, he asked me out to dinner. I refused because it was clear what he wanted from me. I had to leave that place. Then, I worked in a café kitchen washing dishes. That *patron* also turned out to be same. “I will add a bonus to your salary, but you must stay in a hotel with me once a week,” he openly said. OK, I am divorced and still young, I might be open to a romantic relationship, but I would never sleep with that old man. Why would I be a private prostitute for an old man in his late 50s? So, I worked for less than two weeks there and quit. Then, the quarantine started and everything shut down. We are holding steady somehow with

daily jobs every now and then. I hope I will find a normal job when these lockdowns end. (Barchin, female worker from Uzbekistan, 27)

Before coming to Turkey, I worked in *Piter* [St. Petersburg] and Krasnodar in Russia. I heard different stories about Turkish men before, but I didn't know they were that "hungry" [*och*]. In Russia, it is very rare for a *nachalnik* [supervisor] to sexually harass someone. If anyone harasses us, it is our male migrants who do. Since I am divorced, I had co-habitated with a man, also a migrant from Uzbekistan. I would not say there was love between us, but living together had its advantages, since I did not have to pay for rent and food. This allowed me to send more money home. After being deported from Russia to Uzbekistan, I could not stay long in the village, so I came to Turkey. Here, everyone thinks you are available for sex. I had relationships with two or three Turkish men, because I saw it as an opportunity to cover a lot of my expenses. But, they are hungry, and we call them "*skovorodka*" [literally, frying pan], ha-ha. That's what we call men who perform oral sex. (Jamila, female migrant from Uzbekistan, 32)

I went to one *shirkat* recently. They offered me a job, and I asked what kind of a job it would be. They said it was an easy job. They said I had a good body, and they told me to do that kind of job. They said I can earn up to 200 to 300 liras [~US\$28–43 at the time of the interview] per day. They asked if I would work as a "*makon*", and, with my little Turkish, I thought it must be a cleaning job and immediately agreed. Right away, they put me in a car, and told me to pack my nice clothes. Then, on the way there, one of the girls in the car asked me whether I knew where I was going. I said, "Yes, it must be a cleaning job", to which she said, "No, to a brothel... You will sit and drink with men, and then provide a service," she said. Then, I immediately took off. I called the "*shirkat*" and scolded them severely. They said it was me who agreed to take the job. (Gulya, female migrant from Uzbekistan, 34)

I have mostly worked as a caregiver to children in Turkish families. Once I was called for a so-called job interview. That's when you go to someone's house and decide on the details of job. I went there based on my acquaintance's recommendation. A man was standing at the entrance. I didn't like his looks. I started to worry because usually it's a mother who invites you for such a job interview. Since I started to have second thoughts, I decided not to enter the house and offered to discuss the job right in the street, because, if I entered the house, he might lock the doors and rape me. He asked me when I arrived in Turkey, because they look for newly arrived and inexperienced women. I knew this tactic and I told him to call his wife and show me his children. As a precaution, I called my male friend and spoke to him on loudspeaker. I told him the exact address where I was. My friend told me not to enter the house and to

wait for him to arrive. The man who listened to all this just decided to leave. Then, I was sure that he was going to rape me. Possibly, he was not alone; there could have been other men inside. Because I have heard some similar stories when men lure powerless migrant women to a location and gang rape them. (Zumrad, female migrant from Uzbekistan, 38)

Our informants who worked in domestic work and domestic care reported that they experienced instances of sexual harassment while meeting their work obligations. However, they could not report these experiences to the police given their undocumented status as migrants and the lack of any formal agreement between them and their employers. Even if serious cases of harassment or rape become public, it is quite rare that an unbiased and fair investigation of such cases would proceed. This reality is exemplified by the recent death of a 23-year-old female Uzbek migrant, Nodira Qodirova, in the house of a well-known Turkish parliament member, a death that occurred in Ankara in September 2019. While several media reports claimed that Nodira, a live-in care worker, was a victim of sexual harassment (BBC Türkçe, 2019), the official police report considered her death a suicide. Incidents like this illustrate the lack of protection available to disposable and cheap labor provided by undocumented migrants.

REMARKS ON INFORMALITY AND *IYMON* AND *INSOF* IN THE RUSSIAN AND TURKISH LABOR MARKETS

This chapter primarily provides a comparative exploration of Central Asian migrants' experiences of the labor markets in Russia and Turkey. In undertaking this task, we emphasized understanding migrants' positions and patterns of incorporation into the labor markets, their interactions with various labor market actors, the gendered experiences of employment and migrants' agency and their capacity to navigate the risks and uncertainties under the conditions of informal employment. The main task was to understand how and why, despite all of the challenges associated with navigating the repressive legal landscape in Russia, many Central Asian migrants we encountered in Istanbul felt that Moscow offered greater agency and opportunity than Istanbul. Our informants' frequent references to the "*iymon-insof*" binary served as a comparative lens via which we explored the role of informal norms, power structures and extralegal negotiations and struggles in shaping migration

outcomes and migrant life trajectories alongside labor market incorporation in the Russian and Turkish migration regimes. Based on the empirical data from the Russian and Turkish migrant labor markets presented, we suggest that undocumentedness and informal employment do not necessarily lead to similar migration outcomes. In other words, the use of binaries such as “formal–informal” work or “legal–illegal” status cannot sufficiently explain migrants’ experiences within the labor markets and working conditions in different migration regimes. Instead, migrants’ agency and experiences from the labor markets are contingent upon the myriad informal processes and practices that determine the rules of the game within a specific migrant labor market.

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The Shadow Economy and the Street World as a Migration Arena

INTRODUCTION

According to the *2021 Rule of Law Index*, one of the leading global indicators on the rule of law published annually by the World Justice Project, Russia and Turkey ranked 101st and 117th, respectively, among 139 countries (World Justice Project, 2021). The low positions of these two countries in the *Rule of Law Index* is unsurprising given that both Russia and Turkey are non-democracies where law enforcement remains arbitrary, corruption and shadow economic transactions proliferate, civil society's capacity is constrained by legal and administrative restrictions and respect for and observance of human rights is poor. As we noted in Chapter One, today international migration and mobility primarily involve non-Western and nondemocratic migration locales (e.g., Russia and Turkey, along with Brazil, China, the Gulf States and Kazakhstan), political contexts that significantly differ from the traditional immigration countries situated in North America and Western Europe (IOM, 2021). Many of these newly emerging non-Western migration hubs occupy low positions on global indicators pertaining to the rule of law and governance. This implies that the majority of international migrants work and reside in countries with a relatively weak rule of law, widespread corruption and large shadow economies.

These differences are also reflected in the academic literature focused on migration from less developed to developing countries, the so-called

South–South migration (Bakewell et al., 2009; Botchwey et al., 2019; Hujo & Piper, 2010; Pholphirul, 2019). In this regard, several features distinguish South–South migration from the migratory processes that take place in the realm of South–North migration. First, South–South migration is characterized by weaker border control systems and law enforcement capacities, allowing those migrating greater agency in navigating immigration restrictions (De Lombaerde et al., 2014). Second and relatedly, less restrictive border and immigration control measures facilitate undocumented or irregular migration flows (Hujo & Piper, 2010). Third, South–South migration is primarily characterized by the prevalence of low-skilled, cheap and docile migrant labor, a distinctive element resulting from the aforementioned two features (Hujo & Piper, 2007; McKenzie, 2008). Fourth, South–South migrants often operate under the conditions of shadow economy employment and only remain temporarily in their host society, limiting their access to certain privileges and rights (Zabyelina, 2016).

An analysis of the above tendencies suggests that employment under the conditions of a weak rule of law and shadow economy is prevalent in non-Western migration locales. Various terms and definitions are used to refer to the shadow economy (Gerxhani, 2004). One typical definition views the shadow economy as a segment of the economy where transactions occur unofficially, thereby leaving no formal trace. Proposing a similar conceptualization, Schneider and Enste (2000) suggest that the shadow economy encompasses all economic activities contributing to the officially calculated GDP, but such activities remain unregistered in official records so as to avoid obligations and barriers stemming from overregulation, a high tax burden, a low level of trust in public institutions, corruption and arbitrary law enforcement. A widespread belief exists that the shadow economy—whether in the form of informal labor, tax evasion, bribes, nepotism, favors or other forms of informal exchanges—leads to direct monetary losses and erodes societal trust in public institutions, thereby reproducing unintended economic, political, legal and social consequences (Dreher & Schneider, 2010; Schneider, 2012; Schneider & Enste, 2000; Williams & Schneider, 2016). Resting on these assumptions, a great deal of effort has been and is spent on liquidating or formalizing shadow economic practices (Williams et al., 2013; Williams & Renooy, 2008, 2013). These efforts are particularly visible in the agendas of international organizations, such as the International Labor Organization (ILO), the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme

(UNDP), all of which have been working on these issues for more than 40 years (Curristine et al., 2007).

While acknowledging the harmful nature of the shadow economy, a steady surge in scholarly literature has called for reconsidering such a “one-size fits all” approach, which insufficiently explains the diversity of informal and shadow economic practices. This point brings us to the “diverse economies” perspective, developed by Gibson-Graham and her collective (Gibson-Graham, 2006, 2008), who argue for the necessity of considering the multifarious nature of economic activities when studying the informal economic practices in different parts of the world. Studies have shown that informal and shadow practices also reflect cultural and moral values, enabling actors to enhance a sense of self-worth within relevant social circles, and providing sources of esteem for ordinary people in social settings such as Russia (Humphrey, 2012; Rivkin-Fish, 2005). Indeed, in addition to economic perspectives, informal or shadow transactions may also be driven by ‘alternative currencies’ such as trust, respect and reputation (Pardo, 1996; Urinboyev & Polese, 2016; White, 1994), whereby even the meaning of money differs depending on the social and economic norms of a society (Parry & Bloch, 1989; Thomas, 1991; Urinboyev & Svensson, 2013). Several studies have attempted to explore not only the social significance of shadow economic practices in a certain context, but also their persistence and relevance to governance mechanisms (Ledeneva, 2006, 2013; Morris & Polese, 2013, 2014; Polese et al., 2016). Some studies have even claimed that the shadow economy is closely related to governance and, in some cases, may actually serve as the cure for an ineffective system rather than the disease (Darden, 2008; Ledeneva, 2013).

The above discussions have informed our understanding of the shadow economy in this chapter. That said, our aim is not to explore this phenomenon as a friend or as a foe (Eilat & Zinnes, 2002). Rather, we take a pragmatic approach by viewing the shadow economy as the rule, simply a standard operating procedure that characterizes migrant labor markets in non-Western, nondemocratic migration regimes. The primary rationale for this approach is motivated by the fact that the shadow economy is so omnipresent in such migration regimes that it becomes *all* that exists. In other words, informality has simply become part and parcel of everyday life for many migrants operating in the Russian and Turkish labor markets. This implies that portraying the shadow economy and informal migrant labor within it as instances of illegality precludes

“looking under the hood” of the Russian and Turkish migrant labor markets.

