
ARTICLES IN ENGLISH

Mark Simon

SOVIET IN FORM, NATIONAL IN CONTENT: CENTRAL ASIAN MIGRANTS IN THE CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE OF MOSCOW

Unlike the leisure practices of migrants from Central Asia in large Russian cities, which recently came to the attention of researchers, the presence of this population in the urban cultural infrastructure has hardly been studied so far. This research, based on in-depth interviews with members of community-based organizations and artistic groups established by people from Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, as well as observation of their activities at various cultural venues in Moscow, discusses the peculiarities of post-Soviet diversity management. In this article I am making two main points: (i) The self-presentations of people of Central Asian origin on various public platforms in Moscow largely involve performing the role of ambassadors of a homogenous 'national culture'. Such a form of cultural behaviour, inherited from Soviet past, allows the participants of corresponding events to achieve guaranteed recognition from both the host site and their compatriots. It legitimizes their presence in the public sphere as agents of the 'dialogue of cultures,' since it fits the dominant discourse of ethnic diversity in Russia. Thus, for the majority of informants, culture turns out to be a kind of 'safe space,' cleansed of the daily troubles associated with labour migration; (ii) it may seem that this kind of self-expression for migrants is determined by social powers: whether the latter are officials, responsible for national policy in Moscow, embassies of Central Asian republics, or public organizations

Mark E. Simon – Cand. Sci. (Pol.), Leading Research Fellow, Center for Political Centre for Political Theory and Applied Political Science, Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration; Associate Professor, Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences, Moscow, Russian Federation. Email: mr.marksimon@gmail.com.

calling themselves 'diasporas'. But with a deeper study of the issue, it turns out that the aforementioned scenarios of self-presentation are still playable without direct influence from the authorities. The explanation is that Central Asian migrants voluntarily accept this representation that is Soviet in form and national in content as far as it makes it possible to symbolically overcome the marginalization that they face.

Key words: representation of ethnicity, diversity management, social recognition, cultural inclusion, post-Soviet migration

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'Culture is What Unites Us' (*Kul'tura nas ob'edinyayet*) was the title of the festival which took place in the fall of 2019 at the Moscow House of Nationalities on the initiative of the Coordination Council of the Kyrgyz Diaspora. This festival is a typical example of an event organized within the framework of state diversity management policy (called 'national policy' in Russia). It included a roundtable with duty speeches from officials and members of ethnic public organizations on the first day. Then, on the second day there were performances of folklore groups in ethnic costumes, followed by the serving of national dishes and presentations of arts and crafts. The very title of the event, in which 'culture' is used in the singular, sounds bizarre, since each organization seeks to present its people as special, with their own traditions and customs. I see an explanation for this paradox in two interpretations of what is embedded in the notion of 'culture' here. Firstly, 'culture' is understood as a certain field of socially approved activity. This is a way to touch on the issues of ethnicity and identity, which is secure from acute social and political articulations. Secondly, and this is a more implicit understanding, performances of ethnicity, presented at such events, are mediated by a common pattern, inherited from the institutions of Soviet cultural policy. Appealing to national particularity, these performances remain deeply Soviet in form, and therefore it can be argued that the festival participants share a common culture.

During each year, quite a few events are held at cultural sites in Moscow, in which people from Central Asia, both permanent residents in Russia and temporary migrants, take part. These events range from large-scale festivals, bringing together several ethnic public organizations (in the Russian language such organizations are called 'national' or *natsional'nie*), to small gatherings aimed at members of the same language community. It is surprising that studies on the integration of migrants in Russia have so far ignored this rather important type of cultural participation. There are academic works that give a good idea of what integration at the local level looks like (Savin 2019; Vendina 2018; Olimova, Olimov 2018; Varshaver et al. 2017; Tkach, Brednikova 2016), as well as those that shed light on leisure practices of migrants from Central Asia in large Russian cities (Bryazgina et al. 2019; Varshaver, Rocheva 2018; Peshkova 2015).

