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**THE BOUNDARIES OF THE DJAMAAT:
THE PARTICULAR FEATURES OF DANGESTAN'S
TRANSLOCAL COMMUNITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF
MIGRATION FLOWS WITHIN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

This paper analyses the contemporary structure and functioning of Dagestan's rural communities in a context of internal Russian migration, particularly to the cities of Western Siberia. The concepts of transnationalism and translocality are deployed as a theoretical framework to analyse the migrant and his social world without detaching ourselves from the donor community, the *djamaat*. It is argued that the Dagestan rural community, in the course of the migration processes of recent decades, can no longer be viewed merely as a local social entity. A new translocal community has emerged, organized on the principle of the 'Global Village', that consists of migrants, their family members and non-migrants remaining in the home villages. Translocal migrants, existing simultaneously in several geographically separated points, continue to construct their identity and their social networks, a process that fosters a sense of belonging to a Dagestani village. The donor rural community is an important space where migrants can demonstrate personal successes and new entrepreneurial and philanthropic economic activities. Migrants invest not only in their own households but also help their native villages as a whole through entrepreneurial activity and financial support. In addition, the key moments of life remain rooted in the village. Migrants prefer to find a marriage partner from their home village. The home village is also seen to be the only acceptable burial place for deceased migrants. A major role in the consolidation of a translocal *djamaat* is played by Internet resources such as social networks and messenger programmes, which construct social networks and maintain communication among fellow countrymen in real time. This preference for preserving ties to one's rural locality even after resettlement out of the village and the Republic of Dagestan, as well

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as the maintenance of translocal links, allow us to speak of a new social entity: the translocal community.

Key words: rural community in Dagestan, migration, translocality, social networks of migrants

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Dagestan is one of the few regions of the North Caucasus where a reasonable proportion remains between urban and rural communities and mountain areas are populated in a relatively even and dense fashion. Nevertheless, the process of resettlement from the mountains to the valley, which has gone on for a century, has only intensified with the onset of the twenty-first century (Karpov, Kapustina 2011; Kazenin 2012). The current trend towards ever-increasing urbanization, which is driven by contemporary economic and political conditions, has brought about the steady depopulation of many, mostly mountainous, villages. This raises questions over the long-term viability and sustainability of the Dagestan village as a unique and specific social space. Dagestan is one of the regions of the Russian Federation where labour migration has had a serious impact on many aspects of social and political life. In this case, the scale of this migration is rather large and has a particular geography; in one way or another the majority of the republic's population is involved in migration processes. Migration from Dagestan to other regions of the country has become a significant economic and social phenomenon not only for Dagestani society, but also for those regions that receive Dagestani migrants. Given the varied debates this provokes, as well as the scale and relevance of the issue, fresh research is seriously needed.

This paper focuses on the practices of migration predominating among those leaving the rural areas of Dagestan to find work in the major cities and mining centres of Western Siberia. However, rather than concentrating on migrants themselves and their life during migration, the main object of study is the Dagestani 'post-village' society consisting of people from one village who have come together through migration pathways. The main aim of this paper is to shed light on the relevance and significance of this social institution, which is vital for both Dagestan and those receiving Dagestan migrants in other regions of Russia. Evidence for this importance can be found in the existence of specific practices aimed at maintaining the 'post-village' community, part of which involves replacing some of the functions of state institutions.

Dagestan's rural community through the lens of the translocal paradigm

Beyond the standard reasons given for out-migration such as unemployment and low standards of living, one distinctive feature of internal Russian migration from rural areas of Dagestan is the consistent desire to maintain

regular and sufficiently deep contact with their relatives in the homeland, as well as build ties with other villagers, members of the rural community—*djamaat*. '*Djamaat*' is a term with various meanings in contemporary Dagestan. It is used to refer to both regular meetings of the elected representatives of the village, and the rural community as a whole. In addition, *djamaat* also refers to a Muslim community of worshippers within the same mosque. In fact, the second and third of these definitions overlap in many ways, since the vast majority of Dagestan villages residents consider themselves to be Muslim, even if not every villager plays an active role in the life of the mosque.