This chapter, then, aims to explore the interconnections between the shadow economy and the street world in the Russian and Turkish migrant labor markets. As we will empirically demonstrate, the term “street” (*ko’cha*) is frequently used by different migrant labor market actors in Russia and Turkey to refer to various informal, illegal and semi-legal practices that take place beyond state law. Given the weakness of formal legal mechanisms, street institutions serve as a parallel legal order regulating daily relations and activities. With these considerations in mind, in this chapter we focus on the shadow economy and the street world as a specific migration arena and provide “thick description” of Central Asian migrants’ experiences from the shadow economy and the street world in the Russian and Turkish labor markets.

We will explore the above processes through the life histories of three Uzbek migrants, allowing us to demonstrate the role of the street world and the shadow economy in the life trajectories of migrant workers in precarious migration contexts such as those in Russia and Turkey. We aim to show how three migrants—two female and one male—navigate the risks and uncertainties stemming from a weak rule of law environment. These three life histories resulted from our extensive transnational ethnographic fieldwork carried out between 2014 and 2022 in Russia, Turkey and Uzbekistan. Throughout that period, we maintained regular contact with these three migrants and closely followed the developments in their lives through intensive fieldwork and smartphone-based communication. Observing their lives afforded us the opportunity to collect their narratives of their experiences from the street world and the shadow economy, a difficult endeavor which allowed us to explore—ethnographically and biographically—the struggles, alliances and power dynamics among various formal and informal actors involved in different migration arenas characteristic of Russia and Turkey.

Throughout the following, we use pseudonyms for all three migrants and all of the other individuals that appear in the life histories. The first case focuses on Leyla, a female migrant who was pushed into sex work and encountered violence in Moscow as a result of her vulnerability, but later devised various strategies to adapt to the risks and uncertainties accompanying street life. The second case revolves around the life trajectory of Zarina, a female migrant who was exposed to sex work and drug trafficking in Turkey, but was able to navigate various precarities and

vulnerabilities thanks to her newly acquired street skills. The third case focuses on Shurik, a male migrant with street skills and carceral experience in Russia, whose case illustrates the role and impact of the street world in the lives of migrants in various migration contexts. The sections that follow provide “thick description” of the street world and the shadow economy in the Russian and Turkish migrant labor markets presented through these three life histories.

LEYLA: THE STREET WORLD AND SEX WORK IN MOSCOW

Leyla (a pseudonym) is a 34-year-old female migrant from a village in the Tashkent region of Uzbekistan, who had been working in Russia for five years at the time of our interview in November 2019. Shortly, after finishing technical college in 2006, when Leyla was 21 years old, she married Akmal, her cousin (her aunt’s son). Their marriage was performed by an *imam* (religious cleric) in accordance with the principles of Sharia law, representing a religious marriage (*nikah*) in Central Asia, but not legally recognized by the state. Although Leyla and Akmal were happily married and got along quite well, their relationship was full of legal complexities given that their marriage was not legally registered. When Leyla gave birth to their first son, Akmal was away in Russia working as a labor migrant. As a result, their first son was registered in Leyla’s name, meaning that the child had no any legal attachment to Akmal. However, their second child was legally registered listing Akmal as the father since he was back in Uzbekistan.

Working as a labor migrant in Moscow enabled Akmal to buy a small apartment in Tashkent city, where his wife and children lived. When Leyla and Akmal began the process of formalizing their marriage through the state civil registry department, it turned out that Akmal had developed a severe form of tuberculosis while working and living in an unfinished construction building on the outskirts of Moscow. This unexpected turn of events forced them to postpone formalizing their marriage, shifting their entire focus on Akmal’s treatment. The treatment lasted for nine months, eating up all of their savings. Despite their efforts, Akmal died in early spring of 2014, leaving Leyla alone with two small children.

Akmal’s death left Leyla in a vulnerable situation since she had been a housewife with limited legal literacy and no work experience. Several months later, Akmal’s brothers kicked Leyla and her two children out of their apartment. Leyla’s marriage to Akmal was not legally registered,

meaning Leyla had no formal right to claim ownership of the property according to Uzbek legislation. Since Leyla was legally illiterate, she did not know that she could claim ownership of their apartment through her second child, who was officially registered as her late husband's child.

As a result, she had to return to her parents' home with two children. But she knew that her parents' home would only offer temporary accommodation since her brother would marry soon and there would be little space for all of them. This situation led Leyla to look for income-earning opportunities in Russia, the only viable option for many single mothers in Uzbekistan, in order to avoid community gossip and to provide for their children. After several inquiries and checking with her networks, Leyla got in touch with her classmate Charos, who was working at a bakery in Moscow and promised to find a job at a chocolate factory should Leyla decide to travel to Russia. Charos even offered to help with the airline ticket, telling Leyla that she could repay the money later after receiving her first salary. In July 2014, leaving her two children with her parents, Leyla boarded a flight from Tashkent airport to Moscow's Domodedovo airport.

After arriving in Moscow, things did not go as planned. Charos picked Leyla up from the airport and brought her to an apartment in the north of Moscow. Telling Leyla that this would be her new accommodation in Moscow, Charos took Leyla's passport, explaining that she needed it to sort out her residence registration and *patent* application. Later, Leyla learned that it was not an accommodation where she would live with other tenants, but rather it was a brothel, and housed three other sex workers from Uzbekistan. Leyla's protests and refusal to work as a sex worker proved useless given that she had neither money nor documents to leave the brothel. In addition, Charos reminded Leyla that she had bought her an airline ticket, which she demanded repayment for by working at least one month. With no other options available and after being persuaded by the other women in the brothel, Leyla was forced to accept working as a sex worker.

This brothel exclusively serviced male migrants from Central Asian countries. Apart from Leyla, there were three women from Uzbekistan working at the brothel. One factor common to all four women was that they were all single mothers and victims of domestic violence and gender inequalities in Uzbekistan, a situation that pushed them to migrate to

Russia in search of job opportunities and a better future for their children. But, upon arrival, they were all deceived by the madam, Charos, who forced them into the sex work industry.

On average, Leyla and the other three women earned between 45,000 and 60,000 rubles (US\$750–1000) per month, depending on the number of clients they serviced each day. Charos, the madam, charged each client 1500 rubles (US\$25) for one hour of sexual services, while services for the whole night cost 4000 rubles (US\$65). Each woman served between eight and ten clients per day, while weekends were busier, reaching up to 15–20 clients per day. The madam had approximately eight mobile phones, through which she communicated with potential clients, predominantly male migrants from Central Asian republics. In terms of security, the madam paid a monthly *dolya* (share) to the local *uchastkovoy* (police) and street actors, such as *smotriashiy* (literally, a looker), a member of the Russian criminal subculture (thieves' law) responsible for the street world in the area. Ensuring security through both state officials and the street world was of paramount importance since there was always a threat of either a police raid or burglars who would attempt to enter the brothel as potential clients.

After being forced to work for nearly five months, Leyla was able to pay back the cost of her airline ticket as well earn US\$2000, which would allow her to return home. Leyla begged the madam to release her from the brothel and allow her to return to Uzbekistan for the sake of her two children. Given that Leyla was physically attractive and generated sufficient money by serving many clients, the madam returned Leyla's passport to her and gave her an additional US\$500, stating she would be welcome to again work with her should Leyla decide to return to Moscow. In late December 2014, on New Year's Eve, Leyla returned to Uzbekistan with more than US\$2000 in her pocket.

After returning to Uzbekistan, Leyla did not report the madam to the law enforcement bodies since it would bring her shame alongside the revelation that she had worked as a sex worker in Moscow. However, after spending four months in Uzbekistan without a decent job, Leyla realized that she would need more money to sustain her children and to buy an apartment of her own. Since she learned that salaries were much higher in Moscow, Leyla decided to return to Russia in the spring of 2015, but this time she was determined to find a decent job.

After returning to Moscow, Leyla got a job as a cleaner, which required many hours of hard work with little pay, sufficient only to cover her living

expenses in Moscow. Her income did not allow her to send money home given that she had to pay for her accommodation, meals and a monthly *patent* fee. At the same time, she was under pressure to earn money for her children's increasing expenses as well as to save money to buy an apartment as soon as possible. As a result, she decided to return to the brothel where she had previously worked. After negotiating, Leyla managed to strike a special deal with Charos, the madam, according to which they would split her earnings equally (fifty–fifty). For example, if Leyla received 4000 rubles from a client, 2000 would go to the madam and 2000 to Leyla.

Another factor that strengthened Leyla's position vis-à-vis the madam Charos was that Leyla had developed a special relationship with one of her former clients, Tursun, an Uzbek migrant belonging to a network of Chechen and Dagestani protection racketeers. Under this semi-romantic relationship, Leyla offered free sex to Tursun in exchange for protection from burglars and abusive clients. If Leyla or other women in the brothel faced problems, they usually sought help from Tursun. Leyla's capacity to provide street protection not only put her in a higher position within the brothel, but also granted her leverage to arrange a separate room for herself. Unlike the other three women who served clients in one big room partitioned by curtains (cubicle style), Leyla secured a room of her own in the brothel where she could receive clients privately. Owing to these circumstances, Leyla was able to send US\$2000 home each month.

However, Leyla's economic success did not last long. Tursun, who provided protection to Leyla, was arrested by the Russian police and received a seven-year prison sentence for racketeering and extortion-related crimes. These events left Leyla without any protection in the sex work industry, where she had to deal with exploitative pimps and madams, abusive clients and corrupt police on a daily basis. Normally, Leyla never accepted working *viezd* (serving clients outside the brothel, e.g., in a hotel or apartment), especially if the clients were migrants from Central Asia. Given that Leyla was no longer able to secure street protection for the brothel, she had little bargaining power vis-à-vis the madam, leaving her no option but to accept *viezd* work. In late autumn of 2015, Leyla was sent to one apartment in the north of Moscow to provide all-night sexual services to an Uzbek *posrednik* (middleman). But, the apartment where Leyla was supposed to "serve" the client turned out to be a dormitory located on a construction site, where twelve Uzbek migrant workers were waiting for her. This meant Leyla had to serve all of the migrant workers

throughout that night. Her protests did not help since the migrants beat her and no one was around to offer assistance since the construction site was in a closed area. The migrants took turns raping her throughout that night. In addition to raping her, the migrants shaved Leyla's head bald for "dishonoring Uzbeks' dignity in Russia".