These studies describe various segments of urban infrastructure, within which the processes of routine social adaptation take place. However, they do not address the significant issue of migrants' symbolic communication.

This study explores the ways in which public images of the Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Tajik communities are presented through cultural practices, localized in the Moscow city infrastructure. The choice of these three countries of origin is explained by the fact that they became the main 'migration donors' for Russia in recent years. In spite of this, their 'cultural heritage' remains poorly institutionalized in the largest Russian cities (see, Ivashchenko 2020). Here I would like to make a terminological clarification. I use the term 'migrants' in this article for two reasons. Firstly, the focus of this study is on artistic groups created by labour migrants. As will be shown below, in many cases their access to certain cultural sites is mediated by activists of ethnic public organizations, many of whom live permanently in Russia. However, as my sample showed, the main creative activity is carried out by people who constantly return to their country of origin, that is, they are localized in a transnational social space. Secondly, I gave up the idea of translating the Russian word *vyhodtsi* (from Central Asia) as 'immigrants', since the latter word, according to Umberto Eco, is loaded with administrative and legal meanings, which I would like to avoid (see, Bauman 2018: 1).

What justifies the use of the term 'cultural infrastructure' here? There is a formal reason: it appears in the policy documents of the Moscow authorities responsible for diversity management. By 'infrastructure' the authors of these documents mean subordinate budgetary institutions in which the authorities, together with loyal public organizations, carry out reporting activities aimed at the 'harmonization of interethnic relations' (Sobyenin 2016). However, I intend to interpret the concept of 'cultural infrastructure' in a broader sense – as a set of state and private platforms, mediating the cultural activity of migrants from Central Asia, as well as formal and informal, vertical and horizontal social ties lined up around these platforms.

The structure of this article is two-fold. First, I will demonstrate the institutional design of the cultural infrastructure within which the cultural performances of migrants from Central Asia that fell under my study are localized. In the second step, I will demonstrate how these performances address three types of audiences through different segments of the described infrastructure: (i) the migrants' own language communities; (ii) representatives of other ethnic organizations; (iii) visitors to citywide festivals.

Research design, methodology and conceptual framework

The research is based on in-depth interview and on-site observation methods. The empirical part of the study was conducted from June 2019 to March 2020. Entrance to the field occurred after the premiere of a performance from

the amateur Kyrgyz theatre group 'Ayan' in the NGO Resource centre on Ryazansky Prospekt. This group of labour migrants from Kyrgyzstan initially rehearsed in the evenings in small friendly cafes (Ivashchenko 2019), and then appeared on the stages of the Tatar Cultural Centre, 'Dom Kul'turi Stimul,' Moscow Youth Theatre and several other events organized at various levels, from the Embassy of Kyrgyzstan to migrant mutual aid funds. Having discovered such a wide range of venues hosting cultural events initiated by migrants, I set out to identify the organizational structure through which such projects are implemented. To do this, I interviewed people responsible for cultural activities in officially registered Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Tajik public organizations. Further, I searched for information about these organizations on social networks (mainly on *Facebook*) and thus found several artistic groups operating under their auspices. I interviewed several members of these groups and, at their invitation, conducted on-site observation at their performances.

Nineteen semi-structured interviews were conducted in total. All of them were conducted in Russian. Of these, five were with representatives of ethnic public organizations, eleven were with members of artistic groups and three were expert interviews with people who have professional experience in the organization of events with people of Central Asian descent. I considered the collected data to be valid at the moment when the descriptions of the available infrastructure and the rules by which the cultural projects should be implemented began to be repeated regularly. I preferred to anonymize quotes from interviews in the text, so as not to do potential harm to the activities of my informants.