In examining how significant the *djamaat* is to the social structure of modern Dagestan, it is important to take into account certain features of the kinship system in Dagestan. In contrast to some other regions of the North Caucasus, Dagestan lacks the classic, well-developed clan networks of her neighbours, which often span many generations and are supported by myths of a common origin from a common ancestor and the utilization of a strict exogamy (marriages within the clan are prohibited). Instead, Dagestani communities are organised along the lines of the *Tukkhum*, a family-orientated type of social organisation sometimes consisting of only a few generations that is far more orientated towards endogamy, with marriage between cousins common in mountain settlements. Given these conditions, rural and village solidarity trumps family solidarity, and the practice of endogamy reinforces this tendency. When we put this together with the long history of political independence enjoyed by many Dagestani villages¹, the linguistic fragmentation predominating among these settlements, and the serious ambiguities inherent to Dagestani ethnic identity, one would expect a common rural identity to be most fundamental unifier under the transformative political and social conditions Dagestan has experienced in the last century. In other words, rural identity has not lost its relevance even during the large-scale urbanization that has occurred in the region (see, Karpov 2007; Karpov 2008; Kapustina 2012; Sokolov 2017b).

Having said that, mass migration, both within the republic and outwards from it, mean that relatively few people in Dagestan live in their rural homeland. On the contrary, it has become rather typical to find a mountain village where there are far less families remaining compared to the number that have left. Those leaving the village follow several paths of departure: apart from temporary labour migration, villagers also relocate to lowland villages, where they often live compactly with other migrants from their village. This can be viewed as a planned and rarely spontaneous resettlement that, as a rule, occurred in the second half of the twentieth century (Karpov, Kapustina 2011). Another migration pathway is to the cities of the republic, often to the capital, Makhachkala.

¹ Before the era of the Caucasian War (1817–1864, in Dagestan it ended in 1859), many mountain villages were largely autonomous and free societies and in fact possessed a certain degree of sovereignty from the large feudal states around them (Karpov 2007).

Thus, rural communities, having negotiated changes to the locality and integrity of their communities a few decades ago, are now experiencing another phase of serious transformation. As a result, they faced with the challenge of retaining the coherence and existence of this social entity in a different set of conditions. In interpreting this process some researchers have even predicted the imminent demise of the *djamaat*, especially with regards those second and third generation of migrants from the villages (Sokolov 2017b). As will be discussed below, I have found evidence to the contrary and, thus, view this conclusion as premature.

The term 'community' in social research has, for a long time, been connected to the concept of 'locality': when members of a community are principally linked together by the sense of sharing a common bounded territory. Over the past thirty years, research has shown there is great diversity in the forms of extraterritorial community, especially with the changing interconnections of the modern global world. Indeed, even the term 'community' itself has been subjected to criticism for its ambiguities and inconsistencies (Byford 2014). It was along such lines that Arjun Appadurai argued that it is necessary to uncover the roots of locality as a lived experience in a global world and, thus, to reconceptualize group identity landscapes in such a way as to fit with the growing sense that groups are no longer strictly territorialized, spatially bounded, or culturally homogeneous (Appadurai 1991: 191–196). Soon researchers turned to the topic of collective identities, and the symbolic role of place (locality) in the construction of these identities (Cohen 1985). As a result, over recent decades it has become obvious that factors other than territory, such as social networks that transcend locality, can be a vital link in the collective identity of community members (Wonneberger 2011: 129).

Given the rise of new interpretations of localization and the migration experience, the social sciences turned to the concept of the 'Global Village' as a lens for examining the changes of the era. New technology meant new ways of doing business, financing projects, communicating and moving people, making human life more global and local at the same time, as people were now living on multiple levels of reality (Copeland-Carson et al. 2012). The geographic boundaries of one village could be used as a source of community identity on the one hand but, on the other, an 'extraterritorial community' of virtually unlimited bounds could exist within a 'socially determined space' that could, in theory, cover the whole world (Peleikis 2003: 13).

The term 'community' in this article will be scrutinized in conditions of deterritorialization through the help of two theoretical frames: transnationalism and translocality. These two lenses allow us to focus on the interactions between migrants and their previous 'homeland' community, as well as their physical and social multi-locality. Transnationalism is defined here as an attribute of migration, in as far as migrants develop and maintain multiple forms of relationships that cross state borders while also constructing their public identities through interacting with more than one nation-state (Glick Schiller et al. 1992: ix). Approaching the study of migration with the concept of transnationalism encour-

ages researchers to recognise that migrants, having made a move, remain, in one way or another, connected to their former place of residence. It is this context that the concept of transnationalism overlaps with the familiar and well-established concept of 'diaspora'. While some researchers view these terms as tightly inter-linked (Tölölyan 1996), others argue that not all migration leading to the formation of a diaspora can be viewed as a form of transnationalism. According to Thomas Faist, the diaspora community and those remaining in the homeland often live in distinct and separate social worlds. Transnationalism, on the other hand, is when a set of functioning networks connect migrants and inhabitants of the receiving territory, alongside the influence of various economic, social, and cultural cross-border interactions (Faist 2010).