It took more than two months for Leyla to recover from this incident. Due to her horrible experience, Leyla decided not to engage in sex work anymore and instead sought a normal job. In early February 2016, with the help of her friend, Leyla found a job as a kitchen porter at Chaykhona 1, a popular restaurant chain in Russia that specializes in Uzbek cuisine. She worked at the restaurant for about six months, but the long hours, poor working conditions and low pay led her to reconsider her plans. Leyla had a good relationship with Inna, a waitress at the restaurant. In addition to her part-time waitressing job, Inna also worked as a call girl and provided sexual services at a sauna near Moscow's Bibirevo metro station. Learning about Leyla's past experience and her constant complaints about the working conditions and low pay, Inna invited Leyla to be her co-worker at the sauna. Inna needed a partner given that in most cases clients in the sauna requested at least two girls. After some consideration, in August 2016, Leyla decided to accept Inna's offer and joined her when they were called to the sauna.

Much to Leyla's surprise, the terms and conditions at the sauna were clear cut. There were two options available for sex work at the sauna: the first option meant that the sauna would find a client for the women offering sexual services, while through the second option women brought their own client(s) to the sauna. Under the first option, Leyla received 2500 rubles (~US\$40) from the client for her one-hour sexual service, of which 1000 rubles (~US\$15) went to the sauna. The sauna usage fee was paid by the client. In the latter case when Leyla brought her own client, she charged 3750 rubles (~US\$57), from which 1750 rubles (~US\$30) was paid for a one-hour sauna usage fee and for protection in case of abusive clients or a police raid. The advantage of sauna-based sex work was that it offered safety to women, allowing them to avoid abusive clients and police raids, with no pimp or madam taking a percentage of their income and controlling their workload. But, since this was a cheap sauna mostly oriented toward migrants from Central Asia and the Caucasus, Leyla did not feel comfortable working there for a long period due to her past exploitative experiences. She, thus, continued to look for better alternatives.

As Leyla was exploring different alternatives, in December 2016, Bernara, one of her acquaintances from the street world, helped her find sex work at Cosmos, the largest hotel in Russia built during the Soviet times in preparation for the XXII Summer Olympic Games in 1980. Like other sex work venues in Moscow, the work at this hotel also had its own informal rules and practices. First, the standard rate for one-hour sexual services was 6000 rubles (~US\$100), an amount double that from the sauna. Each woman working at the hotel was required to pay 65,000 rubles (~US\$1100) as a monthly *dolya* (share), which went toward informal structures within the hotel management offering facilities and protection (both from abusive clients and the police). On top of this, each woman had to work on a fifty-fifty rule, meaning that she had to give half of her earnings to one Russian madam from the street, who informally ran the hotel's sex work business. For example, if the woman received 12,000 rubles (~US\$200) from the client, 6000 rubles (~US\$100) would go to the madam. This offer came in quite handy for Leyla since she was eager to avoid Central Asian migrants and, instead, wanted to target higher income clients, predominantly tourists and businessmen from foreign countries. Even though Leyla felt safe and did not have to deal with migrants, her initial euphoria quickly evaporated. This was due to the fact that she had to "hunt" for potential clients in the hotel's lobby and cafes, competing with the other 25 women working there. She ended her first month of work netting an income of only about 15,000 rubles (~US\$250), barely covering her living expenses, let alone allowing her to send money home. A similar situation persisted for the next four months, leading her to seek alternatives with better pay and safety.

Although she earned little at Cosmos, working there allowed her to broaden her networks, subsequently later paving the way for a new opportunity in the sex work business centered around a chain of different hotels in Moscow. This time the rules of the game were different given that Leyla was not bound to one specific hotel, but could operate as a call girl in select hotels. In this situation, business was organized by a dispatcher, typically a Russian woman with good connections to the hotel industry who took a *dolya* (share) from call girls like Leyla who needed clients and a safe place to provide sexual services. This arrangement was also handy for the informal management structures of different hotels, who often welcomed additional income. Under this arrangement, hotel guests approach the hotel security guard or receptionist, who in turn would call

the dispatcher asking for call girls for their guests. The dispatcher, then, taking guests' preferences into account, sent a call girl to the hotel. The money generated from Leyla's work was equally divided into three parts: Leyla received one-third, another third went to the dispatcher for finding a client for her and the last third was given to the hotel for arranging a safe venue for sex work. Despite Leyla's income being divided into three parts, she still earned good money from her work, ranging between 80,000 and 120,000 rubles (~US\$1350–2000) per month.

Because Leyla had worked in this business for nearly one year and became more experienced, she later realized that she could earn even more by working as an *individualka*, a call girl working individually without a pimp/madam or hotel attachment. This represented high-risk/high-gain work, meaning that she would pay only 30% of her income to the dispatcher, leaving the remaining 70% for herself. But Leyla had to handle all of the other issues on her own, such as renting an apartment, meals, paying a daily fee of 3000 rubles (~US\$50) to a taxi driver who would also act as a bodyguard and, most importantly, sorting out any problems with the police. In order to work as *individualka*, Leyla contacted dispatchers, working as administrators of specialized websites offering escort services in Moscow. To enter into this business, the dispatcher explained that (on top of the abovementioned 30% share) Leyla had to pay a website registration fee of 3000 rubles (~US\$50) as well as monthly website maintenance fees of 1000 rubles (~US\$16). On top of these fees, Leyla also paid 6000 rubles (~US\$100) to the dispatcher as gratuity for allowing her into the business. The role of the dispatcher was crucial since he/she found clients for call girls via several websites that featured girls' profiles with photographs and a list of sexual services offered by each call girl. Without dispatchers, it was quite a time-consuming and risky process to find real clients, especially in light of frequent police raids. Dispatchers, as experienced administrators of websites, constantly improve the search engine optimization of their websites and ensure that their websites pop up first on the Google and Yandex search engines. Dispatchers also maintain a database of blacklisted phone numbers and addresses in order to avoid police raids and abusive clients. If a phone number or apartment/hotel location is suspicious or call girls were previously caught in an area, the database automatically shows red text and the dispatcher ignores the call. One of the peculiarities of this kind of work was that Leyla never met the dispatcher in-person; instead, all of these contractual relations were based on trust and a verbal

agreement and their interaction was conducted through phone calls and messengers.

Working as *individualka*, Leyla was now able to generate even more income, sending approximately US\$1500 to US\$2000 home monthly. To her parents' surprise given this large amount of money, she explained that she was working two jobs simultaneously. However, this economic success also incurred significant costs. Leyla had to cope with numerous risks and uncertainties on a daily basis, since the dispatcher only helped with finding clients for her, but did not take responsibility for any police-related problems. While sex work is not criminalized in Russia, many call girls suffer from arbitrary police actions. When call girls are caught during a police raid, they usually have three options: (1) face the legal consequences and pay an administrative fine of 1500 rubles (~US\$25) to the state; (2) offer a bribe of 10,000 to 15,000 rubles (~US\$160–250) to the police officers or (3) instead of a bribe, offer free sex to the police. Many call girls often chose the third option and offer free sex, since they neither wanted to be registered in the police database nor pay a bribe. But, during raids, police mostly aimed to catch drivers whom the police could treat as pimps and, thereby, accuse them of organizing sex work, a criminal act according to Articles 240 and 241 of the Russian Criminal Code. The probability of a severe criminal punishment meant that the police could extort a huge bribe from drivers, the primary reason the police were so eager to catch them. Leyla recounted an incident when their driver was caught during a police raid. The police demanded the driver pay a bribe of 100,000 rubles (~US\$1660) if he did not want to face criminal charges. Since Leyla and the other call girls had a good relationship with the driver, they lent the driver the required sum, thus saving him from a potential prison sentence.

In the spring of 2019, the police raided an apartment where Leyla and two other call girls were offering sexual services to a group of clients. This was a raid jointly organized by the police and immigration officials aimed at fulfilling a monthly quota to fight sex work and undocumented migration. This time the police accepted neither a bribe nor free sex offered by the girls. Given that Leyla did not have a valid *patent* or residence registration, it was obvious that she had an undocumented legal status. As a result, her case was further transferred to a court. According to the court decision, Leyla received an expulsion (deportation) order and a ban from entering Russia for the next five years. These developments put an end to Leyla's almost five-year-long migrant life in Russia and resulted in her returning to her children in Uzbekistan.

In August of 2021, the last time we met Leyla in a small town outside Tashkent, she was no longer involved in sex work. Instead, she was running a small factory producing plus-size underwear for women. Having spent nearly five years in Moscow, Leyla was aware that there was a niche in the Uzbek market for plus-size underwear. Leyla's business idea proved successful and generated a stable income for Leyla and her family. Leyla's factory also provided employment to nearly 30 women in the town. During our last meeting, we also learned that Leyla was able to re-establish ownership of her late husband's property after hiring a lawyer, an outcome which resulted from Leyla's enhanced legal literacy and resilience.

ZARINA: NAVIGATING PRECARITIES AND VULNERABILITIES IN FERGHANA AND ISTANBUL

Zarina (a pseudonym) is a 31-year-old female migrant from a village in the Ferghana valley in Uzbekistan. After having worked in Russia for three years, she had been working in Turkey for five years at the time of our interview in 2020. Zarina married at the early age of 15. While the legal age of marriage for girls in Uzbekistan is 17, it is not rare among many parents in rural areas of the Ferghana valley to marry their daughters earlier, at the age of 15 or 16, officially registering the marriage only after the bride reaches adulthood. Zarina was from one such family. However, soon after reaching 18, as a result of domestic violence from her husband and in-laws, she was divorced with a two-year-old daughter on her hands and pregnant with another child. Zarina returned to her parents' house and later gave a birth to her second child, a son. However, in her parents' house, she did not feel comfortable since her parents were ashamed of her divorce and had to accommodate her and her two children. Although Zarina worked as a cashier in a local grocery store, her earnings were insufficient to cover her costs. In addition, constant community gossip was directed at her as if she was involved in intimate relationships with several villagers. As a result, Zarina started wearing a *hijab*, a shield used by many divorced women in Uzbekistan against community gossips and rumors. After a couple of years of staying in her parents' house and still unable to secure accommodation of her own, Zarina decided to find a job in Russia. She planned to work for several years to earn enough money to buy a small apartment of her own in Ferghana city, where she could avoid village gossip and neighbors' judgmental looks. Leaving her children with

her parents, Zarina went to Russia as a migrant worker in 2011, a typical coping strategy among young, divorced women in Uzbekistan.