What interested me most in the course of data analysis was that the authenticity of the practices under study was not questioned either by artists or their audiences. I needed to figure out why blissful public performances in the vein of Soviet festivities do not seem feigned to my informants, given the fact that they find themselves in an adverse social environment offstage. In order to deal with this, I resorted to the theoretical model of cultural performance proposed by Jeffrey Alexander (2004). According to Alexander, the performance's pragmatics is to make the identification of the audience with the actors possible. Alexander argues that a performance is successful as far as actors can 're-fuse' its scattered elements, which allows it to appear authentic to the spectators (Ibid: 566). The theoretical challenge of this study was that it was necessary to explain why, in conditions of migration, when not only the elements of performances, but also their audiences are in a disaggregated state, expectations regarding the success of considered performances remain high. When I refer to the concept of 'culture' in this text, I mean exactly those meanings that my informants put into this concept, that is, the idea of culture as a separate functional and professionalized sphere of public life. This understanding stems from the specifics of the Soviet institutional system and turns out to be very stable in post-Soviet realities (see, Grant 2011).

Access to infrastructure: gatekeepers, vertical and horizontal ties

For greater clarity, I mapped the cultural infrastructure of Moscow, in which Central Asian artistic groups fulfil their creative endeavours, in the form of a diagram (Figure 1). I depicted those entities and platforms through which migrants are (self) organized in oval outlines and citywide institutions in rectangular outlines. Ties between actors and organizations, which can be characterized as hierarchical or vertical, are shown with solid lines (with arrows where there is administrative subordination), while horizontal, more equitable links with dashed ones. My research focus is on music, dance and theatre collectives, which are designated as ‘initiative groups’ in the vocabulary of ethnic public organizations. The latter act as the main gatekeepers for creatively active people from Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan on their way to state cultural institutions. Any official event taking place at the site of the Moscow House of Nationalities (MHN), embassies, city libraries or resource centres must be organized under an agreement with registered organizations.

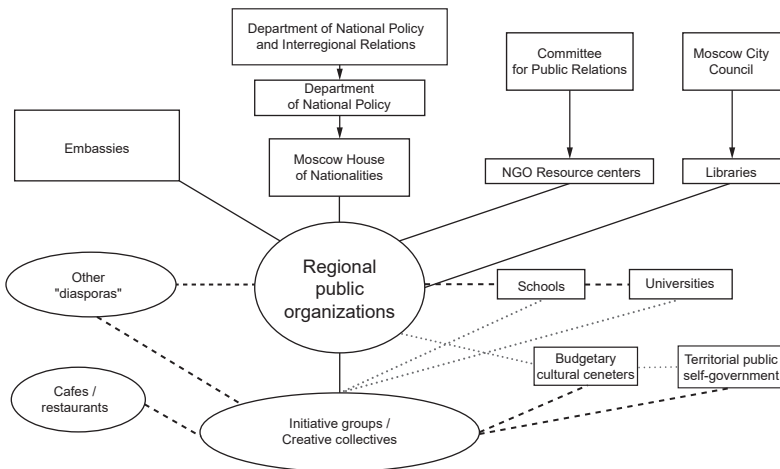


Figure 1. Cultural infrastructure of Moscow, accessible to migrants from Central Asia

The most developed system of representation in this sense exists among the Kyrgyz people. It consists of two large regional public organizations, as well as one interregional organization, which has been operating for over twenty years. Several of my informants confirmed that more than seventy informal associations operate behind these three structures. Some of these associations are formed according to the territorial principle (people from one city or village) and function as mutual aid funds. They are aimed at collecting money in order to help those who are in need while working in Russia and also

for the needs of their hometown. I attended one of the meetings of such an association at the invitation of the *Ayan* theatre artists. They showed a humorous scene about the life of labour migrants in Moscow there. The message of this scene was that migrants from Kyrgyzstan should morally and financially support each other in Moscow instead of being selfish.