In this paper, in order to examine Dagestani migration occurring within the Russian Federation, I find it more relevant to employ the concept of translocality. Translocal migration is considered by some authors to be analogous to transnational migration, but without crossing of national borders as such. Indeed, it appears that, in some regions of the world, migration within one country is comparable in scale, consequences and complexity to that of international migration. Internal Russian migration is a clear example of this phenomenon. Taking this fresh approach to translocality does not rule out the existence of a national border between the donor and the receiving territory; the emphasis is on the mobility of commodities and money, as well as symbolic flows such as ideas and symbols (Greiner 2010; Greiner, Sakdapolrak 2013). This approach can be fruitful in examining the modern migrant practices of Dagestanis.

In my previous research I focused on the translocal nature of migration from Dagestan to the cities of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug (Kapustina 2016). In general terms, it is worth underlining the key factors that make Dagestani migration translocal in nature: the difficulty in finding a place in the communities they leave, the temporary and fluid nature of life between the community to which they have migrated and the homeland they left behind, as well as the constant movement between the village and the receiving city. As a thorough demonstration of the translocal attributes of these communities is beyond the scope of this paper, I will focus squarely on the role of the village homeland in the lives of those who have migrated from rural Dagestan to the cities of Khanty-Mansiysk. I will examine the practices deployed to solve the social problems of the village by the power of the community, including sending immigrants to other regions, and sometimes actually replacing the role of state in fostering social development. In addition, I will consider how appropriate it is to talk about a translocal Dagestan rural *djamaat* in modern conditions.

This paper was based on fieldwork data from semi-structured and biographical interviews in three Western Siberian cities: Surgut, Nizhnevartovsk, Pyt-Yakh. In addition, I visited various regions of the Republic of Dagestan in 2011 and 2014–2016, such as Khasavyurt, Dakhadaev, Kaitag, and other areas, as well as the capital of the Republic, Makhachkala. My informants consisted of

labour migrants, members of their families, fellow villagers and neighbours in migration, as well as those remaining in their historic homeland and participating in the translocal life of migrants. During the selection of informants, I did not follow certain quota-sampling with regards age, profession or gender. In my sample, almost all age groups are represented although, as most were of working age, my informants were mainly men and women between twenty-five and fifty years old. In total, ninety conversations ranging from fifteen minutes to three hours were conducted on the topic of labour migration from the villages of Dagestan to West Siberia. Most interviews were recorded on a dictaphone, the rest were recalled from memory post-interview. Observations on the trajectories of several families lasted for two to four years, which allowed me to record changes in discourses and practices, as well as trace the longer family trajectories among migrants. An important part of the research involved expert interviews with the employees of local government and the heads of Dagestani associations in Surgut, Nizhnevartovsk and Nefteyugansk. It is important to note that Dagestani citizens migrate far less to the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug. Therefore, the topics considered in this paper focus on the dynamics between the Dagestani villages and the cities of West Siberia.

One of the most important methods employed to collect material in this research was that of direct observation, both in the departure and arrival zones of migration. Working in the villages of Dagestan was of great importance as it allowed me to identify and clarify the actual 'on-the-ground' contexts active in the lives of particular migrant families. My short but regular appearance among migrant families permitted the verification of some data from my other interviews and allowed a comparison between what community members said and how these words do or do not resonate in the real-life conditions of migrants.

The donor community from the point of view of migrants

The interactions between the donor society and the migrant are often predicated upon the existence of effective social networks, whose emergence may be due to various factors. In the case of Dagestani migration, it is rural rather than ethnic identity that is the driving force in this social network formation. The exception in the Dagestan context is the Nogai, for whom ethnicity plays a more important role than territorial bonds. This explains the limited degree of contact the Nogai display with the Dagestani compatriot associations¹ in Surgut and, conversely, their close contacts there with other Nogai from Chechnya and Karachay-Cherkessia.