With few acquaintances, it was not easy for Zarina to enter the Russian labor market. She faced deceit, fraud and discrimination, a reality experienced by many Central Asian migrants in Russia. She worked in several places in and around Moscow, jobs which included cleaning offices, looking after an older woman and working in chemical-laden printing houses and refrigerated poultry farms. The last stable job with a relatively decent salary she found was at a chocolate factory just outside Moscow. Like many other fellow migrants, Zarina did not always have a valid work permit. Initially, she tried to comply with the Russian immigration rules. She tried to regularly pay her *patent* fee and renew her residence registration, but a couple of times she missed the monthly deadline to pay the *patent* fee, because she did not receive her salary on time. Since she sent her earnings home right after receiving her salary, Zarina could not find enough money to pay the *patent* fee during the designated period. According to immigration rules, failing to pay a fee by the designated period automatically invalidates the *patent*, one of the typical factors leading to migrants in Russia to become undocumented. After a *patent* becomes invalidated, a migrant must exit Russia and enter again to restart the *patent* application process from the beginning. Otherwise, his/her stay in Russia is deemed illegal. The cheapest option for migrants to exit/enter Russia is crossing Russian–Kazakh or Russian–Ukrainian border with the help of migrant taxi drivers. Given these expenses, not all migrants try to maintain their legal status. After being unable to pay her *patent* fee on time, Zarina's *patent* became invalid. Nevertheless, she continued to work in the chocolate factory since her documents were in place when she was hired. After having worked in the factory for more than nine months, she was stopped during a raid by immigration officials on the street for a random document check. As a result, the immigration officials transferred her case to the court for further processing. Since Zarina lacked the required documents, the court issued a deportation order from Russia with a five-year entry ban, meaning Zarina could not return to Russia for the next five years. So, Zarina's migrant career in Russia ended in 2014 and she was deported to Uzbekistan.

Since she sent almost all of her earnings home on a monthly basis, Zarina was able to save some money. However, this was insufficient to buy even a small apartment in a small industrial town near her village. Moreover, Zarina knew that she had to find a job to feed herself and

her children. Instead of buying an apartment, Zarina decided to buy a car so that she could earn money through informal taxi driving, one of the largest informal income-generating options not only in Uzbekistan, but across Central Asia. While taxi driving among women is not a widespread phenomenon in Uzbekistan, she was forced to take up this option given that she could not find any other formal job and the doors of Russia were closed to her. Taxi driving helped sustain a bearable life, but it was insufficient for achieving her dreams. As Zarina's children grew, so did her expenses. Moreover, she and her children continued living in her parents' house, which had become even more crowded following her brother's marriage. This meant that Zarina had to earn more, a task that was becoming less viable in the country. As a result of the introduction of draconian entry ban laws in Russia from 2013 through 2015, the number of entry-banned Uzbek migrants increased drastically, leading them to look for alternative migration destinations. Simultaneously, the number of Uzbek people going to Turkey for work increased. Zarina also became interested in going to Turkey and began exploring her options.

It turned out that Gulya, a friend of Zarina's mother, had been working in Istanbul since 2010. Gulya offered Zarina help in finding a job and temporary accommodation should Zarina decide to travel there. Zarina did not think for long and decided to go to Turkey in 2015, leaving her children with her parents once again. Gulya instructed Zarina to join four other women who were also flying to Istanbul on the same flight so that Gulya could pick them up from Istanbul Ataturk airport. But, when they arrived, Gulya was not there and Zarina and the other four women had to stay for two nights at the airport with no clue regarding what to do next. Surprisingly, on the third day, two men sent by Gulya picked them up from the airport.

As Zarina recounted, this was a deliberate move to ensure that no one from the same flight from Uzbekistan witnessed who picked up Zarina and the other women. At the same time, this strategy was used to make the women more docile and desperate to find a job. On the way from the airport, the men who picked up Zarina and her companions said that they would take them to Bursa, a city on the western coast of Turkey for house cleaning jobs. The men took everyone's passports, explaining that they might easily lose them since their cleaning jobs required that they move from one house to another on a daily basis. They also made Zarina remove her *hijab*, justifying it as the employers' wishes.

In Bursa, the women were separated and taken to home-based brothels. It turned out that Gulya had sold Zarina and the others to pimps for US\$1500 each. Zarina's initial resistance did not help, since she was severely beaten and threatened with her life. She was forced into sex work for about one year without any possibility of contacting her parents and children in Uzbekistan. As she described it, her workday started around midday when she would receive clients in the apartment where she and the other women were living. Depending on the turnout, she would serve 10–50 clients a day. Around or before midnight, she would be taken to a client's place, an individual who had paid for an entire night. She would be brought back, usually by the pimps or their guards, early the next morning. Whenever she was outside the brothel, either on her way to a client's place or for any other purpose, Zarina would not be left alone, and instead was accompanied by pimps or guards. Zarina and the other women in the same apartment would receive a certain percentage of the money they earned, but it never accumulated or amounted to much. As Zarina recounted:

When we sit and drink with clients in the apartment, we order drinks or soft drugs (e.g., marijuana) and they [pimps' people] bring them to us and bill it to us. After working, we often don't remember what and how much we ordered; they just tell us the cost and often it is equivalent to what we earned. Or it [the money] is often stolen. So, we are not paid a dime in the end. And they often encourage us to buy drugs, under the influence of which we usually do not comprehend much of what is going on around us. One of the girls who worked with us was so addicted to drugs that she never cared about when or how she could gain her freedom.

After about a year, as the queue of clients for Zarina's services thinned and she became "worn out", the pimps offered her the option to buy her freedom. Kicked out of the house with her passport returned to her after a year of sex work, Zarina did not know what to do next. She and another Uzbek woman who was also set free at the same time decided not to leave behind Shahlo, a third Uzbek woman still owned by the pimps and still in "service". They asked a client to order Shahlo's services and bring her to a designated location in his car. But, their escape plan failed quite quickly; all three girls were caught five minutes after picking Shahlo up at the designated location. The pimps and guards severely beat all three girls, incapacitating them from even walking for weeks. Moreover, the

pimps told Zarina and her Uzbek friend that they now owed an additional US\$1000 each for daring to challenge them in such a way. Her passport was taken away again and she was threatened with death for escaping. Now, Zarina had to resume sex work, this time on her own, to earn the money she owed. She was unable to report the incident to the police, since the pimps' associates were everywhere issuing death threats, and she was sure that as a foreigner without any documents she had no chance of persuading the authorities. It took Zarina several more months to repay her new debt. Yet, her client "database" made it relatively easy for Zarina to find clients so that she could earn in order to pay off her debt.

After returning her debt and thereby "regaining" her freedom, Zarina assumed various temporary jobs, mostly daily, alternating those with occasional sex work. However, both sex work and day jobs were unstable, leaving Zarina needing more money. In the meantime, she was back in touch with her parents explaining her almost year-long absence as "slavery" on a remote farm. As Zarina developed her own network of connections, she became familiar with people involved in illegal activities. She was later offered a job delivering narcotics through a ferry route between Bursa and Istanbul. Zarina explained the job as follows:

They would wrap up small batches of cannabis totaling one to one-and-a-half kilos around my belly. I would wear a large robe on top [of my clothes] and cover my head with a *hijab*. This was done to minimize any suspicion, so that people would view me as a pious believer. Then, I would take the ferry and travel for about two hours. I would just find a spot on the ferry and sit quietly until we reached the ultimate destination. After disembarking, two men would be waiting for me in a car. Before allowing me to sit, they would ask "*Mal sağ mı?*" ["Is the shipment alright?"]. After my affirmative response, they would take me to some secluded area where two women who work for them would remove the shipment. After they counted the batches and checked the weight, they would give me money in [US] dollars. After receiving the money, I was supposed to bring the money back to the people who supplied the narcotics. I did not count that money — the people who received it counted it in front of me. Because I did not cheat, they started to trust me after several shipments. For one shipment, they usually paid me US\$1000. The shipments did not take place every day, but it was once in a fortnight or so. In one of my last shipments, we went as a group of six women, some of whom I knew beforehand. But, this time, four women from our group were caught by the police and were taken immediately into custody. Because we were

sitting in different places, thank God, I and one other woman were not caught. We delivered the goods and brought back the money. But since the drug dealers lost a lot of money because the other four women were caught by the police, they paid us very little. This upset me greatly, but I could not do anything at that moment. Instead, what I did was, when a convenient moment arrived, I just stole five kilos of their cannabis and escaped from Bursa where I worked for them. They looked for me in both Bursa and Istanbul for a long time, but never found me. I stayed at a friend's place and hid there for a couple of months. Since I knew some people from the street world, I later sold the drugs in small batches and made a lot of money. In one month, I sent home US\$7000. I just explained to my parents that I was able to recover my unpaid ten-month salary from my former employer. Those drug dealers could not find me, but I learned later that they changed locations and the 'mules' they worked with. Although they did not find me and three years have passed since then, I am still afraid and avoid going to places where their people may wander. For example, I go to Aksaray only if I really have to and, even if I go, I take someone with me.

Several months after she hid in Istanbul, Zarina tried to find a regular job and start a "normal" life. It took a while for Zarina to restart her life with regular jobs; she had to engage in occasional sex work depending on the situation. She also changed several jobs in different quarters of Istanbul until she found her current job in a semi-underground textile sweatshop in Istanbul's Bayrampasha district, which produced different types of jumpers and sweaters. Thanks to her tough character and leadership skills, Turkish employers have promoted her to the level of *usta* (literally, master, or a first-line supervisor), where she was overseeing ten of her migrant co-workers. In terms of accommodation, she also had to change many shared apartments.

In January 2022, the last time we met Zarina in Istanbul, she was cohabitating with Jora, an unmarried Uzbek migrant eight years younger than Zarina. Interestingly, both knew that their romantic relationship would continue as long as they were migrants in Turkey. Zarina soberly understood that Jora's parents would never allow him to marry her. Apart from romantic experiences, cohabitating with a partner was a deliberate strategy some female migrants used to minimize the hardships of migrant precarity and sexual harassment from employers (Parla, 2020), a reality many female migrants face in Turkey. For Zarina, living with Jora under a *nikah* (religious marriage without formal registration) not only

minimized her own expenses (for room and board), but also provided security allowing her to avoid sexual advances from Turkish employers, colleagues and strangers on the street. If there was one thing that Uzbek female migrants disliked in Turkey, it was men's importunity toward single women and girls. Being accompanied by a male partner allowed women to avoid male advances on the street. For Jora, his relationship with Zarina meant that he had access to regular sex and a person who would cook and look after him. At the end of the day, they could rely on each other to a certain point when one of them faced financial or other difficulties. Thus, this was a relationship of mutual calculation not entirely devoid of romantic affection.