Some associations are more like hobby groups – literary clubs, amateur theatres, music and dance ensembles, etc. As for Uzbek and Tajik communities, one regional organization fell into my research in each case, since they are more actively involved in the organization of cultural activities in comparison with other similar structures. In these two cases, it is difficult for me to judge the real number of similar grassroots associations and initiative groups. However, the data that I managed to collect on material from one Tajik and two Uzbek artistic groups, testify that communication between formal and informal associations look similar.

What resources are creative teams able to accumulate through cooperation with registered organizations? First of all, there is an opportunity to present your ensemble at events held under the auspices of the Department of National Policy (DNP) and its subordinate institution – the Moscow House of Nationalities. Artists who participate in such events never get paid, but the very opportunity to present themselves in front of a large audience motivates them to engage in creative activities. During the year, the MHN organizes events dedicated to one or another ethnic community, as well as 'inter-diasporic meetings.' However, the MHN does not provide permanent premises for artistic groups. They cannot use it for rehearsals and preparation for performances, even when it comes to festivals organized by the DNP. NGO resource centres are more likely to serve as premises for rehearsals. Subordinate to the Moscow government, these coworking centres are obliged to conclude agreements with ethnic public organizations and provide them with time slots for their activities free of charge. But these sites are available at inconvenient hours for labour migrants, no later than 7 pm, and are closed on weekends. Also, in order to book a slot for a rehearsal or a performance there, each collective must wait in line for two to three months, since there are many creative units in the orbit of each registered organization.

Libraries are another type of institution to which, in theory, registered organizations could give access. By design of the project 'Dialogue of Cultures,' initiated by the Moscow City Council, libraries are encouraged to host events dedicated to ethno-cultural diversity. Similar initiatives took place before, but they have not been institutionalized. However, the 'Dialogue of Cultures' did not fundamentally improve the situation. One of the central Moscow libraries began to establish a cultural centre in cooperation with an ethnic public organization, but this enterprise did not bring tangible promotion to creative people from the respective community:

We opened a cultural centre on the basis of one library, but now they are focused on paid services. We can hold singular events as partners, but we

cannot rehearse there [for free], while staging one dance takes six months! The Department of Culture promised to provide us with another library. But people come to our events mainly from the Moscow region, so we are interested in a location closer to the centre, and this library is in a tedious place (member of an ethnic public organization, 06.03.2020).

Less formalized relationships are established with educational institutions. Schools invite ethnic organizations and artistic groups to conduct so-called 'days of tolerance' or 'friendship lessons'. Universities that have Central Asian student communities often hold 'days of culture' dedicated to their countries of origin. Most often, they themselves send a request to ethnic public organizations, so that they invite one or two collectives to participate in a concert or an exhibition. Thus, on the eve of the celebration of the 75th anniversary of victory in the Great Patriotic War, many state-sponsored cultural centres and universities tried to lure Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Tajik collectives to demonstrate the role of the former Soviet republics in this historic event.

I also came across one case of cooperation between the territorial public self-government of one of the central districts of Moscow with an ethnic dance studio. They provided an opportunity for the head of the studio to work with children on Sundays for minimum rent. However, in most cases that I happened to observe, amateur artistic groups of labour migrants are forced to rent venues for rehearsals and performances on their own.

From 'migrants' to 'culture bearers': stage as a spot of social recognition

In this part, I focus on scripts, background representations and means of symbolic production that prevail in performances localized in one or another segment of the described infrastructure, depending on the target audience, as well as the impact of certain social forces. To do this, I rely on Jeffrey Alexander's conceptual framework described above. With its help, I explain why the performances under study are perceived as authentic in each of the considered contexts. Firstly, however, I describe who the participants of the artistic initiatives in question are, or 'actors' in Alexander's terminology.