¹ By 'compatriot associations' I refer to informal and often spontaneous communities of people who hail from the same settlement and have migrated to live in the same place. In addition to these groups, in Siberia there are also official compatriot organisations that aim to unite all migrants from Dagestan. These official institutions are registered as national-cultural autonomous bodies or social clubs that follow certain legal requirements. In this paper I differentiate between the two types of compatriot association with the adjectives 'formal' and 'informal'.

In using the term 'identity' in this paper, I am referring to the multifarious ways in which the individual associates himself with a village, both by living in it and by the simple fact that he comes from it and that he still has kinship ties there. In other words, even a person no longer living in the village (having, for example, migrated to a city in Western Siberia or to the capital Makhachkala) assuming he has kept up active connections in the village, can still utilize the informational, economic and other advantages offered by his homeland village.

In Dagestan, social networks built on the basis of village bonds can lead to the formation of a certain specializations in production and trade for a range of different villages, something that can occur when the majority of residents of a particular village work in a similar sphere during migration. This kind of village specialization has strong historical roots in Dagestan: the level of specialization in seasonal labour was extremely high from the second half of the nineteenth century. This specialization was often connected to the high levels of craftsmanship in these villages. To some extent, this tradition lives on in Dagestan today. For example, today's village specializations include: builders, livestock breeders, gardeners, seasonal labourers, farmers, fur hat makers, shoemakers, and KAMAZ truck drivers.¹ There is a clear link between which professions or skills are already well-established within a given village and the homogeneous nature those involved in migration. If we take one example, most people from the village of Novolakskoye who migrate to Surgut specialize in dental prosthetics. Here I would like to note, however, that I do not want to exaggerate the predominance of homogeneous professional employment among migrants from the same village: in many cases, those migrating from the same village end up in various forms of employment.

One reason the rural aspect of migration is so highly significant is that the village dynamic often determines the direction taken by migrants and generally reduces the costs of sending migrants (Boyd 1989: 638–63; Massey et al. 1987). Migration to the cities of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug does involve specific challenges for those Dagestanis who make the trip. Firstly, there is the existence of a discriminatory, often specifically anti-Caucasian, discourse at work and in everyday life. Secondly, there appears to be a 'glass ceiling' for migrants in some particularly profitable areas, such the oil and gas sector, as well as the security, defence and law enforcement agencies (*silovyye struktury*). It is perhaps no surprise that, given these conditions, Dagestani migrants activate and utilise the resources of their native community, providing them with economic and social support, as well as socializing options outside of working hours.

According to my fieldwork data, migrant-villagers from Dagestan tend to help their fellow villagers in finding work. This also includes those who have

¹ Here it is important to note that these traditional crafts and trades are no longer economically viable in the village today; in other words, they no longer serve as a strong economic basis for rural life in contemporary Dagestan.

built a successful career in state companies or have started their own businesses, both of which prefer to hire fellow migrant-villagers in posts where they control the hiring. For example, almost all the migrants from the village of Bezhta who working 'up north' in the cities of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug and the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, reportedly owe their positions to the patronage of one of their successful countrymen, who occupies a senior position in the company where they are employed. Another successful Dagestani in Surgut offers his male fellow villagers work at his factory for the summer season. This practice of hiring employees, beyond the economic benefits it brings to the employer through simplified network recruiting, also involves an element of social responsibility to one's fellow villagers. For example, an informant told me that one summer some elderly men came to look for work with the Surgut entrepreneur mentioned above in order to earn money to pay for their children's wedding. Although the entrepreneur turned the men away, citing their age as the reason, he did give each of them respectable sums of money, which were approximately equal to the salary they would have been paid for the seasonal work.

Migration's effects on the donor community

Migrants leave Dagestan, which suffers from high levels of unemployment and is heavily subsidized by Federal funding, to find work amidst the relatively stable economic development of the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug. Their earnings are often sent back as remittances to those family members who have remained in their native village. In the villages of Dagestan it is not only migrant families, however, that depend on the earnings of migrant workers. 'Migrant' money stimulates the rural economy, especially trade and services, including the business of organizing weddings and other ceremonies. In interviews, informants described how local businessmen in rural Dagestan waited in anticipation for 'northerners' to return, either on vacation or after the work season. This was because, in contrast to other villagers that must buy on credit, they bring 'hard cash' to the village. Furthermore, many of those returning from work in the 'north' are now able to undertake largescale projects in the village, such as building a home, buying a car, organizing wedding purchases and celebrations, and even just enjoying themselves in local cafes or by organizing large dinner parties for friends and relatives. As a result, real estate, services and rituals have become more expensive for all villagers, something that is further aggravated by competitiveness among the villagers, which is a common tendency in Dagestan.