SHURIK: FROM MOSCOW'S STREET TO ISTANBUL'S MOSQUE

Shurik (32, male) is a migrant worker from the Fergana valley in Uzbekistan. He is a street-smart and physically fit individual with a rich experience in street life and brawls. This experience is also visible in his post-school career, during which he worked in the informal taxi sector, which required physical strength and organizational skills. In 2011, shortly after finishing secondary school in rural Fergana, Shurik began working as a *posadchik*, a regulator of the informal taxi sector. Due to the high unemployment rate in Uzbekistan, the informal taxi sector has become a major source of self-employment and an income-generating opportunity for many of the unemployed in Uzbekistan. However, given that the informal taxi sector was informally organized, there was a need to maintain order in terms of queues, preventing price dumping and gate-keeping. As a *posadchik*, Shurik maintained daily order in the informal taxi sector in his home district's bazaar, which served as a primary local transport hub. His job included directing passengers to the taxis waiting in the queue, disciplining unruly drivers when they tried to jump the queue or offered a different fee than the established rate and gate-keeping and controlling the entry of new taxi drivers. Sometimes, when oral warnings did not work, Shurik resorted to physical violence to discipline drivers, a street job that required physical strength and experience in conflict resolution. As compensation for his "law and order" work, Shurik received a daily *dolya* (share) from each driver, allowing him to cover his living expenses. But, despite these informal income-earning opportunities, Shurik decided to change his livelihood strategy and move to Russia

as a migrant worker. This decision was driven by Shurik's desire to earn more and try his luck in a new country.

Shurik arrived in Moscow on May 15, 2014, together with four of his co-villagers who had previously worked in Moscow. But, unlike his fellow villagers, Shurik did not enter the construction sector; instead, he got a job as a seller at Food City (*Fudsiti*) on the outskirts of Moscow, the largest wholesale food distribution bazaar in Russia, which employs thousands of migrant workers from Central Asia and the Caucasus. Approximately 5000 wholesale and retail vendors sell nearly 150,000 tons of products monthly, about 15% of all food sales in Moscow. His job as a seller was not similar to typical jobs in the sales sector, but rather working as a seller in Food City involved a myriad of informal practices such as (1) hosting and providing logistical support to entrepreneurs (*rossiychilar*) who brought agricultural products in large trucks from Uzbekistan, (2) negotiating the *dolya* (share) typically collected by Food City's informal power hierarchies, (3) selling Uzbek entrepreneurs' (*rossiychilar*) products on a wholesale basis to supermarkets, restaurants and cafes and hotels, small wholesale and retail markets, catering companies and retail customers and (4) providing protection ("roofing" [*kryshevanie*] in street jargon) from racketeers and bandits operating in bazaar areas. Owing to his previous street experience, Shurik gradually gained the trust of many Uzbek entrepreneurs who needed to quickly sell their products and safely return to Uzbekistan. In return for his services, Shurik received a payment from the *rossiychilar*, amounting to about 60,000 rubles (~US\$1700) per month.

According to rumors circulating among migrants, Food City was informally controlled by a high-level official from the Russian law enforcement bodies. In the words of Shurik, Food City was a separate republic, or a small state within the state with its own legal order and informal governance system. Many Uzbek migrants we encountered there stated that they paid a *dolya* [share or protection fee] to *kuratori* [curators] who ensured that no raid by immigration officials would occur on the bazaar's territory, a privilege allowing migrants to work and live without a work permit and residence registration. Furthermore, Chechen and Dagestani protection racketeers, key actors in the street world, could not operate freely in the Food City area given that the bazaar fell under the protection of a top law enforcement official.

Given the fact that selling had a seasonal nature and Uzbek entrepreneurs brought their products to Russia mostly during the harvest

season (May–October), Shurik had to look for other income opportunities during the off-season periods. This situation enticed Shurik to explore other avenues where his street experience and skills would generate a high income.

Working as a seller at Food City bazaar enabled Shurik to integrate more closely into the street life of Moscow and establish connections with a small group of Uzbek migrants who were involved in various illegal activities (e.g., fake immigration document production and sales, illegal sales of train tickets and extortion) at Moscow's Kazanskiy railway station (*vokzal*). Kazanskiy *vokzal*, situated at Komsomolskaya square, is one of nine railway stations in Moscow serving the Trans-Aral railway line (among others) departing to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Therefore, when visiting this railway station, one may spot many migrants arriving from and departing to Central Asia. Given the high concentration of migrant workers at Kazanskiy *vokzal*, many cafés serve Central Asian food and many underground printing houses produce fake immigration documents for migrants. Shurik worked there in different capacities such as selling resident registrations and other fake immigration documents to migrants, acting as an intermediary between migrants who needed cheap train ticket to Uzbekistan and train controllers (*provodniks*) who made extra income by illegally providing cheaper train tickets to migrants, as well as extorting money and telephones from non-Uzbek (mostly, Kyrgyz and Tajik) migrants who came to Kazanskiy *vokzal*. Despite his extortion work, Shurik remained loyal to his fellow villagers who primarily worked in Moscow's construction sector by supporting them when they experienced problems.

Although different ethnic criminal groups operated within the territory of Kazanskiy *vokzal*, Uzbeks occupied a dominant position. According to Shurik, this was partly a result of the chief of the police at Kazanskiy *vokzal*, a Russian originally from Uzbekistan's Andijan region. Owing to their common origin (*zemliachestvo*), the Russian police officer acted as a *krysha* (roof) to the Uzbek criminal group and secretly informed them about upcoming raids organized by law enforcement bodies so that they would stay away from the *vokzal*. In return, Shurik and his friends reciprocated by regularly paying *dolya* (10–15% of their profit) to the Russian police officer. For example, if Shurik earned 100,000 rubles per month, he gave 10,000–15,000 rubles to the police chief.

However, the rules of the game at Kazanskiy *vokzal* drastically changed in early 2015 following the retirement of the police chief. He was replaced

by a new chief, who, unlike his predecessor, had no sympathy for Uzbeks, but instead had an agenda of fighting against street actors and criminal groups. As a result, Shurik and his friends failed to find common ground with the new police chief, who was, in their words, a “communist”, a metaphor used to refer to law-abiding state officials in the Uzbek cultural context. These changes were particularly felt by Shurik and his friends in early 2015 when a street brawl (*ulichnaya draka*) between Uzbek and Tajik criminal groups erupted within the territory of Kazanskiy vokzal. Even though Shurik and his friends regularly extorted money from migrants, their victims were primarily Kyrgyz and Tajik migrants, while many Uzbek migrants could remain “under the radar” due to their shared ethnic identity. The main trigger of the interethnic brawl was an extortion incident in which the Tajik criminal group demanded a monthly *dolya* (share) from the owner of an Uzbek café located on the premises of the railway station. This act was perceived as an insult by Shurik and his friends, who regularly provided protection to the café owner. Paying a *dolya* to Tajiks also carried a moral dimension, since paying Tajiks was considered a sign of weakness and an attack on the honor and dignity of Uzbeks in Moscow. More than half of the participants in the brawl, including Shurik, were immediately arrested by the Russian paramilitary police (*OMON*). After spending a few days at a nearby police department, Shurik was sent to one of the pretrial detention facility (*SIZO*) in Moscow city, where he spent the next six months awaiting his trial and the court’s verdict.

After arriving at the pretrial detention facility, Shurik was placed in an “*osobo opasnaya hata*” (very dangerous cell), a cell (*hata*) he shared with seven “*polosatye*” (literally, “striped”) inmates who were all recidivists accused of committing serious crimes and all with rich knowledge (*ponyatka*) of informal norms and hierarchies within prisons (so-called, thieves’ law). In other words, prison was a kind of home to many of these *polosatye* inmates in Shurik’s cell, a lifestyle visible in many tattoos on their bodies, such as *KOT*, or “*korennoy obitatel tyurmi*”, which translates as an indigent inhabitant of the prison. Given that Shurik was already well-versed in street law and regularly gave *grev* (a donation) to an *obshak* (mutual assistance fund among prisoners), it was not that difficult for him to integrate into pretrial detention life. Owing to his rich street experience, he knew how to behave and find common ground when interacting with the *polosatye*. Shurik managed to build a good relationship with Ruslan, a *polosatiy* inmate from Tatarstan, who served as a *hatnik*, an informal leader

of the cell (*bata*). Because each inmate's stay in the pretrial detention facility is temporary, Ruslan was soon transferred to one of the correctional colonies (*zona*) outside Moscow to serve his prison sentence. This meant that there was a need for a new *hatnik* who would oversee the *bata* and educate newly arrived inmates about prison subcultures based on the principles of the "thieves' law". Seeing that Shurik held a solid *ponyatka*, Ruslan nominated Shurik as the new *hatnik* to replace him after his transfer to the prison colony. The *vory* (thieves and criminal authorities), after checking Shurik's background and reputation on the street, accepted his candidacy.

As a *hatnik*, Shurik's duties included receiving newly arrived inmates, giving them *ponyatka* about the thieves' law, completing a background check of newly arrived inmates (whether they collaborated with police, whether they were homosexual), solving disputes (*rams*) among inmates, managing and collecting contributions to the *bata's* mini-*obshak* and providing supplies to inmates (e.g., tea, cigarettes and soap) when they departed to another destination (pretrial detention facility or a correctional colony) after receiving the court's decision. Working as a *hatnik*, Shurik was able to expand his networks in the street world, which later served as a vantage point in reaching a higher position within informal prison hierarchies. After being held in pretrial detention for six months, Shurik was transferred to colony X in the Moscow province in mid-2015, where he served his sentence until early 2020.

In the post-Soviet space, both prisoners and ordinary people use the word "zona" to refer to prisons. Colony X was a strict-regime correctional facility, or *zona*, for men serving prison sentences for the first time (known in Russian as a colony for *pervokhody*). In the words of Shurik, colony X was a black *zona* (*chernaya zona*), where *blatnye*—informal power hierarchies represented by members of the Russian criminal world (thieves' law)—colloquially known as *polozhenets* or *smotriashiy* (representatives of the thief) and *barashnik* (head of the barrack) played decisive roles in determining "the rules of the game". The formal prison management structures, such as the *nachalnik* (head of the prison) and *menty* (a Russian colloquial nickname for police officers), had a limited impact on regulating prisoners' everyday lives and routines. Cigarettes and tea served as the main currencies in prisoners' daily transactions and relations. Each night, prisoners played cards (*qimor*) and generated income for the *obshak*, a mutual assistance fund among prisoners. But, prison management and power relations are different in so-called red *zonas* (*krasnaya*

zona). In red *zonas*, formal prison management structures (i.e., reds) exercise full control, while prisoners must comply with the colony regime rules and work on a daily basis.