Actors

The composition of the Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Tajik musical, dance and theatre collectives that I happened to observe usually varies from seven to fifteen members. The leaders of such groups, as a rule, are people over forty who were socialized in the late Soviet or early post-Soviet times. Among them are professional directors, music teachers, as well as methodologists of cultural institutions. Wherein, the bulk of the collectives is often non-professional artists, labour migrants, who want to get involved in creative activities and perform on stage. There are quite a few young people among them – both female and male,

aged from eighteen to thirty-five. Characteristically, all these groups, in contrast to migrant mutual aid funds, are not formed on the basis of belonging to one city of origin. Their members get to know each other in Moscow, mainly through announcements on social networks that a particular creative group is 'looking for talents'. One children's dance group that also fell into the field of my research, was formed thanks to the desire of mothers for their kids to communicate with each other.

It has become obvious to me that for most of the collectives in question, their activities do not bring material benefits. Quite the opposite, people are ready to spend their scarce material and time resources to engage in creativity. For many ordinary members of registered ethnic public organizations, the dividends from their efforts to promote cultural activities are also rather dubious. Therefore, we are dealing not with 'ethnic entrepreneurs' (Brubaker 2004), but rather 'ethnic enthusiasts'.

Audiences: (i) Compatriots

The initiatives that come from the Central Asian artistic groups themselves are addressed primarily to their compatriots living in Moscow. Finding a decent site is a major concern in this regard. It is significant that most of the informants clearly distinguish between the spheres of entertainment and art. I often heard from them that cafes and restaurants are inappropriate places for true art, because the latter requires a fitting environment. Cafes and restaurants provide an opportunity for amateur musicians to earn money, but this money is not enough to make performing their main craft. At the same time, in several Pamir, Uzbek and Kyrgyz cafes, I happened to observe charity concerts organized by migrant mutual aid funds in order to raise funds for compatriots in need. Anyway, since the access to free concert halls, which in the opinion of the informants satisfy the concert format, is rarely available, migrant collectives are renting venues on their own.

The most affordable option in this sense are former Soviet DKs ('Houses of Culture'), that survive due to their subordination to the City Department of Culture. It cannot be said that informants perceive Moscow DKs as hospitable spaces. Despite the fact that the district press sometimes proudly reports on concerts held in local cultural centres by people from Central Asia, the latter are aware of the fact that host sites usually perceive them as aliens:

The [Moscow] houses of culture do not hire people like us for permanent work. I think so, I don't know actually, I haven't tried it myself. Maybe if you try, it will work out somewhere. But it seems to me not... another culture... (a professional artist, forced to change profession while being in Moscow, 13.01.2020).

This statement confirms the fact that many migrant artists have a feeling that Moscow cultural institutions are not interested in their art (despite the fact that in some Moscow houses of culture there is a demand for concerts of ethnic

music – in particular, the ensemble of Iranian music *Mehrabanan* regularly performs in the *DK Gaidarovets*). However, when I asked about the image of a desired future, many informants responded that they would like to have a cultural centre, like DK, at their own permanent disposal.

Although the events organized by Central Asian artistic groups addressed to their own language communities are designed to recreate the atmosphere of being in home country, they are in compliance with those representations of 'ethnic cultures' that prevail in the cultural life of most regions of Russia. Anthropologist Joachim Habeck, who conducted research in several DKs in the Novosibirsk region, came to the conclusion that despite the seemingly artificial representation of ethnicity at the events held there, DK remains the main stage on which a 'public face of the community' is created, and a place where social recognition can be won (Habeck 2011: 68). In the case of Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Tajik artistic collectives in Moscow, there is a similar demand for such a stage, but in the absence of a permanent site that could satisfy it.