The donor community is important for the migrant as it provides a space for performing highly important ceremonies. The significance of these ceremonies is in the space they give for reaffirming membership bonds to the community, as well as the opportunity to mark out status and power shifts among community members (Goldring 1999: 174). This is most clearly reflected in

wedding and funeral or remembrance rituals. Take, for example, the marriage strategies of migrants working 'up north': this remains intimately linked to village ties with the donor community. Even though these migrants spend long periods of time in the cold and remote cities of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug, marriage with fellow villagers still remains a key priority for migrants of both genders, even including those second-generation migrants who have grown up in the North. In order to find a match for their son or daughter, Dagestani parents living 'up north' ask for the help of those relatives still remaining in their village. One of my informants, whose family has been living in the Surgut district for a long time, was matched with a bride by his mother's relatives, who still live in his home village. His relatives went to the trouble of organizing the matchmaking and handing out the necessary gifts, while the parents of the bride merely had to transfer money to cover the expenses. As a result, the groom could afford to come to Dagestan with his family immediately before the wedding, and a week later he and his wife returned to the north, where he repeated the wedding ritual with his relatives there.

Help from those remaining in the village is also vital to maintaining the required home visits among fellow villagers, such as relatives, neighbours, acquaintances, where significant events can often occur. In the event of a wedding, a representative from the family comes to the house of those being wed to bring money. In the case of offering one's condolences to the family of the deceased, this is done by visiting the head of this family during one of the regular return visits to the village. Unfortunately, the data used in this paper is not sufficient to draw firm conclusions about the prevailing marriage strategies among the children of Dagestani migrants. According to Denis Sokolov, the children of migrants who grew up in Siberia still prefer to seek marriages with fellow villagers, although such a marriage does not offer the same level of integration into the rural environment as it did for their parents' generation (Sokolov 2017a).

The expectation to attend weddings of relatively close relatives often forces migrants to synchronise their vacations with the 'wedding schedules' of their home village. This often leads to them travelling more than 3000 km each way over just a few days. One informant, having arrived in his native village in the middle of July, visited about a dozen weddings in less than two months. As summer is the wedding season in the region, he took all his vacation time in this period. In fact, I observed that almost all of my informants use their vacation time, including those offered paid holiday time by companies in the north, not for traveling and relaxing at resorts, but for traveling to Dagestan's villages.

The funeral of a fellow villager is also a very significant moment in the outward manifestation of the *djamaat* community and the whole Dagestani community in general. Almost all Dagestanis who died in migration are taken back to be buried in the home country. This is in spite of the serious difficulties and expenses involved in transporting a body this distance. One informant spent at least twice his average salary for his family members to attend the

funeral of his great-nephew, who died in migration. It is worth pointing out that funeral organization is an excellent example of how mutual assistance functions among migrant-villagers. Of course, this cooperation is not strictly limited to members of the same village, other Dagestanis may also participate in events such as funerals, especially in those cases where there is an active compatriot organization in the Western Siberian city in which they live.

When it comes to religious worship, rural migrants also show close affinities with developments in their home village. Instead, for example, of paying the *zakat* (the profit tax Muslims pay for the poor and needy) to the nearest Surgut mosque, Dagestanis living there often prefer to send this sum to the mosque of their native village. I also discovered cases of migrants who fixed the end date of Ramadan not according to the pronouncement of the Surgut imam, but in line with the rulings of their native village's imam.¹

The boundaries of the djamaat and the functioning of a translocal village community