Because colony X was a black *zona*, prisoners enjoyed mobility inside the prison walls, including access to mobile phones and the Internet. Although mobile phone use was illegal in the *zona*, prisoners could use it at almost any time of day. However, due to the higher probability of *shmon* (police checks) during the day, many prisoners preferred to use their mobile phones at night, between the hours of 20.00 and 05.00. Furthermore, because mobile phone use was illegal, prisoners typically kept their mobile phones and other forbidden items in a *gashnik* (a secret hole or hidden place), which exists inside each barrack. Mobile phones entered the *zona* via two primary channels: (1) *menty* secretly carried mobile phones into the prison, hiding them in their jacket or anus, and then sold them to prisoners through a *baryga* (reseller); or (2) mobile phones arrived through *perekid* or *bros* (throwing), whereby someone standing outside the prison walls threw the phone onto the prison territory. Given these tricky routes, smartphones remained prohibitively expensive inside the prison. For example, if a basic Nokia mobile phone cost 5000 rubles (US\$125) in a store, a *baryga* sold it to prisoners for 15,000 rubles (US\$375). Smartphones were even more expensive. If the cheapest Chinese Huawei smartphone sold for 13,000 rubles (US\$200) outside prison, it cost 30,000 rubles (US\$450) inside. The price of an iPhone could reach as high as 150,000 rubles (US\$2500).

Despite Shurik being locked up in a Russian prison, he continued to be a part of his fellow villagers' networks and daily life in Moscow through mobile phone contact. Shurik had three SIM cards and used each for a specific purpose. One SIM card was used to make phone calls to his co-villagers and friends in Moscow. The second SIM card was designated for international phone calls, which Shurik used to make phone calls to his family members in Uzbekistan. The third SIM card had a specific function, linked to Shurik's mobile wallet (*mobilniy koshelyok*), an electronic payment system in Russia allowing people to make payments and money transfers using mobile devices. Thanks to the existence of his mobile phone, Shurik maintained regular contact with both his co-villagers in Moscow and left-behind family members and community in Uzbekistan. Shurik also had access to the internet and enjoyed online life by updating his social media accounts (i.e., Facebook, Odnoklassniki and VKontakte) and by watching porn when bored.

In black *zonas*, when a new prisoner arrives, he can choose between three main pathways in terms of determining his daily routines, barracks (living or dormitory blocks) and status in the prison. First, he can choose to work during his sentence and live in a “working barrack” (*rabochniy barak*) together with other working prisoners (*muzhiki rabotyagi*). Second, he can choose not to work and, thus, live in a nonworking barrack (*nerabochniy barak*), in which prisoners with an interest in the ‘thieves’ world’ (*zainteresovannyye muzhiki*) are held. Third, he can choose to cooperate with the prison’s formal management and, thus, live in a “red’s barrack” (*krasniy barak*) together with other prisoners who occupy the lowest position in the informal prison hierarchies given their cooperation with prison management. Prisoners who opt for the first two categories (working prisoners and prisoners with an interest in the thieves’ world) were considered decent men (*porядochnye muzhiki*) according to informal prison norms (thieves’ law).

After arriving in the *zona*, Shurik spent two weeks in a quarantine cell in the *zona*, a typical adaptation pathway for all newly arrived inmates before being transferred to barracks. Given Shurik’s rich *ponyatka* and resilience to pressure and torture, the *menty* did not send him to the working barrack, fearing he would “poison” other inmates with the thieves’ law ideology. As a result, he was sent to a nonworking barrack, in which *blatnye*—that is, criminal authorities—lived. In that barrack, given that Shurik previously served as a *hatnik* in the pretrial detention facility and his rich *ponyatka*, he was able to quickly establish solid relationships with Aslan, the *zona*’s *polozhenets* (the main power broker in the *zona*), a Muslim from Dagestan.

However, being a part of the *blatnye* circle also meant that Shurik must follow the basic principles of the thieves’ world. According to the thieves’ law, prisoners with some status as decent men were expected to make a monthly contribution to the *obshak*. Many prisoners worked in the *promzona* (a prison’s industrial zone) and received a salary each month, allowing them to make a monthly contribution to the *obshak*. This rule also applied to prisoners who lived in a nonworking barrack even if they had no stable source of income. Alternatively, they were expected to engage in some useful activities (*dvizheniya*) that would bring monetary and/or nonmonetary benefits to the *obshak*.

Even though Shurik lived in a nonworking barrack, he was still expected to engage in some useful activity and bring some kind of benefit to the *obshak*. Shurik came up with an innovative idea: salary recovery, an

activity that benefited both the *obshak* and himself. Being in the *blatnye* circle, Shurik learned that Aslan, the Dagestani *polozhenets*, was influential not only inside (in the prison), but also outside (on the street), often acting as a *gozi* (street judge) and enforcing unfulfilled promises or contracts when someone cheats others and acts unfairly. Shurik knew that many of his co-villagers working in Moscow often experienced problems receiving payment for their work. Since many of his fellow villagers worked in the shadow economy, they could not seek redress from formal legal institutions in cases of salary nonpayment. Therefore, alternative means of recovering their salary through street-level institutions and prison-based criminal authorities were the most viable options under the conditions of shadow economic employment.

The need for salary recovery was particularly high in the construction sector, an industry with a high concentration of undocumented migrants and where many Uzbek migrants worked. Equipped with a mobile phone and three SIM cards, Shurik remained in regular contact with his co-villagers who worked on various construction sites in Moscow. Shurik's first case involved a group of six migrants who worked on a construction site in a small town outside Moscow. Their boss was a *posrednik* (middleman) from Armenia, who, in turn, worked for a Russian construction firm. The employment relationship between all parties—the migrants, the *posrednik* and the Russian construction firm—was based on a handshake agreement, implying that these transactions were informal and took place beyond labor and tax regulations. The migrants worked for the *posrednik* for five months, but they were not paid for their last two months of work, an amount totaling 360,000 rubles (about US\$5500) collectively. When the migrants asked the Armenian *posrednik* whether he was willing to pay their two-month back salary, the *posrednik* stated that the Russian construction firm was delaying payment, not him. They waited for two more months, hoping that the *posrednik* would pay their salary. But, he continued telling the same story. Thus, it became apparent that the *posrednik* was unwilling to pay the remaining salary, leading the migrants to call their co-villager Shurik with a salary recovery request.

After receiving his co-villagers' request, Shurik explained the situation to Aslan, recounting all of the problems his co-villagers had experienced and politely asked the *polozhenets* whether he could help them recover their salary from the *posrednik*. In turn, Aslan, before taking on this challenge, asked Shurik whether his co-villagers would be able to stand by their story during the *razborka* (dispute settlement process) and whether

they were ready to pay 20% of the disputed money recovered. After Shurik confirmed both points, the *polozhenets* asked him to provide the *posrednik's* full name and phone number, the name of the construction firm, the exact amount of the salary in question and the phone number of his co-villager who could speak on behalf of all of the affected migrants.

The next day, Aslan organized a conference call during which all of the parties, the *polozhenets*, the migrants and the *posrednik* were all on the line simultaneously. Before starting the investigation, Aslan warned both the migrants and the *posrednik* to be honest and that they would be severely punished if they attempted to bend the truth. First, the *polozhenets* asked the migrants to describe what had happened and what claim they had in relation to the *posrednik*. Then, the *posrednik* was given the chance to respond to the migrants' complaint. The *posrednik* blamed the construction firm, stating that he also did not receive his own salary from the Russians. The *polozhenets* immediately interrupted the *posrednik*, stating that the migrants made an agreement with him, not with the Russians, whereby he was responsible for securing the migrants' salary regardless of other circumstances. Aslan did not continue the conversation any further and quickly moved to the final settlement and ended the *vazborka*.

As a result of the *vazborka*, the *posrednik* was given a maximum of three days to pay the migrants' salary. In addition, the *posrednik* was also ordered to deposit 36,000 rubles (US\$550) to the *polozhenets's* phone number. Aslan made clear to the *posrednik* that his life would be in danger if these two payments were not made by the deadline. The migrants were also reminded that once they received their salary from the *posrednik* they must also transfer 20% of the salary recovered—that is, 72,000 rubles (US\$1100)—to Aslan's phone number so that he could pass it on to the *obshak*. Not wanting to risk his life, the *posrednik* quickly paid the migrants' salaries and deposited the stated amount onto Aslan's phone number. The migrants also deposited money to the *polozhenets's* number that same day.

This was a win-win situation for all of the parties. It was quite obvious that the Uzbek migrants would not have been able to recover their salaries through formal legal means since they worked without any formal employment contracts. Therefore, for migrants, it was much better to give 20% percent of their recovered salaries to the *polozhenets* than to lose all of their money. For the *polozhenets*, it was also a favorable outcome given that solving vulnerable people's problems through street mechanisms enhanced their reputation and the legitimacy of the *vory* (thieves)

in the eyes of ordinary people. Financially, it also brought money to the *obshak*, which can be used to improve the living conditions in the *zona*.

Since salary nonpayment was common among many Uzbek migrants (as well as among other migrant communities in Russia), the demand for Shurik's assistance was quite high. Given his solid relationship with the *polozhenets*, Shurik not only helped his fellow villagers, but also provided salary recovery services to a wider group of Uzbek migrants in Moscow. In return, migrants regularly deposited money into Shurik's mobile wallet, thereby allowing Shurik to enjoy a relatively decent life in the *zona*. Apart from financial benefits, the salary recovery schemes enabled Shurik to contribute to *zona's obshak* and thereby retain his reputation within the circle of *blatnye*. Alongside the financial benefits, Shurik's capacity to help his fellow countrymen even under the harsh conditions of confinement gave him a sense of pride and moral satisfaction.

Five years later in early January 2020, Shurik was released from the *zona*. However, as soon as he exited the gates of the *zona*, Shurik was greeted by the officers of the Russian Federal Migration Service (FMS), who, in turn, forcibly took him to a temporary detention center (*Spetsial'noe uchrezhdenie vremennogo sodержaniya inostrannikh grazhdan*) in Moscow, where he was held for two weeks until his deportation to Uzbekistan in late January 2020, with a five-year ban to enter Russia.

After returning to Uzbekistan, Shurik found it quite hard to reintegrate into his family and *mahalla* life. The taxi sector had already been digitalized meaning that there was little need for *posadchik* services. He also failed to find a formal job given his criminal record. Nevertheless, under his parents' and community's pressure, Shurik married a girl from his village. As the days passed, it became apparent that he would not be able to sustain his family let alone cover his own expenses if he continued to stay in the village. But, the doors to Russia were closed given his five-year entry ban. Kazakhstan, another alternative (to Russia) migration destination, was also closed due to travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The only available option at that time, in August 2020, was Turkey, which had become a growing destination for many Central Asian migrants in recent years.