Audiences: (ii) 'Inter-diasporic' public

Along with the above, all artistic groups that came into the field of my research have experience performing at events organized by other so-called diasporic organizations. In this case, 'diasporas' mean ethnic public organizations that seek to represent the peoples of the former Soviet republics, as well as the national-cultural autonomies of the peoples of Russia. The key platform for their interaction is the MHN. However, informal contacts have also been established between them. Thus, according to several informants, there are 'inter-diasporic' chat rooms in messengers, where representatives of organizations, as well as individual artistic groups, can agree on joint events. There is a stable tradition that if one ethnic organization arranges a major city event, representatives of other 'diasporas' are invited to it:

Besides Navruz, there is Sagaldan, the Buryat holiday, the Bashkir-Tatar holiday Sabantuy, Armenian 'Apricot,' Azerbaijani 'Pomegranate' – we have been taking part in all of them for many years. And this once again suggests that in fact, holidays, meals, and leisure unite people (Member of an ethnic public organization, 13.02.2020).

The interviews show that there is a distinct grassroots demand for communication with representatives of other ethnic minority groups. I find no explanation for this phenomenon other than that participation in such events provides an opportunity to receive moral support from those who also face prejudices because of their ethnic background. Demonstrating recognition of the importance of each other's cultures, albeit in an exoticized form, contrasts sharply with the everyday experiences of the participants:

The atmosphere at these meetings [at the MHN] is completely different. At least for an hour or for three hours, you move away from all the problems.

At work there are different nuances, hatred... But there is such a friendly environment, as if there were no such problems in the world (former member of an ethnic public organization, 22.02.2020).

It is noteworthy that such 'inter-diasporic' connections do not depend directly on the common geographic region of origin. Without exception, all informants told about their experience of interaction with the Tatar Cultural Centre— either they rent a room for rehearsals or a concert hall on preferential terms, or perform at the invitation of the Centre.

Audiences: (iii) City-wide events and other forms of outreach

Access of the designated artistic groups to the Russian-speaking audience is mediated either by state structures, be that the DNP, budgetary educational and cultural institutions, or by private organizers of exhibitions of arts and crafts. Such activities rely heavily on the symbolic background of Soviet *Dekadas* of National Art, ten-day festivals that have been regularly held in Moscow since the mid-1930s to demonstrate the achievements of the peoples of the USSR in the field of art and literature (see, Kaplan 2020). Here is an illustrative excerpt from an interview with one of the members of an ethnic public organization involved in organizing the annual celebration of Navruz holiday (an annual event since 2005) in Moscow:

After the celebration, a woman came up to me, a Russian, a Muscovite. She said: 'You know, I'm so grateful to you. Today I felt as if I was in my own country for the first time in 20 years!' She felt like she was in her own country DURING NAVRUZ, do you understand it?! Because she felt the atmosphere of such goodwill, which has long been gone. This was the Soviet country where all sorts of *Dekadas* [of National Art] were held, where we did not shy away from each other, where we were not migrants [*ponaehavshie*]. We were the children of the same country: My address is neither a house nor a street, my address is the Soviet Union¹ (13.02.2020).

If the initiative is supported by the embassies of the countries of origin, then another format can be traced here— ethno-festivals, which are built in the aesthetic framework of historical reconstruction. Such festivals are usually held in collaboration with Russian military-historical communities and focus on the presentation of folk costumes, music and crafts, as well as ancient wrestling.

Both scripts presuppose an encounter with material objects, that is, generalized images, not individuals. In order to create an entourage that corresponds to the idea of the correct demonstration of the 'public face of the community' on sites that do not belong to them, migrant artistic groups have to constantly look for the necessary means of symbolic production. Such means are traditional costumes, national flags and antiques. To obtain it all, they often seek help

¹ Refrain of the famous Soviet Estrada song performed by Samotsvety ensemble.

from ethnic public organizations. The latter try to support such initiatives to the extent that their resources permit, and also to symbolically encourage artists. For this, after almost every concert, representatives of public organizations, and sometimes the embassies of the republics, reward the participants with certificates of honour. For instance, in recent years, the Ministry of Culture of Kyrgyzstan has begun awarding the 'Excellent cultural activist' (*Otlichnik kul'turi*) medal to members of artistic groups through public organizations registered in Russia.