One thing that is striking for the researcher working in rural Dagestan is the very rapid and accurate manner in which informants can answer the question of how many families have migrated from their village to a given city. Village residents clearly meditate on this matter without the intervention of the anthropologist's questions. One reason this calculation is made all the easier for them is that those who leave the villages, as a rule, maintain close ties not only with members of their families and relatives, but also with other villagers. Moreover, it should be noted that both less successful migrants, who struggled more with the adaptation process to the new host community, and more successful migrants, both demonstrated similar levels of devotion and connection to their old rural communities. In conversations about the attitudes of those who had left the rural *djamaat*, some informants directly stated that both migrants and those remaining in the village still make up a single *djamaat* (Kapustina 2011). Naturally, there are variations to the degree of unity of the community and the interaction of the villagers in each Dagestani village: declarations on the unity of the *djamaat* do not always accurately reflect the actual practices 'on the ground' in a specific village. On the other hand, my observations show that Dagestani labour migrants with significant time working in the cities of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug tend not only to be involved in finding solutions to the personal or family-level economic and social problems in the village; they also play an active role in activities that are aimed at securing the overall prosperity of the village while seeking to strength the bonds of rural community.

¹ This date is determined depending on the appearance of a new moon around the end of the fasting month and discrepancies in dates can vary by a few days from region to region.

It should be noted that the involvement of translocal migrants in the many local projects aimed at improving life in the donor community is a practice that can be found with some regularity in other regions (Peleikis 2003: 64; Goldring 1999: 177). In post-Soviet Dagestan, these practices are, for many villages, the only remaining method for furthering the development of rural settlements. Informal communities organized around community organizations rooted on the level of their village, the mosques and/or village activists have, in many ways, replaced the power structures of the state at various levels. This includes even serious large-scale projects such as road construction, building local hydropower stations, restoring and even reconstructing historic buildings and neighbourhoods, the expansion and repair of mosques, madrasas, cemeteries, gymnasiums, and schools. Of course, these kinds of initiatives are not carried out extensively in all of Dagestan's villages with equal vigour. Other factors play an important role in determining developmental success, such as the degree of cohesion among the rural community, the amount of people from the village (including labour migrants) able to successfully occupy certain posts that open up access to government programs and other budgetary resources.

One telling example of how a philanthropist village activist can replace state structures can be found in one village in South Dagestan. One native of this village created a business in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug and, with some of his proceeds, built all kinds of much-needed infrastructure in his home village. This included the landscaping of a cemetery, construction of a vital part of road that significantly reduced travel time between the village and the district centre.¹ He also rebuilt a school that was in a serious state of disrepair:

It ended up costing thirty-seven and a half million in 2004. Not a penny of that money came from the state, not even for a single nail to be hammered in... Same thing from the regional authorities, not a penny for a single thing... Although when the conversation went in this direction, when he (the philanthropist) asked (the regional administration) he heard: 'Sure, go ahead, do your project, a school would be good'. But as for other questions ... We spent three hundred and sixty-five (thousand) on the project, yet they tried to push us around, ... for such a project, ... they demanded we change the title page, for the hotel project, although he said he wanted a two-storey building he was complaining... Not a single person from the regional administration came during this time of construction, even to do a basic technical inspection. [nobody was interested in] what we were doing here, what we did! (Male 57, Kaytag district, Dagestan).

During the process of migration, it is not uncommon for migrant activists living in the cities of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug to collect money from their fellow villagers in order to alleviate certain problems in their native village. Indeed, it is perhaps by tracing donation records that we can get the

¹ The road construction project was, according to informants, carried out with the help of the regional administration.

clearest picture of how many families from a particular village have come to live in a particular Siberian city. Volunteer work to improve conditions in one's home the village is not only about raising basic standards and general prosperity. Given the absence of any tangible support from the authorities at various levels in the Dagestani villages, these community actions become a driving force behind the consolidation of the rural community within a translocal context.

Community events such as village days, sports tournaments or prayers can also be viewed as events that consolidate the community. For example, one Dagestan village, whose residents migrate for work in Surgut, has an over twenty-year tradition of celebrating the 'Day of the Village' in May. Those migrants who cannot come to a holiday in Dagestan often mark this event in Surgut by organizing football competitions and cooking up large barbecues. I would argue that the translocality of the rural community is also supported by features specific to the administrative structure of the Republic of Dagestan. A significant part of twentieth-century population resettlement within Dagestan occurred on lands once used for animal husbandry that were administratively independent. Indeed, even today, these lands, in formal terms at least, fall under the purview of mountain region administrations. According to official documents, all the inhabitants of these settlements are residents of mountainous regions and are expected to participate in the election of the of mountain villages heads and districts chiefs, even when they are not physically present in the village. It may be that explains the close connection between the place of resettlement and the historic village homeland, which later continued into later decades of migration.