In early August 2020, with the help of his acquaintances, he managed to find a ticket for a chartered flight to Istanbul. Upon arrival, Shurik was picked up by his acquaintance, who then took him to his temporary accommodation in Kumkapi, a standard adaptation route for many newly arrived Uzbek migrants in Istanbul. Like many other Uzbek migrants, he

had neither a residence permit nor a work permit. As described in previous chapters, Shurik also found the Turkish migrant labor market different from that in Russia in terms of fewer police and less immigration control, but overly exploitative working conditions and low salaries. For Shurik, who previously exerted significant influence on abusive middlemen and dishonest employers in Russia, it was odd that there was no viable street channel that would make the labor market actors accountable to migrants. Since he had no other options than Istanbul, he had to endure the hardships and tried to adapt to the new realities. Before being able to find his relatively stable job in a small factory that produced zippers for clothes, Shurik held several jobs, such as a loader in a cargo company, a security guard at a restaurant, food deliveryman and as a tailor in a textile sweatshop that produced face masks. Most of his jobs were unstable and low paying. To make matters worse, the volatility of the Turkish lira and its constant devaluation affected the amount of remittance he could send home. One consolation was that he was able to send home all of his earnings given that he was not forced to pay bribes to the Turkish police nor did he need to spend money on legalization expenses.

Another thing that he could not accept in Turkey was the dominant role played by women in the migrant labor market. In Shurik's view, many Uzbek women became spoiled while working and living in Turkey. Since a considerable share of Uzbek female migrants in Turkey were single mothers, some chose to enter into romantic relationships with Turkish men. In the words of Shurik, many Uzbek female migrants preferred Turkish men over Uzbek male migrants because the former were in a better financial situation and could support women, for instance, by paying their monthly rent, giving them pocket money for miscellaneous expenses, buying clothes for them and treating them to dinners in restaurants. Uzbek male migrants, however, earned a lot less than female migrants and could not afford to spend their money on women since they also had to send their earnings home to support their left-behind families. Back in Moscow, male migrants constituted an absolute majority of the Uzbek migrant population and occupied higher positions given that they earned more by working on construction sites and fulfilling many *baltura* (part-time) jobs, leverage allowing them to afford romantic relationships with Uzbek female migrants.

Shurik found the opposite situation in Istanbul, where women had more agency in organizing their private lives. Such a situation led to jealousy and frustration among Uzbek male migrants like Shurik, who

blamed Uzbek women for becoming spoiled (*ayollar buzilib ketdi*), but about which they could do nothing.

Thus, Istanbul was a totally different experience for Shurik. On the one hand, Turkey was a Muslim-majority country with innumerable mosques, a new context that awakened Shurik's dormant religious instincts he had acquired during his childhood. On the other hand, Shurik soon realized that his street skills were less valuable in Istanbul, where Uzbek migrants were weakly organized and did not have connections with the street world in Turkey. The last time we visited Istanbul in January 2022, we found that Shurik was still working at the zipper-producing factory. But, much to our surprise, Shurik had become religious and began praying five times a day, a significant change that occurred given his exposure to a new social context in Turkey.

THE SHADOW ECONOMY, THE STREET WORLD AND MIGRANTS' LIFE TRAJECTORIES

In this chapter, we aimed to understand the interconnections between the shadow economy and the street world in the Russian and Turkish labor markets. Our central argument was that, in non-Western, nondemocratic migration contexts such as Russia and Turkey, the majority of migrant workers are undocumented and often operate under the conditions of a shadow economy and a weak rule of law. Instead of dismissing the shadow economy as an instance of illegality, we argue for a more pragmatic approach in studying migrants' incorporation into the labor market, viewing informal employment and other shadow economic practices as the rule, simply a standard operating procedure. Accordingly, viewing the shadow economy and the informal migrant labor centered within it as instances of illegality prevents us from exploring the inner workings of the Russian and Turkish migrant labor markets. Such a perspective implies that the lack of formal rules does not necessarily mean there are no rules; rather, informality grows and establishes itself as a regulatory tool in areas where the state cannot or does not want to rule, leaving room for informal and spontaneous initiatives (Davies & Polese, 2015; Polese et al., 2014).

In this chapter, we presented the life histories of three Uzbek migrants, illustrating how migrants experience the shadow economy and the street world in Russian and Turkish migration regimes. Leyla's life history centered around sex work and the street world highlighting three main tendencies. First, Leyla's life history shows that informality never exists

in a vacuum, but engages in a constant iterative process with formal structures (Williams & Round, 2011). This was especially visible in the involvement of Russian law enforcement actors in the operation of brothels and other sex work schemes through closing their eyes or, sometimes, providing protection or roofing in exchange for a regular *dolya* (share). Second, Leyla's history highlights the existence of multiple orders and actors in the street world of sex work. Through Leyla's life trajectory, we could glean the patterns of at least five main forms of the sex work industry in Moscow: (1) brothels oriented toward migrant workers, (2) sauna-based sex work organized through agreements between sauna owners and sex workers, (3) hotel-run sex work where sex workers provide services under the roofing or protection of hotel management and a pimp, (4) sex work centered around collaboration between pimps and hotel management, through which sex workers provide services in select hotels and (5) individual call girls (*individualkas*) who operate independently (without subordination to pimps). Each of these forms of sex work feature their own gatekeepers and internal power dynamics that maintain the rules of the game. Third, Leyla's life history illustrates the role of individual agency even under the conditions of exploitation and precarity. Undoubtedly, Leyla was a victim of domestic violence, abuse and sex trafficking. But, confining our analytical lens to the victimology perspective does not allow us to explore the street world of sex work as a separate migration arena, which can be found in many migration regimes. This case also shows that some resilient and resourceful female migrants like Leyla are able to make the best of a bad situation and organize their daily life notwithstanding numerous challenges and uncertainties. Overall, Leyla's life history calls for a more context-sensitive approach when attempting to understand the inner world of the sex work industry.

The life history revolving around the experiences of Zarina takes us from Moscow to Istanbul's street world. Here, in Zarina's life history, we can summarize at least two main points. First, Zarina's life history shows that a prior migration experience does not necessarily translate into better migrant adaptation outcomes. Zarina, despite her previous migration experience in Moscow, fell victim to sex traffickers when she traveled to Turkey. This calls for the need to compare different migration regimes through the experiences and agency of migrant workers, rather than merely focusing on immigration laws and policies as the primary comparison lens. Second, Zarina's case, like Leyla's, also calls for moving beyond the victimology perspective. Despite being a victim of pimps and

experiencing various forms of abuse and violence, Zarina was nevertheless able to fight back and regain her agency, an outcome which was visible in her post-sex work career success, via which she achieved a leadership position in her new workplace. Another instance of her resilience emerged in her drug trafficking experience, during which she was not merely a mule, but was able to recover her losses through hijacking drugs. These points do not imply that we endorse her involvement in illegal activities. Instead, we aim to demonstrate that the street world is an inalienable part of the migrant labor markets, particularly in migration contexts such as Russia and Turkey where migrants operate under the conditions of a shadow economy and a weak rule of law.

The life history focusing on Shurik's adventures allows us to explore the street world and the shadow economy from a male migrants' perspective. First, Shurik's life history shows the role of premigratory experiences and behavioral patterns and how they shape migrants' life trajectories and labor market choices in the host country. Since Shurik had already been involved in Uzbekistan's street life as a *posadchik*, his labor market choices in Russia were a logical continuity of his premigration experiences. Unlike his fellow villagers who worked in construction, he consciously chose to work at Food City and later at Kazanskiy *vokzal*, key hotspots of the street world in Moscow. This example adds a new perspective to sociolegal debates on migrants' legal culture and legal consciousness (Ballard, 2006; Kubal, 2013, 2015; Shah, 2011) by contributing new empirical insights into "migrants' street world" and how it shapes migrants' legal baggage and adaptation outcomes. Second, Shurik's case shows that in situations and contexts where state law is inefficient or when the state is reluctant to regulate certain arenas, informal channels and practices may serve as an alternative regulatory mechanism. This argument connects us to studies that claim that the shadow economy is closely related to governance and, in some cases, may actually serve as a cure for an ineffective system rather than representing the disease (Darden, 2008; Ledeneva, 2013). These processes were evident in the example of how Shurik, being under conditions of confinement, coordinated the salary recovery process in Moscow's shadow economy through the help of the *vory*, the Russian prison subculture. His case also shows the interconnections between the shadow economy and street world in Russia, particularly how street-based legal orders regulate employment and contractual relations in the informal migrant labor market. Third, and connected to the second point, Shurik's experiences in Istanbul show how the absence or presence of

informal regulatory mechanisms shape migrants' labor market experiences and adaptation outcomes. While Shurik and other migrants in Moscow had certain agency vis-à-vis dishonest middlemen and abusive employers owing to the existence of street channels, this was not the case in Istanbul where Uzbek male migrants could not exert influence on abusive *shirkats* and exploitative employers. This comparative element allows us to argue that the informality may serve as an alternative enforcement mechanism (to the state law).

To conclude, this chapter shows that labeling the shadow economy and street world merely as instances of illegality and crime may preclude us from looking at migrants' actual coping strategies and navigational skills in migration contexts permeated by the shadow economy and a weak rule of law. That said, it is not our intention to romanticize the street world and shadow economic practices and schemes, but rather to describe them as they manifest themselves in migrants' life trajectories and choices. Fundamentally, a comparison of different migration regimes should not focus only on immigration policies and law, but should also encompass an analysis of migrants' experiences of the street world and the shadow economy as one of the key migration arenas.

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Informality and Migrant Agency in Non-Western Migration Regimes

On January 14, 2022, we attended a dinner with Safar (the Uzbek migrant presented in Chapter 1 of this book) at O'zbegin restaurant in Kumkapi in Istanbul, Turkey. When we last met him in September 2019, he was depressed given his inability to navigate the established power geometries in Istanbul's migrant labor market. He was planning to return to Moscow in November 2021 when his entry ban to Russia would be lifted. Much to our surprise, Safar had now become a successful migrant in Istanbul. During the course of our dinner conversation, he described the positive developments in his migrant career in Istanbul, a result of his involvement in the shadow economy and street life of Kumkapi. Frustrated with abusive *shirkats* and exploitative employers, in December 2019 Safar approached one of the informal Uzbek cargo companies in Kumkapi that ships garments to Uzbekistan. Since there were many cargo companies in Kumkapi, there was stiff competition among them to attract customers. This meant that the cargo company needed someone who could attract customers by distributing advertising leaflets about shipment services on the busy streets of Kumkapi. Safar's main job was to distribute leaflets along the Kumkapi streets, find potential customers and bring them to the cargo company offices. This job required Safar to spend at least eight hours on the street and enter into communication with hundreds of people on a daily basis.