Thus, artistic groups formed by migrants from Central Asia who perform at city-wide venues in Moscow often find themselves in the zone of control of the authorities of both receiving and sending countries. Firstly, certain ideological directives come from the DNP if events are held with its support. Thus, in 2020, all collectives participating in the concert program at the celebration of Navruz holiday, were required to reflect the theme of the Great Patriotic War in connection with the 75th anniversary of Victory Day (ultimately the event did not occur due to the pandemic). Secondly, the embassies often send their employees to status events with the participation of people from their countries to make sure that the 'national culture' is presented in a way that they find appropriate.

On the other hand, since no royalties are paid for the performances at city events dedicated to cultural diversity, rather soft criteria of professional qualification are applied to the participating collectives. Since the goal of such events is to get an ethnically representative cast, many amateur groups get the opportunity to perform on the big stage, which they would hardly have had if they were trying to break through in their homeland. Performing at respected cultural venues in Moscow quite often attracts the attention of the Central Asian media, among which success stories of people in migration are in demand. And this, in turn, can bring subsequent recognition to migrant artists in their homeland.

In all three communicative contexts that we have considered, the same pattern emerges. The performances presuppose identification of the audience with actors as 'bearers of national culture.' Such a script of cultural behaviour, guaranteeing social recognition, is largely inherited from the (late) Soviet period. Consequently, the social background of the participants (in case of those of Central Asian origin), that is, their migration experience, falls out of sight. Instead, they are given the symbolic status of respected ambassadors of the country of origin. This switching of the social register is based on endowing the cultural sphere with the qualities of a 'safe space', a territory of peace and harmony, cleansed of acute social problems.

Conclusion

As shown in the study, artistic groups formed by migrants from Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in Moscow exist mainly due to their own enthusiasm and in the absence of tangible material resources. Registered ethnic

organizations, as well as city governance structures responsible for managing diversity, can provide them with access to some public platforms, but do not give them an opportunity to institutionalize their cultural initiatives. The bulk of the activities of Central Asian music, dance and theatrical groups is carried out through the lease of premises in state-sponsored cultural centres (mainly, DKs) at their own expense.

When it comes to performing in educational institutions or at city festivals and celebrations, migrant amateur artists find themselves in the zone of control of the social forces of both the receiving and the sending state. On the one hand, the DNP tries to maintain certain ideological markers for such events, using the discursive framework of the 'dialogue of cultures' and references to the common Soviet past. On the other hand, representatives of the embassies of the sending countries are trying to make sure that 'their culture' is displayed in the proper way at prestigious Moscow venues.

According to such a discursive framework, migrant artists appear exclusively as 'cultural ambassadors', whilst their social experience related to everyday life in Russia remains largely hushed up. I happened to observe several cases in which the topic of labour migration was raised through artistic practices. This was done in the form of humorous sketches by the team members of the branch of the Kyrgyz KVN (*Klub vesyelykh i nakhodchivyykh*) League—'Tamashow' in Moscow. It is noteworthy that this particular form of humorous self-expression, which is another Soviet legacy, is in great demand among young migrants from Kyrgyzstan. Also, the topic of migration is sometimes addressed in witty improvisations of *aqyns*, who participate in the *aitysh* competition, which is periodically organized by Kyrgyz activists at different Moscow cites (for more information on this Kyrgyz tradition of poetry and music competition, see Köchümkulova, Qojakhmetova 2016). However, even these examples indicate that the pragmatics of the respective performances is to recreate the atmosphere of being in home country, and not to implement criticism of Russian social realities through art.

It would be wrong to conclude that the described forms of self-presentation are determined exclusively by the authorities. Interviews and observations of various events show that the request for the role of 'cultural bearer' persists both when addressing compatriots and representatives of other minority ethnic groups. The fact that the authenticity of the discussed performances is not questioned either by the actors or their target audience, despite the social conditions in which they find themselves in Russia, testifies to the vitality of the patterns of gaining social recognition, which were inherited from Soviet cultural policy.

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