It is worth underlining that a significant proportion of my migrant informants, whether they were based in Western Siberia or Makhachkala, were still officially registered as living in their native villages. A variety of reasons were given for this decision: many were reluctant to register themselves in Dagestani capital. From my observations it appears that, as a general rule, within any family of migrants in West Siberia there are those with local registration and those who are still registered in their Dagestani village. Return migration from Western Siberia to Dagestan is a common practice, although this does not always entail a homecoming to one's native village as many end up resettling in one of the republic's cities. This kind of migration pathways may have an interesting effect on the migrant's rural identity. A person who has left his native Dagestan village, gone to work elsewhere and then moved, for example, to Makhachkala, often continues his previous orientation towards the *djaamat*. Fellow villagers living in the capital of the republic come together to hold joint meetings, sporting events, and festivals. Together they often cooperate to take an active part in the political life of the village, ensuring they remain registered for village-level elections. They visit their village regularly to attend weddings and pay their respects at funerals; they also help organize rural compatriot associations (Kapustina 2012). Neighbourhoods often emerge in the capital city where people from the same

village live compactly together, a phenomenon that underlines the salience of rural identity among contemporary Dagestanis.

One important mechanism in retaining social connections within the translocal rural community, as well as providing a common information space, comes in the form of Internet social networks such as *Odnoklassniki*, *Vkontakte* and Facebook. Both migrants and non-migrants often organize themselves into groups according to their village of origin, including groups devoted to fellow villagers who have migrated to live in the same particular town. Skype has also long been popular with migrants, allowing members of translocal families to maintain constant contact with one another. In the past few years, WhatsApp has been particularly appealing due to its group chat function, which allows group members to exchange more than messages: photos, videos, and dictated audio messages can be sent. Another important feature of these WhatsApp groups is the fact that they are rarely limited to family members only: these group chats include other members of the whole *djamaat* community beyond kinship and territorial lines.

It seems that these Internet tools help create a secure and consistent space of constant communication between members of the rural community, regardless of their actual geographic location. Thus, the Internet has played an important role in raising the awareness and involvement of migrants in rural affairs. Indeed, involvement and engagement with rural affairs among those regularly appearing in online interactions is almost comparable to those who have physically remained in the village. For example, one informant, who has been working away from her village for more than two years, told me with laughter that she keeps up to date with rural gossip, watched all the weddings she was unable to attend in person, even to the extent that she knows whose animal gave birth in the village or who would be bringing new clothes from their next trip to the wholesale market.

Conclusion

Often, those researching transnationalism interpret transnational lifestyles mainly in terms of how the migrant adapts to the host community and what resources they utilize in order to facilitate the resettlement process (Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Smith 2006; Itzigsohn, Giorguli-Saucedo 2002). Although I generally agree with this approach, in this paper I have examined the way in which the nature and depth of transnational practices is not only determined by factors 'on the ground' in the place to which the migrant has moved; in addition, the sociocultural specifics of the migrants' donor community also come into play. I would argue that, particularly in the case of Dagestani migrants to West Siberian cities, attention to this latter element is a vital part of the picture.

In summary, it can be concluded that in the current period the rural *djamaat* community in Dagestan is largely deterritorialized and has acquired

some of the characteristics of the 'global village' model. The members of this translocal community, even when living in migration, continue to maintain social interactions with the *djamaat*. They also continue to carry out vital social functions for the *djamaat*, such as supporting fellow villagers in direct ways, fully participating in the life of the donor community and organising social activity amongst fellow village migrants in their new place of residence. Furthermore, the boundaries of the *djamaat* as a social entity are established through the activities of community members, including those living far away in long-term labour migration those remaining in Dagestan. Of course, these rural communities do not have total control over their members; the reality is far more fluid. These communities transform, members can lose touch and the range of the community's social and political functions can increase or decrease over time and space. However, in the majority of cases, villagers, as well as those who migrated both out of the village and of Dagestan proper, tend to retain a rural identity that provides a sense of common group membership. *Djamaat* members can participate in the life of their native village, gaining sufficient cooperative power to, in some cases, even supersede the state in the management and resolution of pressing social issues in rural Dagestan.

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