As a leaflet distributor, Safar built an extensive network and made many acquaintances from the street world and law enforcement system that subsequently paved the way for him to open a cargo company of his own, one of the most lucrative and prestigious jobs among Uzbek migrants in Istanbul. While working for a cargo company, Safar learned that not everyone can open a cargo company, even if one has enough cash to cover the initial financial costs. More importantly, one must receive a “blessing” from Kumkapi’s street world controlled by local Turks and Kurds who demand an informal fee from many businesses operating in Kumkapi. The cargo business also required one to have good connections with the *zabita* (municipal police), whose functions also included fighting the informal economy in public places. With the seed money he received from a local Turk, he managed to open an informal cargo company in August 2020 that later developed into a successful shipping company in the Kumkapi area. Safar also started earning income in his role as a *shirkat*, an informal intermediary between migrant workers and employers. Given the high turnover in the migrant labor market, working as a *shirkat* allowed Safar to generate an additional income alongside his cargo business earnings. Having enough income also allowed Safar to have three Uzbek wives in Istanbul through *nikah* (religious marriage), a widespread practice among Central Asian migrants in Istanbul and Moscow who look for temporary relationships during their migration period (Eraliev & Heusala, 2021). Now, as a successful migrant in Istanbul, Safar had abandoned his plans of returning to Moscow, since he was already well integrated into Istanbul’s migrant labor market. As Safar recounted, these positive developments in his migrant life would have been impossible had he not mastered the rules and norms within the shadow economy and street world.

How can this vignette help us explain the differences and similarities between the Russian and Turkish migration regimes? At first, Safar had little agency and did not feel “closer” to Turkey during his initial adaptation process even though the Turkish immigration regime was relatively liberal. He was nostalgic for Russia, despite having to cope with a highly punitive immigration legal regime, corrupt police officers and anti-migrant social sentiments. In his view, Russia offered him a greater sense of agency and opportunity than that available in Turkey given that he was well integrated into his village networks and possessed good knowledge of informal norms characterizing Moscow’s migrant labor market. However, after spending considerable time and mastering the informal norms within various migration arenas in Istanbul’s migrant labor market,

Safar gradually adapted to and built his successful migrant career in Turkey.

This short life history brings us back to the opening arguments in the first chapter of this book, where we made a case for comparing and exploring various migration regimes through the lived experiences of migrants. We suggested a need to move beyond Western-centric approaches, which largely focus on migration outputs (migration laws and policies) as a key factor determining the quality and character of immigrant adaptation (Bloch & Schuster, 2005; Coutin, 2003; De Genova, 2004; Hallett, 2014; Menjívar, 2006). In these accounts, migrant adaptation is primarily understood in reference to the legal status of migrants, underscoring the role of the nation-state and its immigration laws as key analytical features necessary to understanding various paths, as well as the quality and timescale of immigrant adaptation. As a result, these approaches seem to aggrandize the power of immigration laws and policies as a crucial factor defining migrants' "fate" in the host country. However, Safar's experiences in Moscow and Istanbul as well as the many empirical examples presented in this book show that migrant adaptation is not just contingent upon migrants having the proper legal status. But, rather, in non-Western, nondemocratic migration locales such as Russia and Turkey with a weak rule of law, large shadow economies and widespread corruption, immigration policymaking and enforcement are largely shaped by informal regulatory processes in which street-level bureaucrats, employers, middlemen and migrant workers negotiate the contemporary migration system.

Accordingly, we position our book as a response to the call to move beyond the Western-centric, largely democratic, migration regime typologies (Boucher & Gest, 2015; Duvell, 2020; Gest & Boucher, 2021; Reeves, 2013; Urinboyev, 2020) by offering a comparative study of Russian and Turkish migration regimes. Our approach, however, differs from previous research in one way: our ambition in this book was not only to compare the migration outputs (immigration laws and policies) of Russia and Turkey, but we also attempted to compare these two migration regimes through the investigation of migration outcomes (what actually happens on the ground)—reading, seeing and understanding them through the daily experiences of migrants and other actors involved in multiple migration arenas. This bottom-up approach stemmed from our theoretical premise that there is no single, uncontested universal normative order within any society, but rather the outcomes of laws,

regulations and policies are determined by the struggles, alliances and interplay between various social forces which take place in different social arenas. In these social arenas, rules are not clear cut and power relations remain unequal, although each actor has some degree of agency and may exert influence over the final outcome. Based on this understanding, we compared Russian and Turkish migration regimes by exploring power struggles, alliances and interactions in varying migration arenas where street-level bureaucrats, employers, intermediaries, landlords and migrant workers among others interact with one another.

Many of these processes have been illustrated in this book through the “thick description” of migrants’ experiences in multiple migration arenas in Russia and Turkey. For example, we presented our observations of migrants’ everyday lives; interviews with migrants, intermediaries, employers and street world actors; court cases surrounding deportation and entry ban issues; and life histories describing migrants’ life trajectories in Moscow and Istanbul. The use of these different datasets enabled us to explore migrants’ experiences in multiple migration arenas. But, our comparative approach had one methodological nuance. Rather than bringing in our own comparative perspective, we primarily relied on the experiences and perspectives of migrants in Moscow and Istanbul, a migrant-driven comparison that allowed us to explore and compare Russian and Turkish migration regimes through the eyes, narratives and the lived experiences of migrants. This difficult endeavor was possible given that many of our migrant informants worked both in Russia and Turkey, a unique situation that allowed them to reflect on their migration experiences in both contexts. In Chapter 3, we focused on migrants’ internal lifeworlds, agency and transnational communication practices as some of the key migration arenas in Russia and Turkey. In Istanbul, Uzbek migrants built their own ethnic enclave owing to the relatively liberal immigration regime in Turkey, while, in Moscow, Uzbek migrants primarily relied on their “digital *mahalla*” (smartphone-mediated communications practices) to cope with the punitive and xenophobic immigration regime in Russia. We showed how in these physical and digital arenas, migrants build their own parallel world based on its own legal order, information channels, social safety nets and networks of trust and reciprocity. In doing so, we argued that how migrants organize their transnational practices (i.e., parallel worlds) shape the outcomes of many practices migrants (and other actors) employ while in Moscow and Istanbul.

In Chapter 4, we compared the operation of Russian and Turkish migration policies and laws through an exploration of migrants' everyday experiences with the law in Moscow and Istanbul. At first glance, Russia and Turkey represent two extremes in their approaches to undocumented migration: the former heavily relies on punitive and restrictive measures and restrictions making it nearly impossible for migrants to become "legal", while the latter takes a relatively liberal approach to undocumented migration, tacitly allowing migrants to reside and work without any documents. One may easily conclude that Russia has more documented migrants due to its punitive approach, while Turkey has more undocumented migrants because of its *laissez-faire* approach. However, when viewed from migrants' experiences, both the Russian and Turkish migration regimes, despite their divergent approaches, have arrived at similar migration outcomes: both countries have large numbers of undocumented migrants fueling their shadow economies.

In Chapter 5, we comparatively explored Uzbek migrants' experiences of the labor markets in Russia and Turkey. Migrants frequently compared Russian and Turkish employers thusly: "Turks have faith [in Islam] but no sense of justice; Russians have no faith [in Islam] but a sense of justice". As such, we attempted to understand how and why, despite all of the challenges associated with navigating the repressive legal landscape in Russia, many Uzbek migrants felt that Moscow offered greater agency and opportunity than Istanbul. Based on our empirical data, our central argument was that no matter how liberal or restrictive the immigration legal regime is, migrants' life trajectories, labor market incorporation and economic success in non-Western, nondemocratic migration contexts such as Russia and Turkey all hinge upon informal regulatory practices, power dynamics, extralegal negotiations, struggles and alliances. Thus, we suggest that being undocumented and informally employed do not necessarily lead to similar migration outcomes in different migration regimes. Instead, migrants' agency and experiences from the labor markets are contingent upon the myriad informal processes and practices determining the rules of the game within a specific migrant labor market.

In Chapter 6, we provided a comparative analysis of the shadow economy and street world in Moscow and Istanbul through the life histories of three Uzbek migrant workers. Relying upon the empirical evidence that employment under the conditions of a shadow economy has simply become part and parcel of everyday life for many migrants

operating within the Russian and Turkish labor markets, we take a pragmatic approach to viewing the shadow economy neither as a friend nor as a foe (Eilat & Zinnes, 2002). Through life histories, we demonstrate how migrants as active agents employ and invent various strategies when they come into contact with multiple formal and informal legal orders in the street world. This implies that in situations and contexts where state law is inefficient or when the state is reluctant to regulate certain arenas, informal channels and practices may serve as an alternative regulatory mechanism. Hence, labeling the shadow economy and street world merely as instances of illegality and crime may preclude us from looking at migrants' actual coping strategies and navigational skills in migration contexts permeated by the shadow economy and a weak rule of law. The key finding is that a comparison of different migration regimes should not only focus on immigration policies and law, but also encompasses the analysis of migrants' experiences of the street world and the shadow economy as one of the key migration arenas.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Given the specifics of the Russian and Turkish contexts as well as the empirical material presented in Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6, how should we understand, compare and reconceptualize contemporary migration regimes? Should they be compared through the analysis of (a) migration outputs; (b) labor migration, citizenship or integration outcomes; (c) immigration control policies; or through their (d) geographic location and (e) histories of immigration? As Boucher and Gest (2015) have rightly pointed out, existing immigration regime typologies do not sufficiently clarify the indicators or dimensions for comparison. Moreover, the existing typologies primarily focus on migration regimes in Western Europe and North America.

These considerations lead us to revisit the research questions raised in the introduction of this book, namely (1) whether existing migration regime frameworks, largely based on Western-centric approaches, should be applied to the context of nondemocratic regimes; (2) how we can address the differences in state–society relations, legal cultures and governance patterns when comparing different migration regimes and (3) how the focus on migrants' agency and experiences as a lens for comparison helps us understand, compare and reconceptualize contemporary migration regimes. Our short and clear-cut answer to these questions is that

frameworks developed in Western contexts have limited applicability to the context of nondemocratic migration contexts, where a discrepancy exists between formal migration policies and laws (migration outputs) and their actual implementation (migration outcomes). Therefore, when comparing immigration regimes in nondemocratic contexts, it is more fruitful to focus on migration outcomes (what actually happens on the ground) and migrants' agency than to focus on migration outputs (policies, laws and regulations) and formal opportunity structures. All in all, attempts to compare different migration regimes should extend beyond the mere analysis of migration policies and laws. We also need to consider the role of micro- and meso-level struggles, alliances and interactions that take place in different migration arenas, such as migrants' internal life-worlds and social networks, the migrant labor market, documentation and legalization practices and the shadow economy and street institutions. This indicates that we need to place greater emphasis on migrants' agency and experiences in these multiple arenas as a lens for comparison.

Thus, we hope this book is read as an attempt to broaden the scope of comparative migration studies, which is still largely confined to the Western-centric, largely democratic, migration locales. Our ambition is to inspire further research on non-Western migration regimes, ideally generating new comparative approaches and theoretical perspectives.

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